

TRADITIONAL DANCE HERITAGE OF ZIMBABWE



BRIDGET CHINOURIRI, WONDER MAGURASHE & RICHARD MURANDA

2025



TRADITIONAL DANCE

HERITAGE OF ZIMBABWE

EDITORS

Bridget Chinouriri
Wonder Maguraushe
Richard Muranda

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DEDICATION

This volume is dedicated to dance culture bearers, tutors and practitioners for their sterling work in perpetuating indigenous dance knowledge in contemporary society.



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We would like to acknowledge the divine enablement that was endowed by the Almighty God for this whole project to come to fruition. The resilience and tenacity that was invested in this work required concerted effort, energy, commitment, hard work and patience from all involved. Gratitude is mutual amongst ourselves for the scholarly, musical and social collaboration that grew out of the common goal to document Zimbabwe's traditional dance heritage. This project would not have come to fruition without unity of purpose and high level of commitment. The triumvirate took charge of the ingredients of the book chapters by mapping the layout of the book and editing its content.

We are indebted to Professor Mellitus Nyongesa Wanyama at Kabarak University for his constructive suggestions about the book's production and belief in its mission which buoyed us throughout the various stages of the project. His command of structural layout and scrutinous attention to detail throughout the numerous drafts of the book ensured the consistency of its final version. We appreciate Professor Wanyama, the Founder and Director of Utafiti Foundation, for his academic foresight and vision in academia and for availing the opportunity to embark on this project.

Twenty-two authors worked very hard to generate content by interacting with culture bearers, reviewing literature, transcribing songs and spending hours on end to put stuff together. The project would surely not have been possible without their invaluable energy and dedication. They deserve very special mention as well. Traditional dance is a component of music that has received little academic research attention in the study of music in Zimbabwe. In view of that we commend all the contributors of the book for their input. The authors should be saluted for this academic undertaking, especially in the backdrop of tough economic conditions in Zimbabwe. Despite the challenges, we pride ourselves as academics for penning this book that chronicles our Zimbabwean traditional dance heritage for the first time since the attainment of independence in 1980.

To the reviewers, we recognise your thorough, impartial and academic observations, evaluations and suggestions which helped to convalesce the quality of the final product. We also recognise the social and moral backing that our families rendered to us from the beginning to the end of this academic project. We thank all people who contributed immensely to the success of this project and recognise the different ways that allowed us to complete this valuable work. God bless you all.



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bridget Chinouriri (Ph.D.) is an Associate Professor of ethnomusicology in the Department of Creative Media and Communications at the University of Zimbabwe. Bridget is currently the Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. She is a creative writer, editor, and culture exponent. She graduated with a Doctorate in April 2014 at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her research interests include Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Digital Humanities, Music and Land Issues, Developmental Politics, Gender and Sexuality studies. Other interests are also in the documentation and preservation of the musical arts. Bridget sits on a number of cultural boards in Zimbabwe such as the National Intangible Cultural Heritage of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe College of Music, and National Arts Council of Zimbabwe. She has more than 40 publications to her name which include 5 books.

Wonder Maguraushe (Ph.D.) is a Senior Lecturer at MSU's Music Business, Musicology and Technology Department in Zimbabwe. His research interests are in indigenous, popular and digital music. He has presented papers at conferences in Wuhan, Shanghai, Durban, Cape Town, Pretoria, Accra, Victoria Falls and Harare on music research. He has 30 publications in refereed journals and books. Wonder is also a mbira and marimba performer with Zvirimudeze Mbira Ensemble, and Rimba Resonance Vibes respectively.

Richard Muranda (Ph.D.) is a senior lecturer at Midlands State University in the Department of Music Business, Musicology and Technology. He teaches and conducts research in Music pedagogy, Performance, Popular Music, Ethnomusicology and Music Technology. Muranda supervises and examines Honours and postgraduate theses. He has presented research papers in Botswana, China, Finland, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Muranda has 32 peer reviewed publications.

Beauty Dengu is a professional dancer who graduated with a degree in Ethnochoreology from Great Zimbabwe University. She is a member of Dzimbadzamabge Traditional Dance troupe. Beauty has participated and performed at the provincial and national Chibuku Neshamwari Festival competitions.

Claudio Chipendo (Ph.D.) is the Chairperson of the Department of Music Business, Musicology and Technology at the Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. Chipendo has performed and directed traditional dance performances and taught African traditional music at different institutions of learning. He has published eight journal articles and two book chapters. He presented several papers at national and international conferences, which include ICTM, SASRIM and PASME.

Eunice Zibani is a holder of a Master of Master of Science in Applied Ethnomusicology degree from Midlands State University. Her research interests are in indigenous dances, choral music, arts administration and musical pedagogics. Eunice is a professionally trained teacher with a Diploma in Education. Currently she is a school administrator. She has trained traditional dance troupes and choral music choirs in Schools and churches which have competed up to National level. Eunice is also a recognised music adjudicator.

Locardia Sango is a Principal Lecturer at Madziwa Teachers College. She is a Ph.D. candidate and holds a Master's and a Bachelor's Degrees from the University of Zimbabwe. Currently, she is studying for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Music Education. She is an author of three chapters in the Professional Syllabus 'B' Module teachers' college curriculum.

Magdalene Fungai Zivengwa (MPhil) is a researcher in the field of ethnomusicology. She is a holder of an Honours Degree in Music and Musicology from Midlands State University. Her academic record is complemented by a background in teaching as a primary teacher. She is passionate about sharing knowledge through performance and research. She also has a talent for inspiring and motivating music learners. She specialized in the Mbira DzaVadzimu instrument.

Magwati Phineas (Ph.D.) is music lecturer at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. His research interests are Musical arts, Indigenous music and dance traditions, African Indigenous knowing systems. He sits on the Zimbabwe National Music Strategy Team Board and is also a founding board member of Africa Musical Charitable Arts Trust, a skills programme for the marginalised and disadvantaged members of the community.

Mercy Kayumba has been an administrator in the Arts industry since 2009. She holds a Master of Applied Ethnomusicology degree from Midlands State University. She works at IYASA (Inkululeko Yabatsha School of Arts) as an office and projects administrator. She has run various projects with IYASA including the school tutelage programme *Isiphiwo sami*, CREDISI (Creative Diversity for Cultural Inclusion) and the PROVE project. Mercy is a costume

designer, stylist, researcher, innovator and archivist of traditional music dance costumes.

Perminus Matiure (Ph.D.) is a mbira player and ethnomusicologist. He has published thirty articles and book chapters in ethnomusicology. He has also presented papers at international conferences like ICTM, PASME, CIMCIM, Applied Ethnomusicology Study Group, and MESI. He is the founder of Zvirimudeze mbira ensemble. He also produced six innovations on mbira. He can teach, construct, tune, and play mbira, *chipendani*, and ngoma. He also teaches music video production and archiving of tangible and intangible musical materials at the University of Namibia.

