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A Review of the Sociocultural Roles of Traditional Musical Arts in Xhosa Society

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Abstract

Traditional musical Arts are culturally crafted art forms in and from a particular ethnic group. It is widely recognised that in Africa, traditional music plays an integral part in people's lives and life cycles. An important characteristic of African music is its cultural function, as the various stages of the life cycle of an individual are observed commemorated with the performance of traditional music. This is also apparent in the Xhosa culture. The purpose of this article is to depict the socio-cultural, and religious functions that traditional musical arts holds in the Xhosa culture. In particular, this article discusses Xhosa traditional music, in the context of African traditional music. The discussion depicts the various functions of the music, including religious, social, cultural, ritual, and moral, and that this music is also used to appease or elicit favours from the ancestors. These functions and the value of music, furthermore, inform the African way of life, and traditional musical arts performance has a major impact on the life cycle of various African peoples. To present this information, a qualitative approach was used in this article to interrogate the rich content and narrative(s) of the Xhosa people's experience as well as the understanding of the value of traditional music in this society. This approach was chosen as it offers the opportunity for an in-depth analysis of existing literatures pertaining to African music traditions.

Keywords: sociocultural; traditional; Xhosa; music

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INTRODUCTION

Music and dance have always been a part of everyday life in and across African societies. Indeed, African cultures are often defined by their music, which is unique to a community, and forms part of various aspects of their lives (Obaje, 2018). This kind of communal music consists of sounds created by indigenous African instruments, such as the drum, flute, gong, rattles, and bell, as well as singing (Mbaegbu, 2015). The drum is the most common instrument used in African traditional music performance. Other instruments that are used for performance, are inclusive chordophones, membranophones, aerophones, and idiophones. Across the African continent there is diversity with respect to materials and methods of construction, materials, structures, size, playing, and tuning techniques (Karolyi, 1998; Kubik, 2010; Obaje, 2018).

The core principle of music performance in African cultures, according to Obaje (2018), is that music creation involves participation as a group, which helps to bring people together for a common goal (Berliner, 1993). Musical activities are, thus, an integral part of everyday life in most African communities. According to Ife (1993), African communities are strongly rooted in traditional music, and these communities understand the holistic nature of music's rhythm as it relates to the type or place of performance (Obaje, 2018). Similarly, Okpala (1996, cited in Nnamani, 2019) posits that music in African society forms the centre of life, which gives human life meaning, and makes existence worthwhile. Music is, therefore, always present in African society, as it permeates all human conditions.

Of further note is that both music and dance, according to James (2000), are important aspects of African life and culture, as they contribute to societal integration by expressing social group dynamics, reinforcing morals, propagating ideals, and creating group cohesion. Traditional African music, is therefore a means for instilling societal values and knowledge into the lives of individuals within a community through its performance. For example, traditional Xhosa music is a medium for learning about the history and cultural traditions of the Xhosa tribe. Music in African societies is also used in folk tales to warn, praise, or entertain (Nnamani, 2014). However, some music in African societies, including in the Xhosa culture, is purely for entertainment purposes.

Traditional music in African communities also reflects the people's cultural existence, as depicted through song lyrics. In the African context, music and dance are interconnected and separate from other art forms. Traditional music, is also based on the spoken language. Hence, it provides a form of communication that enables the expression of emotions, beliefs, and other reactions. Such music also serves a variety of purposes, including rituals and secular activities for recreation and entertainment. Since music and dance are interwoven, one cannot easily