Philemon Manatsa (Ph.D.) is a lecturer at the University Zimbabwe. Philemon's research focuses on socio-cultural issues in music education, policy, curriculum, and music perception. He has published book chapters and articles in peer reviewed journals. He served as Coordinator of music education (ISME) board member, Commission of the Education of the Professional Musician; member of Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education, (PASMAE) and ISME. Philemon studied Visual and Performing Arts (Music) at North West University.

Sanelisiwe Fredda Ngwalo holds a Master's Degree in Applied Ethnomusicology and a Bachelor's Degree in Music and Musicology from Midlands State University. She is a visual and performing arts and music teacher at Coghlan Primary School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Sanelisiwe is also a choir conductor and pianist at St Margaret's Anglican church. Ms Ngwalo is a dance instructor and choreographer in traditional and contemporary dances. She is a keen researcher in music education, African music and performance.

Sarudzai Dube is a music lecturer and researcher in the music department at Morgenster Teachers' college. She has a Master of Applied Ethnomusicology degree from Midlands State University. She is an up-and-coming academic writer, she aspires to contribute towards preservation of indigenous music traditions. She has organised music performances at college graduation ceremonies and workshops. Sarudzai has also worked with the Zimbabwe School Examination Council as an item writer. Her teaching and research interests include educational technology, creative processes in music, curriculum models, instructional designs and choral music training.

Selina Rangarirai holds a Master's degree in Applied Ethnomusicology from Midlands State University. Selina has conducted some research on the Muchongoyo dance. Rangarirai is a choreographer with experience in teaching and research in music and dance. She has an interest in exploring and analysing various aspects of Zimbabwean music and dance. She has experience in instrumental performance with Rimba Resonance, Mbira Resonance Vibes and Afro-troop mbira ensembles. To demonstrate her passion for her involvement in music and culture she has produced a mbira album and a single track with the outfit Afro-troop.

Shadreck Dzingayi (MPhil) is a lecturer in Popular Music and Indigenous Dance Studies, his experience merges academia with indigenous and contemporary culture. Shadreck brings a unique blend of scholarly diligence and practical experience to the dance floor. His career envisions choreography and directing dance for the University youth learners separating the cultural impact of indigenous and contemporary dance in the present-day era. His research endeavour capitalised on philosophical significance and function of Zimbabwean indigenous dances, blending scholarly insights to cultural preservation.

Solomon Gwervende (Ph.D.) recently graduated from Dublin City University in Ireland's School of Theology, Philosophy, and Music. His research was funded by the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Fund. Previously, he obtained a Choreomundus-International Master's Degree in Dance Knowledge, Practice, and Heritage. Solomon also holds a first-class Master of Arts in Ethnochoreology from the University of Limerick in Ireland, funded by Stepping-Stone, an Irish dance scholarship organisation.

Tariro Claris Muungani holds an MEd degree in Teacher Education (Music) from the University of Zimbabwe and BA degree in Music Education from Great Zimbabwe University. She is a Principal Lecturer at Morgenster Teachers' College and Head of Music Section. Tariro is a Doctoral candidate (Ethnomusicology) at the GZU. She has an ABRSM Grade 5 theory of music and other certificates in theory, dance, choral training and adjudication and marimba. Her research interests include music education, business, music technology, ethnomusicology and inclusive education.

Taurai Mukege is a holder of a Bachelor of Music in Bandmasters Degree from Africa University. Taurai is a Director of Music with the Zimbabwe National Army. He transcribes and notates music of different genres. In the field of music and dance, Taurai is known for Traditional dance coaching skills, performing and undertaking research. He has won several National accolades as a traditional dancer and coach.

Tendai Muparutsa (Ph.D.) is a music performer, researcher, educator, ethnomusicologist, and bandleader. He participates in many Zimbabwean and African music circles in North America and collaborates with musicians and instructors from Africa and others. Muparutsa's publications appear in several academic journals. Further, he has three CDs on several platforms, including YouTube and Spotify. Tendai is an Artist-In-Residence at Williams College in Massachusetts, where he directs the Zambezi marimba band and co-directs the Kusika Dance company, among other courses. Muparutsa graduated with a PhD in Ethnomusicology from the University of Alberta, Canada.

Vimbai Chamisa (Ph.D.) is a Lecturer in the Department of Music Business, Musicology and Technology at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. Vimbai studied Ethnomusicology and Popular music and her research interests lie in music and identity, indigenous music and sustainable development as well as music as it relates to politics. Dr Chamisa has 8 peer reviewed articles and two book chapter publications.

Weston Chimbudzi (MPhil) is a Music Technology Lecturer at Midlands State University. He has more than 20 years of experience in the performative arts as a music theory specialist, recording musician, guitarist composer/arranger/tutor. He is a researcher who strives to integrate music theory with practical knowledge at a high level. His research interests cover performative arts, jazz, the music industry, live sound, music production, andragogy, instrument construction and innovation. Chimbudzi has three peer reviewed articles and three book chapters amongst others undergoing review pending publishing.



FOREWORD

Here is a book on Zimbabwe's indigenous dances, this time authored by Zimbabwean music and dance scholars instead of non-indigenous scholars from Europe and America. The title of the book asserts its focus on the traditional dances of Zimbabwe – a former British colony – and that the controversially termed 'traditional' dances play a vital role in Zimbabwe's heritage. The subtitle aligns with the newly introduced *Heritage-Based Education*, which spans from infant to tertiary institutions. Consequently, this book is essential reading not only for those engaged in understanding the nature, form, and structure of the various indigenous dances but also for those seeking to deconstruct the term 'traditional' and for anyone interested in exploring how these dances 'perform' heritage.

The editors of the book also express unease with a widely promoted, almost aphoristic statement that claims dance in Africa is virtually inconceivable without music. Personally, as someone who has written a PhD thesis on the representations of dance in Zimbabwean literature post-1960 (2015), I find the current editors' title for their book to be pugilistic, as they deliberately attempt to elevate dance to the same level that music/song has attained – that of a stand-alone discipline. By engaging with this book, we all contribute to demystifying the assertion that dance exists solely because of music/song, and indeed suggest that, despite its popularity, it is dance that provides music with leverage.

The book showcases the authors' understanding of the dances and their differing abilities to bring these dances to life in various performance contexts. Each of the nineteen well-crafted chapters illustrates distinct capabilities in applying methodological, theoretical, and professional documentation to describe and explain the indigenous dances of Zimbabwe. At its best, the book boldly aims to document and commemorate at least one indigenous dance from each of Zimbabwe's ten provinces, which encompass more than a dozen constitutionally recognised language groups. For the first time, this

book offers insights into significant dances from previously marginalised and cross-border ethnicities. It is essential to recognise that a single province may host numerous ethnicities and dialects, all of which deserve the documentation and commemoration of their unique dances. The authors of the chapters acknowledge that different ethnic groups possess various languages and cultures that influence their music and dances.

Of particular interest are chapters that discuss dances which had previously not attracted attention due to the marginalised ethnic status of the respective ethnic groups of origin. Notable examples include the *Beni Arinoti* dance performed by the Yao ethnic minority from Malawi, the *Chilimba* dance from the previously marginalised Tonga people of north-western Zimbabwe and the Zambezi border, *Ibhorro* healing music and dance performed by the Basarwa minority residing in the Plumtree area of Zimbabwe, the Xibelani dance by the previously marginalised Tshonga/Shangani people of south-eastern Zimbabwe (also found in South Africa and Mozambique), the *Mafuwe* dance of the Korekore people from north-eastern Zimbabwe, and the Amantshomane dance from Matabeleland province, among many other important dances.

Jairos Gonye (Ph.D.)

Associate Professor,
Great Zimbabwe University.



PREFACE

Zimbabwe has ten provinces which are home to about 14 nationally recognized ethnicities. The different ethnic groups have different languages and cultures that inform their music and dances. The majority are the Shona who constitute about 82% of the population, while the second largest group are the Ndebele. The others are the Chewa, Kalanga, Nambya, Ndau, Sena, Sotho, Tshangani, Tsonga, Tswaa, Tswana, Venda, and Xhosa. Each ethnic group has a well-defined music and dance culture. Appreciation of the Zimbabwean music and dance heritage has suffered a setback in that the past and current researchers have not engaged in academic and scholarly endeavours to document and preserve the indigenous knowledge around them. Western civilisation continues to erode indigenous dance knowledge, skills and practices among the locals. The young generation has got a strong affinity for musical cultures from the west and that poses a grave threat to continuity of the indigenous dances. Regardless of the use of digital technology and the endorsement of music in education to preserve and document music and dance, the authenticity of published material about these dances remains in doubt due to a plethora of reasons. Funding towards academic research and documentation of music and dance in Zimbabwe has been problematic hence the lack of materials for use in education. For a long time, dance has been associated with profanity and some people shun performing and studying them. Most emic and etic researchers concentrate on music the sound and dance usually is left out. In this study emic researchers collaborated to produce this volume which is dedicated to the music and dance cultures of Zimbabwe. The focus of this book is to inform readers on the rich music and dance practices that Zimbabwe is endowed with. The dances that are performed by the people are presented in detail based on data from the culture bearers. This volume comes in handy for music and dance academics who have relied on information posted on the internet, some of which lacks authenticity. Recreations of some of these dances also have seen people choreograph them, removing the dances from their original contexts. This book chronicles Zimbabwean indigenous dances in their original contexts, attire, musical instruments, dance movements, the songs sung, as well as the continuity if change in their current state. The book covers some dances in Zimbabwe which have been marginalized since the colonial

era. The authors bring to the fore the role of men and women in the traditional and contemporary contexts. The book is envisaged to provide academic material for primary, secondary and tertiary study of music in Zimbabwe and beyond. The reality evident in the book is that dance and music are inseparable. Dance is musical in every sense as it wields an evocative power to cause body movement in response to music. We hope that this book provides thought provoking insights to maintain originality of dances, inform innovation, choreography, musicking and research in music and dance going forward.

This book showcases the authors' understanding of the dances and their differing abilities to bring these dances to life in various performance contexts ~ Jairos Gonye (Ph.D.), Great Zimbabwe University.

*Gonye (Ph.D.) Great Zimbabwe University:
dances to life in various performance contexts ~ Jairos
the dances and their differing abilities to bring these
This book showcases the authors' understanding of*



Introduction to Zimbabwe's Traditional Dances

Bridget Chinouriri, Wonder Maguraushe & Richard Muranda³

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3613-4743>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8710-2269>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9552-1591>

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is endowed with a rich and diverse music and dance heritage. This music and dance heritage is encapsulated in the many ethnic cultures among the people that reside in Zimbabwe. It is important to appreciate that there has been intra and inter cross-pollination of music and dance practices among the Zimbabwean ethnicities and the people from the neighbouring African nations. Some of these cross-cultural music and dance experiences have enriched the current musical practices as the people engage in different socio-cultural activities. The notable activities include music and dance ceremonies, rituals, festivals, competitions, and commemorations. Important to note is the fact that Zimbabwe has traces of music and dance experiences that reflect the cultural practices of a number of the neighbouring African nations. The countries whose music and dance has permeated into Zimbabwe's interior include Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia.

Some of these music and dance experiences have remained ingrained in the oral traditions of the people. The rich music and dance heritage and some of the innate practices connected to the people have gone without documentation to preserve the underlying legacies. Academic research that has been undertaken has not covered exhaustively the dance and musical heritage in Zimbabwe. This book presents Zimbabwe's indigenous music and traditional dance heritage. The book draws from a diverse range of music genres, dances and musical styles performed by different ethnic groups.

The chapters present critical issues that relate to traditional dances and their inherent musical heritage among the different people from different communities in Zimbabwe. The aim is to preserve and bring to the fore the various aspects that inform music and dance practices in Zimbabwe. The discourse largely articulates the involvement of the people in music and dance practices in the indigenous context. The content in each chapter also



Amantshomane Dance as a Manifestation of the Hunter Spirit

Shadreck Dzingayi

Great Zimbabwe University; sdzingayi@gzu.ac.zw

INTRODUCTION

Dance occupies a significant part of the heritage of a society, and when analysed, it narrates a people's way of life. Throughout history and across many cultures, societal life cycles have been reflected in traditional dance forms. Nzewi (2007), shares the idea that African dance, by its nature, is expressive through visual body poetry which instils a feeling of wholeness and portrays everyday issues. In this sense, dance is likened to a movie which can easily attract and influence an audience. When a person watches an interesting movie, it leaves lasting impressions on his/her mind (Hassam 2012). Similarly, the stories and images created by the *Amantshomane* dance appeal greatly to the Ndebele people to the extent that they can construe the messages conveyed and, accordingly, learn from them. However, there is scarcity of written, recorded, and systematically preserved information on Zimbabwean indigenous dances as lamented by Gwerevende (2019).

The chapter's main objective is to guarantee documentation and preservation of the already existing forms of indigenous dance such as the *Amantshomane*, which have survived the test of time but are on the verge of decaying and vanishing due to lack of carefully organised inquiry. This study responds to the need for ways that can be used in documenting the *Amantshomane* dance to preserve part of the Ndebele dance heritage. Moreover, the study will respond to why the documentation and packaging of the *Amantshomane* dance and music practices can be used to enhance and promote cultural tourism in Zimbabwe

The study is grounded within the functionalist theory as formulated by Auguste Comte which according to Tijime (2018) emphasises the role of dance as a functional and integrated element within the broader social structure of the indigenous community. Applied to the current study on *Amantshomane* dances, the functionalist theory involves examining how the indigenous dance serves specific functions within the broader social structure



Storytelling through *Beni Arinoti* Dance

Locardia Sango

Madziwa Teachers College; locsango@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance is an important aspect of Zimbabwean culture. It is an element of culture without which the Zimbabwean society may not fulfil its spiritual and emotional expressions. All physical movements, which are as a result of the emotional power of music which goes with the dance, are emotionally expressive. Dance is one of the most powerful artistic mediums to engage in or witness. The fact that traditional dances are a product of social construction explains why different dances that are performed in the country are associated with specific groups of people. Ethnic groups have different ways of expressing themselves through dance, governed by their history, beliefs and environment (Mahanda, 2015). Traditional dance is a social activity which is handed down from generation to generation through both informal and formal education (McLaren, 2001). It serves purposes that include teaching societal values, communicating with ancestors, reciting history and celebrating life in totality.

This chapter critically discusses the *Beni Arinoti* dance which is practised in Zimbabwe. The objective is to help people understand, appreciate, and tolerate the dance. From a cultural identity theory point of view, it is noted that *Beni Arinoti* is a traditional dance of Chewa/Yao origin. Telling a story through traditional dance is typical of Africans. Different traditional dances communicate different stories out of people's beliefs and experiences in life. Because of the years around which *Beni* dance was developed, some people think that the dance is a contemporary one. It is actually a traditional dance of the Yao people and it is centred around their experiences during the first and second world wars (Costello, 2013; Gondwe, 2018). When the dance was introduced in Zimbabwe, it was adopted as a traditional dance of Malawian origin. This is why the dance competes with other traditional dances at festivals such as Chibuku Neshamwari and Jikinya (Baureni, personal communication, 25 April 2020). A debate on the classification of the dance can be pursued. In this discourse, the dance is traditional as it is referred to by its originators.



Celebrating 'Tonganess' through *Chilimba* Dance

*Sanelisiwe Fredda Ngwalo*¹ & *Vimbai Chamisa*²

¹Midlands State University; sanengwalo1@gmail.com

²Midlands State University; chamisav@staff.msu.ac.zw

[Dance] is the scream which eases for a while the terrible frustrations common to all human beings who because of race, creed, or colour, are invisible. Dance is the fist with which I fight the sickening ignorance of prejudice ~ Primus cited by Gitens (2012, 50).

INTRODUCTION

The Tonga people, located in the north-western part of Zimbabwe near the Zambezi River, are one of the country's minority ethnic groups. Historically, the Tonga were an isolated community that maintained a traditional way of life, largely disconnected from the rest of Southern Rhodesia (Jonhera, 2022). This isolation contributed to their marginalisation, as dominant cultures such as the Shona and Ndebele exerted hegemonic influence, leading to subtle forms of cultural oppression (Mpfu & Salawu, 2008). While Zimbabwean indigenous music and dance have been widely studied, much of the existing scholarship focuses on Shona ethnic groups and, to some extent, Ndebele music traditions (see Berliner, 1978; Turino, 2000; Rutsate, 2007; Jones, 2008; Matiure, 2023). There is limited literature on Tonga indigenous music culture, leaving a significant gap in understanding their artistic expressions.

This study focuses on the *Chilimba* indigenous dance of the Tonga people, a celebratory dance that is central to their cultural identity. *Chilimba* is performed in various social contexts, including weddings, bride-welcoming ceremonies, and other communal gatherings. Despite its cultural significance, the dance remains understudied within ethnomusicology and Zimbabwean cultural studies. This study seeks to provide an in-depth account of the meaning and function of the *Chilimba* dance within Tonga culture, contributing to the broader discourse on Zimbabwe's marginalised communities.

The marginalisation of the Tonga people has extended to the academic sphere, where their cultural expressions, including music and dance, remain underrepresented in scholarly discourse. While dances such as *Isitshikitsha*,



Chinyambera Hunting and Gathering Dance

Selina Rangarirai

Dominican Convent School; selina@dominicanconvent.co.zw

INTRODUCTION

Traditional dances and music, which are integral to Zimbabwean cultural heritage, have been marginalized due to Christianity and the adoption of modern cultural trends. Dances are deeply rooted in history and ethnicity, exhibit rich authenticity through unique performances, intricate steps, rhythmic drumming, and distinctive props and costumes (Kwenda, 2015). However, modernity and digitalization have altered performance contexts, impacting their continuity and authenticity (Makaudze, 2018). This chapter focuses on the *Chinyambera* dance, a marginalized traditional dance of the Karanga people in Zimbabwe, exploring its historical context and modern relevance. The marginalization of *Chinyambera* dance could be attributed to the increasing influence of global cultures and the diminishing value placed on traditional practices. To memorialize and document *Chinyambera* dance for posterity, it is crucial to understand its origins, functions, and the changes it has undergone over time. This would provide a comprehensive understanding of its significance and the need for its preservation (Chitando, 2020). Therefore, this chapter aims to understand the origins, functions, and evolution of the *Chinyambera* dance, and to explore how this marginalized traditional dance can be documented and memorialized for future generations.

The theoretical framework of analysis used in this study of preservation of cultural practices underscored the importance of collective consciousness (Durkheim, 2021) about indigenous dance performances. If societal values shift away from those embodied by the *Chinyambera* dance, it could lose its societal relevance and gradually fade. However, it's crucial to remember that cultural practices can also adapt and evolve with societal shifts. Abolafia, Dodge and Jackson (2014) offer that culture is an interpretive system, with its practices serving as symbols that can be reinterpreted and reshaped in response to societal changes. Thus, while the *Chinyambera* dance is experiencing a decline and marginalization due to its foundational beliefs



Dinhe Harvest Celebration Dance of The Korekore

*Shadreck Dzingayi*¹ & *Tendai Muparutsa*²

¹Great Zimbabwe; sdzingayi@gzu.ac.zw

²Williams College; tm3@williams.edu

INTRODUCTION

Makwiringwindo, *Dinhe*, or *Katekwe* is a traditional dance performed by the Korekore people in Mashonaland Central and parts of Northern Zimbabwe. Groups from the Shona-speaking side of Zimbabwe perform or know about the mechanics of this dance. The writer uses the word *Dinhe* in this chapter for its simplicity. However, the dance and music style are known as *Dinhe* or *katekwe*, especially in popular culture. Although the dance's purpose tends to change over time, its significance and meaning among the Korekore remain the celebration of harvest, honouring ancestors, and asking for guidance (Muchinyakare, 2009). Hatitye (2015) classifies *Dinhe* as a religious dance performed to praise and invite ancestors to speak to the community. Omowoyela (2002) emphasises the religious angle by asserting that *Dinhe* traditional music and dance have a religious purpose of invoking spirit possession. It is a dance that depicts celebration in the culture after bumper harvests which are celebrated through powerful drumming, songs, chants, and fanfare in the community. In context, the dancing has no specific choreography, but dancers follow each other's sequences. Props include harvest items such as winnowing baskets, walking sticks, hoes, snuff boxes, and more. The vocabulary in this dance style is gender specific for men and women.

DINHE DANCE ORIGIN AND FUNCTION

Zimbabwean *Dinhe* dance is a communal activity that is largely performed by the Korekore speaking people based in Mashonaland Central in the Northern Zimbabwe area. Although their indigenous purposes tend to change over time, their meaning and significance are often preserved to celebrate harvest, honour ancestors, and ask for their guidance (Muchinyakare, 2009). According to Hatitye (2015), the *Dinhe* dance is classified as a religious dance that is performed to praise and invite the ancestors to speak to the community and is usually performed after the harvest season. After the planting and harvesting seasons, the Korekore of



The Inside Story of *Gule Wankulu* Dance of The Chewa

Phineas Magwati¹ & Taurai Mukege²

¹*Midlands State University; magwatiphineas@gmail.com*

²*Zimbabwe National Dance Company; mukegetau@gmail.com*

INTRODUCTION

Understanding of Chewa culture and practice is still very limited and distorted in Zimbabwe, despite the fact that *Gule Wankulu* dance is frequently watched through live festivals, ritual ceremonies and videos shared on social media platforms. Considering that *Gule Wankulu* dancers highly observe secrecy, social and cultural distance mainly against non-initiated members, it attracted a lot of unverified claims, myths and misconceptions from the general public. In Zimbabwe, *Gule Wankulu* ritual dance is corrupted to “*gure*” (singular, plural “*zvigure*”) by the Shona. There is scant academic research regarding the internal practices of *Gule Wankulu* tradition in Zimbabwe, thereby creating a gap in knowledge about this culture. *Gule Wankulu* dance is a practice of the *Chewa* people from Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique. However, besides Chewa language recently being recognised in Zimbabwe’s constitution, the worldview of *Chewa* people is still misconstrued and misinterpreted. This study is one of the interventions aiming to dispel misconceptions and superstitious stories associated with *Gule Wankulu* dance. This chapter explores what constitutes the Chewa worldview as embedded in *Gule Wankulu* dance culture. In this regard, different types of *Gule Wankulu* dance characters, the origin of the practice, purpose, norms and beliefs of the culture creators are unpacked.

CHEWA EPISTEMOLOGY

The Chewa are Bantu people (Wotela, 2010) who today are scattered but mainly located in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique (Daimon, 2007). Chewa people are informed by the ways of knowing broadly perceived as Nyau tradition. In this study the Nyau tradition is used interchangeably with *ChiChewa* epistemology. It is this kind of philosophy, worldview or cosmology which basically guides the *Chewa* people to believe in the spirits of the ancestors that manifest in different characters/forms called *zilombo* (wild animals) (Nthala, 2009; Daimon, 2007; Englund, 2002) as they dance for their living descendants (Curran, 1999). The Chewa community believes in



Ibhoru Dance of The Basarwa People

Eunice Zibani¹ & Wonder Maguraushe²

¹Midlands State University; zibanieunice@gmail.com

²Midlands State University; wondermaguraushe@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the *Ibhoru* music and dance of the *Basarwa* people. *Basarwa* people are one of the ethnic groups whose music is performed on the periphery of the country. The chapter explores this dance of the *Basarwa* people who relocated from across the border in Botswana to *Makhulela* area in Plumtree District of Matabeleland South Province in Zimbabwe. The researchers used qualitative methods to gather data from the culture custodians in order to come up with thick descriptions and analysis of the music and dance. The chapter brings the *Basarwa* people's music and dance to the world so that it is appreciated and preserved for future reference. It further explicates the *Ibhoru* dance of the *Basarwa* people with the aim of bringing it to the attention of the world. The also reviews works by some scholars who concur that the *Basarwa* people's music has long faced marginalisation. We are against this concept of exclusion and chronicle this dance so that more dancers participate in it.

Given that some of the participants in this study were illiterate, the oral tradition was preferred during data collection. It was again advantageous to get information through non-verbal communication because the respondents could also use gestures to stress points. Considering that the informants speak a different language from that spoken by the researchers, the theory of orality played a major role in getting the researchers to understand the San. The researchers also used philosophic sagacity to scrutinize the lives of the *Basarwa* people and their music. Some of the songs are transcribed and analysed. This theory was chosen because it is applicable to this research in that it calls for the researcher to speak with the elders of the San people who have rich information about a technique that explains phenomena.

Ethnographic research methods were used in order to observe, interview and record processes as they happened naturally in the field; the researchers spent a fair amount of time at the *Makhulela* site. The objective was to describe the musical activities of the *Basarwa*, so as to bring it into the existing scholarship



Imbube Dance Performances Across the Limpopo

Magdalene Fungai Zivengwa¹ & Wonder Maguraushe²

¹*Midlands State University; fungaizivengwa@gmail.com*

²*Midlands State University; wondermaguraushe@gmail.com*

INTRODUCTION

The 21st Century has witnessed a decline in cultural practices which include indigenous dances, music and performances as traditional African culture is being diversified through formal and informal instruction (Price, 2013). Traditional performances play a significant role in expressing and promoting culture in a world that is made up of people of different ethnic backgrounds. Indigenous people from African societies perform music and dances inspired by their culture which is defined by Aziza (2001: 31) as “... the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people.” However, indigenous music and dance performances are being influenced by alien cultures; both African and Western. In post-independent Zimbabwe, cultural and social changes are taking place on a global scale leading to a decline in the performance of traditional music and dance activities in African indigenous societies. Therefore, this chapter discusses the *Imbube* music and dance performance practices from a cultural identity theoretical standpoint.

This research adopted a qualitative research design in which ethnographic data collection methods of interviews, observation and document analysis were employed to gather information about *Imbube* dance. Qualitative research is a form of social action that stresses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals. Gentles et al. (2015) define qualitative research as the observations and interpretations of people’s perceptions of different events. The design was appropriate for this research because it helped beget a true reflection of the people’s perception of *Imbube* music and dance in a natural set up. It allowed the researchers to observe *Imbube* music and dance performances at grassroots level.

This chapter explains the etymology of *Imbube* music, tracing its origins and discussing the dance steps that accompany the music style. The authors further discuss how it spread from the country of origin to other parts of the world, paying specific attention to *Imbube* as it is practised in Zimbabwe. A



Exploring *Ingquzu* Dance: Culture and Identity

Weston Chimbudzi

Midlands State University; chimbudziw@staff.msu.ac.zw

INTRODUCTION

Dancing is a response to musical stimulation and excitement. It is also a demonstration of suppleness. In cultural contexts certain dances define gender. Dance is also a platform to demonstrate fertility. Most African dances depict the culture of a people including their daily activities such as hunting, farming, harvesting, as well as their religious beliefs (Onwuekwe, 2009). However, due to the passage of time and external influences from other cultures particularly from the West, some of the dances are no longer context-specific hence they can be used at any occasion and gatherings where people hang out. The *Ingquzu* dance is no exception to the vicissitudes ushered in by the dynamic cultural settings epitomized by modernity and cultural evolution.

This chapter sheds light on *Ingquzu* dance to broaden understanding of its cultural underpinnings and descriptors which underpin and define it. The dance is highly regarded among the Ndebele-speaking people. There is limited literature to give insights about this dance. It appears not much academic attention has been dedicated to capture and preserve the dance. In view of that the culture bearers and dance participants have taken the dance for granted as they have continued to enjoy it during performances without documenting facts about it for posterity. It is against this background that this chapter provides the *Ingquzu* dance biopic to preserve the dance and educate the current and future generations on what constitutes the dance and its cultural significance.

In a quest to analyse *Ingquzu* dance, I adopted the perspective of the sociological theory which holds that the nature of society can be understood by collecting data and analysing it (Main, 2023). I employed the qualitative approach founded on data collected from informants who are from the Ndebele society. Data was collected through purposive sampling (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024) where I targeted those individuals who were deemed to be knowledgeable enough and appropriately placed to give reliable information



Unpacking *Isitshikitsha* Dance of The Ndebele

Mercy Kayumba

Midlands State University; kayumbamercy@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed background of *Isitshikitsha* dance, focusing on its historical background and its significance to its society of origin. The music, dance movements, spirituality, costumes as well as the context in which the dance was performed is highlighted in this chapter. *Isitshikitsha* is a dance that has its roots in the Ndebele people of Matabeleland. The Ndebele people's origins can be traced back to the 19th century. As presented by Nyathi (2001), the Ndebele people are an offshoot of the Nguni people of KwaZulu Natal South Africa. The Ndebele people left KwaZulu-Natal between 1820-1823 and fled to Lesotho led by their founding king Mzilikazi, who was the son of Matshobana Khumalo of the Ntungwa ethnic group. Upon further defeat between 1837 and 1840, Mzilikazi and his followers moved Northwards and settled in the Southwestern part of Zimbabwe in 1860 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). The South-western part of Zimbabwe is called Matabeleland.



Jukwa Rain Asking Dance of The Karanga

Phineas Magwati¹, Beauty Dengu² & Philemon Manatsa³

¹Midlands State University; *magwatiphineas@gmail.com*

²Great Zimbabwe University; *b01dengu@gmail.com*

³University of Zimbabwe; *philmanatsa@gmail.com*

INTRODUCTION

Jukwa dance practised by the Karanga of Zimbabwe in Masvingo Province is minimally mentioned and discussed in scholarly and academia space. However, among the Karanga *Jukwa* is a spiritual dance performed during a rain asking ceremony. Available literature connecting the Karanga with *mukwerera/ mutoro*, a rain asking community gathering, is mostly confined to *Mhande* dance culture. This state of affairs creates the impression as if *Mhande* and *Jukwa* are terms that mean one and the same dance. Yet, in the Karanga context, *Jukwa* is a distinct and standalone dance. Despite the relatedness and commonality of the two dance traditions, *Jukwa* and *Mhande*, it is the latter that received a fair scholarly discussion, (Gwerevende, 2022, 2019; Chamisa, 2017; Ngara, 2014; Rutsate, 2011,2010, 2007; Manatsa, 2006). With this scholarship understating *Jukwa* as an outright dance, it is discussed as a component of *Mhande* dance. Such perception has been realised through interviews and discussions done physically and on WhatsApp platforms. Despite being perceived as a dance, it is interesting to note that for the Karanga people of *Nemanwa*, *Jukwa* [singular] *maJukwa* [plural] refer(s) to: i). the great spirits of the community, ii). music style/ genre, and iii). A sequence, repeated patterns of movements to which to them is a dance, for rain- asking. This chapter, through an ethnographic, qualitative study, seeks to get accurate views regarding the status of *Jukwa* in the Karanga community. It is the argument of this chapter therefore that in cultural aspects, similarity does not constitute sameness. As such, disregarding the closeness and relatedness of *Jukwa* to a better *Mhande* cultural practice in various aspects, ~~the~~ former equally requires scholarly attention and scrutiny as a discrete Karanga cultural practice.

This study is grounded in and framed with Karanga cosmology as it attempts to address questions that include; i) What is *Jukwa* in the Karanga context? ii) In what ways is *Jukwa* either similar or different to *Mhande*? iii) How is *Jukwa* performed? And iv). To what extent is *Jukwa* a Karanga culture creation?



Mafuwe Rain-Making Dance of The Korekore

Wonder Maguraushe¹, Weston Chimbudzi² & Richard Muranda³

¹Midlands State University; *wondermaguraushe@gmail.com*

²Midlands State University; *chimbudziw@staff.msu.ac.zw*

³Midlands State University; *murandar@staff.msu.ac.zw*

INTRODUCTION

Dance is an important aspect of Zimbabwean culture, tradition, spirituality, and history. Many dances reflect the culture of the people, these include *Mafuwe* dance that is perched in the northern parts of the country on the borders with Zambia and Mozambique. The *Mafuwe* dance may have changed over the years. Ethnic diversity is also a key factor in influencing the traditional dances of the Zimbabwean ethnic cultures. *Mafuwe* is a dance which is self-reflective for the entire community where it is performed because music and dance are communally owned. *Mafuwe* dance is spiritual, a powerful means that carries traditions, chronicles, and embodies the important events of the history and culture of the ethnic groups that perform it. The chapter presents a study on *Mafuwe* dance as a heritage for people in parts of Mozambique, Zambia, and the north and north-eastern Zimbabwe. The study placed a focus on the traditional ritual and contemporary contexts of *Mafuwe* dance.

The study was qualitative in nature and employed ethnographic data collection methods. The researchers conducted participant observation and informal conversational interviews in Dotito, Mukumbura and Kaitano to gather information from the Korekore/Budya people in Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East of Zimbabwe. This is so because the researchers find value in the emic perspectives of the people who perform the dance in the culture where it originates. The study analysed *pasichigare* (pre-colonial period) and contemporary contexts and songs used in the *Mafuwe* dances. Literature review and netnography worked to augment the primary data so as to achieve triangulation through document and video analysis of material available about *Mafuwe* dance on the internet.

This chapter presents a discussion on *Mafuwe* dance in the light of the agents of change as mentioned above. The study adopts the cultural identity theory



Mbakumba Harvest Dance of The Karanga

Shadreck Dzingayi

Great Zimbabwe University; sdzingayi@gzu.ac.zw

INTRODUCTION

Music and ceremonies are often intertwined that it is difficult to separate the two and the timing for rituals also serves as an important music event (Kaemmer, 1993: 69). There are three major types of rituals and they often involve the use of music. These are the cylindrical, crisis and rites of passage rituals (Kaemmer, 1993). From the categorization of ceremonies, *Mbakumba* songs and dance harvest ceremonial process falls under the rite of cylindrical ceremonies. The interesting feature in relation to *Mbakumba* harvest ceremonial process, is that, the meaning given to the various parts of the ceremony are reflected in the songs, thus music is a very important part of such ceremonies, because it marks the division between the stages of ritual, Asante (1994: 67). *Mbakumba* traditional dance speaks for itself. It is a living embodied memory that has the power to transgress, transform, transport, transcend, and transmit, yet most of its intellectual property remains unresearched. In the context of this study traditional dance refers to the cultural phenomenon that is visually, psychologically and physically communicated as a nonverbal message. The body is used as a tool to convey its messages through movements which have been passed down from generation to generation. It is fully appreciated in relationship with the people's traditions and culture. This scholarship contribution will help the researcher to probe for meaning from the *mbakumba* songs and dance in the context of harvest celebration, as the Karanga people interpret the mythological and symbolism in the *mbakumba* songs and dance.

Indigenous dances serve as emotive images of cultural identity, preserving and expressing the 'spirit' of a community heritage. For this reason, the study adopts the cultural identity theory attributed to Stuart Hall and Anthony Smith which according to Bo Yang (2021) underscores the significance of cultural expressions in shaping, preserving and transmitting the unique identity of indigenous communities. The theory claims that cultural identity is created through shared symbols, practices and chronicles. In context to *Mbakumba* dance, the cultural identity theory is applied to provide a



From the Past to the Present: *Mbende* as an Enactment of Courtship, Socialisation and Resistance

Wonder Maguraushe¹ & Solomon Gwerevende²

¹Midlands State University; wondermaguraushe@gmail.com

²Dublin City University; sologwedza@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Dance is an important aspect of Zimbabwean culture, tradition, spirituality, and history. Many Indigenous dances reflect the culture of the people, these include *Mbende* (also known as Jerusarema) of the Zezuru people in parts of Mashonaland East Province, such as Murehwa, Uzumba, Maramba and Pfungwe districts in the north-eastern part of Zimbabwe. Ethnic diversity is a key factor in influencing dance traditions of the Indigenous Zimbabwean communities. The dance's curious name reveals much about its vicissitudes over the centuries. *Mbende* is a Zezuru Shona word for "mole", which is regarded as a symbol of fertility, sexuality and family (UNESCO, 1992; Gwerevende and Rwaendepi, 2019, Mataga, 2008). The performance of *Mbende* is self-reflective for the entire community where it is performed because music and dance are communally owned. *Mbende* dance is spiritual, a powerful means that carries traditions, chronicles, and embodies the important events of the history and culture of the Budja/Korekore ethnic groups that perform it. Research on *Mbende* has been done by several scholars to date. Ethnochoreologists Gwerevende and Rwaendepi (2019) inform that *Mbende* is a couple dance of the Zezuru people in Mashonaland East province. Mataga (2008) traces the history of *Mbende* Indigenous dance, as a form of tangible cultural heritage, Ravengai (2010) explores the suppression of dance cultural performance by the British colonial government in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe from 1890-1950 with specific reference to *Mbende* dance. This chapter relies on these studies to make an original contribution to the study of *Mbende* by explicitly focusing on its performance as an enactment of Zezuru courtship and socialisation in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

The *Mbende* dance still survives despite the many changes that have seen the traditional purpose skewed toward some traces of western influences. Following the introduction of Christianity through colonisation, Indigenous cultural events involving music and dance were deemed pagan, evil, and



Mbira DzaVadzimu during Kurova Guva Ritual

Perminus Matiure

University of Namibia; pmatiure@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The ontological and epistemological premises that guide the African indigenes are characterised by mythological idioms and ritualism. Some of the African cultures have persisted because of their strong belief in ancestry. They believe that their forefathers have the power to look after them in their spiritual essence. They also believe that their ancestors are the intermediaries between them and their greatest ancestor who they refer to with different names. The Shona community of Zimbabwe is no exception. They also hold the same philosophy of ancestry. Their ancestors are called *midzimu* and their greatest ancestor is *Mwari*. Some writers mistake the Shona *Mwari* for the Christian God. The two may not necessarily be the same. Evidence is shown by how these two great forces are venerated as shall be discussed in this chapter. The Shona believe that *Mwari* is the ultimate creator and controller of the whole universe as stipulated by the names *Musiki* (Creator) and *Nyadenga* (Owner of the universe). To maintain their relationship with *Mwari*, the Shona occasionally organise sacred ceremonies (*mapira*) meant to create a dialogue with the ancestors through spirit mediums (*masvikiro*). During these all-night ceremonies, music plays a pivotal role. The most efficacious music that has the power to evoke ancestral spirits is *mbira* music performed on *mbira dzaVadzimu* (The *mbira* of ancestors).

This chapter interrogates the efficacy of *mbira dzaVadzimu* during the all-night *mapira* ceremonies. Particular focus is on *kurova guva* ritual of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. On one hand, *Kurova guva* is one of the rituals that have survived the superimposition by exogenous forces upon the Shona religious beliefs and practices. These forces include Christianity, digitalisation, and rural-to-urban migration (Avorgbedor, 1992; Lagakos et al, 2023). On the other hand, *mbira dzaVadzimu* is one of the instruments that has the power to attract the attention of the ancestors and *Mwari*. The two Shona cultural heritages, *kurova guva* and *mbira dzaVadzimu* have all the reasons to be researched because of their transcendent role throughout the Shona cosmology. The whole discussion around the *mbira* instrument and its music



Karanga Culture Portrayal through *Mhande* Dance

Locardia Sango

Madziwa Teachers College; locsango@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has a rich cultural heritage in the form of indigenous dances. These dances are an important aspect of people's culture. Zimbabwe is a multi-cultural society which comprises many ethnic groups such as Karanga, Zezuru, Ndau and Korekore. The reason for the wide variety that exists in these dances lies in ethnic diversity. Each of these ethnic groups has its own history, beliefs, values and political significance among other cultural pillars. The above listed are key factors in influencing dance styles since indigenous dances reflect some of the cultural practices of a people (Asante, 2000). Before the dances were institutionalized, ethnic groups had specific dances which they performed. Therefore, the dances served as ethnic identities. Nowadays because of cultural interactions, any dance can be performed by anyone in any part of the country.

This chapter presents a *Mhande* dance biopic as reported by its culture bearers of Masvingo Province. This study attempts to help people understand the dance in its totality for appreciation purposes. From a cultural identity theory perspective, it is argued that *Mhande* dance has its origins in Masvingo Province among the Karanga people. However, due to factors such as inter-marriages and migration, the dance was introduced to other parts of the country which include the Midlands.

This study employed an ethnographic paradigm in which qualitative data was gathered using face to face interviews with a purposefully selected sample. The snowball sampling technique was also used to identify other rich sources of data. Twelve participants, eight males and four females took part in the study. Amongst them were *Mhande* dance performers, chiefs, *masvikiro*, *mbonga*, *manyusa* and *makombwe* of Masvingo Province and culture exponents from Midlands Province.

The first section presents the historical background of the dance, followed by its purpose, processes involved, participants and instruments and props used in the dance. Attire for the dance is discussed followed by a description of the



Muchongoyo War Dance of The Ndau

Richard Muranda¹ & Weston Chimbudzi²

¹Midlands State University; murandar@staff.msu.ac.zw

²Midlands State University; chimbudziw@staff.msu.ac.zw

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we delve into the Muchongoyo traditional dance as an ethnic practice of the culture bearers in the eastern districts of Chimanimani and Chipinge in Manicaland in Zimbabwe. Since independence there has not been concerted academic research to cover Muchongoyo traditional dance. In view of the above said issues the study intends to avail literature on Muchongoyo as a way to preserve the existing music and dance heritage of the Ndau people as the indigenes who practice Muchongoyo dance.

We engage a cultural preservation theory according to Jeffers (2015) and Idris et al, (2016) to advance the conservation and preservation of our Zimbabwean intangible heritage. Preservation of musical heritage takes the model of a living archive which thrives on physical involvement of the people in preserving the cultural practices among the people within the society. We engage and participate in documenting information relating to Muchongoyo through writing in the form of written texts, coupled with illustrations, transcriptions and graphics. The work also takes into account the forces of emerging technologies in view of how they affect continuity and change of practices of Muchongoyo dance.

Our methodology is a culmination of qualitative and desktop research coupled with literature survey and participant observation of the Ndau culture bearers in their engagements in the Muchongoyo dance (Negou et al., 2023). Through semi-structured interviews, we gathered relevant data for the study. We triangulate the information gathered among the participants since they come from different parts of Zimbabwe in Chimanimani, and Chipinge areas. We also cite the lived experiences of the people and discuss what they imply in view of Muchongoyo.

In the chapter we present a historical overview of Muchongoyo traditional dance in the context of the Ndau people. A chronicle of the developmental



Xibelani Recreational Dance of The Tshangani

Tariro Claris Muungani¹ and Richard Muranda²

¹Morgenster Teachers College; tcmuungani@gmail.com

²Midlands State University; murandar@staff.msu.ac.zw

INTRODUCTION

Dance plays a pivotal role in the history and culture of any African country that includes Zimbabwe. There is a need to protect and preserve the traditional dances for present and future generations. Most of the traditional Music and dances in Zimbabwe are orally transmitted and there is need to preserve them through writing down for cultural identity and preservation. The study is qualitative research embedded in Afrocentrism theory. The research involved so many participants who were randomly sampled male and female structured interviews were administered and document analysis was done for recorded dances and articles downloaded on Xibelani traditional dance of the Shangani people. Findings show that the dance originated in Mozambique and South Africa. The dance had some characteristics that adhere to cultural norms and practices in terms of dressing, body practices and songs. The study also establishes that there is cultural distortion due to forces of the western culture on continuity of indigenous music and dances in Zimbabwe. There is a need to continue promoting and preserving the Zimbabwe traditional dances through festivals and also recording the dances for present and future generations, further studies are recommended for the preservation of another traditional dance by documenting them.

Music and dance play a very important role to preserve culture, relay history and maintain identity in Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans are proud of their culture and they strive to preserve it at all costs. Music and dance depend on the situation that it can be defined in Zimbabwean context. It can be there on happy occasions or sad occasions as a form of entertainment. It depicts the mood of the presenter. There are ethnic groups in Zimbabwe which have different cultures and dances. The Shona, Ndebele, Shangani, Tonga, Kalanga and others. They have different ethnic dances in this presentation, the Shangani are being considered with their Xibelani dance. The chapter will unfold the Introduction, background of Xibelani dance, cultural significance



Zvipunha: The unsung Ritual Dance of The Karanga

Sarudzai Dube¹ & Claudio Chipendo²

¹*Morgenster Teachers College; sarudube14@gmail.com*

²*Midlands State University; chipendoc@staff.msu.ac.zw*

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the *zvipunha* dance of the Karanga people in Msindazi Village, Mberengwa. It examines the dance's historical background, societal role, musical elements, props, movements, and instrumentation. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks guiding the study are discussed.

Zvipunha is a traditional ritual dance of the Karanga people, a distinct subgroup within Zimbabwe's Shona civilization whose history dates to the 10th century (Beach, 1970; Turino, 2002). Archaeological evidence shows that the Karanga played a central role in the Great Zimbabwe civilization, developing sophisticated socio-political structures under mambo (royal chiefs) and makombwe (spirit mediums) who blended political and spiritual governance (Matiure, 2019). The Karanga's spiritual life centered on midzimu (ancestral veneration). This found expression in rituals like bira (spirit possession), kurova guva (homecoming), and mukwerera (rainmaking ceremonies) (Gelfand, 1970), the cultural foundation from which *zvipunha* emerged as a sacred dance bridging the physical and spiritual realms. To date, the Karanga remain concentrated in Zimbabwe's Mberengwa, Masvingo and Midlands provinces (Makamure & Vengesai, 2015). Despite colonial disruptions and the impacts of the Mfecane period, they have preserved core traditions while adapting to changing circumstances. The endangered *zvipunha* dance embodies this cultural resilience, serving both as a living connection to Karanga spiritual heritage and as a vulnerable artifact of indigenous identity in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

Zvipunha dance is particularly practiced in Msindazi Village, Mberengwa. It is performed by individuals believed to be possessed by ancestral spirits (*midzimu* or *zvipunha* spirits) associated with fertility, healing, and dance mastery. As a vital form of cultural expression, *zvipunha* preserves spiritual beliefs, history, and traditions, serving both ritualistic and entertainment purposes among the Karanga people of Mberengwa. However, the dance



Zimbabwean Traditional Dances in North America

Tendai Muparutsa

Williams College-USA; tm3@williams.edu

INTRODUCTION

The USA and Canada are large multicultural, cosmopolitan societies that are welcoming and are home to many other cultures besides their own. Many cultural dances from different parts of the world are finding their roots and are surviving in a competitive performative arena. African dances have made inroads into these societies, and some communities have developed thriving performance groups that exclusively perform African dances. Further, camps and significant college ensembles have and continue to emerge, which has elevated such styles to a higher level. The reception and consumption of African dances have grown for a while to the point that they have become significant areas of study in colleges and universities. Zimbabwean dances, in particular, are fascinating due to their arrival and dissemination dynamics. Women are attracted to West African dances, such as those from Guinea, Mali, and Ivory Coast, to mention a few. Young people up to high school, of those in the Zimbabwean music community, are drawn to marimba as older participants spend time with mbira music. Zimbabwean dance is present and alive, surviving in such a crowded arena. The methodology utilized an eclectic utilisation of ethnography/ or participant observation, review of related literature, and interviews. This discussion establishes the position of Zimbabwean dance and music in North American society.

DANCE OF THE OTHER IN THE US

The United States and Canada are massive countries that are multicultural and inclusive. Performance groups are multicultural, reflecting an acceptance in these countries. In this discussion, the writer leans into the theory of cultural relativism as it guides the line of discussion and prepares the target audience to be open-minded. Cole (2020), Tilley (2000), and Johnson (2007) state that cultural relativism is a notion that respects the knowledge, values, and behaviour of other groups. People have to appreciate a culture for its own sake. Dance of the Other found its way in this space due to travel. People from different parts of the world are found in this space and they bring their own cultures. Academics such as researchers, performers, adventurers, interracial



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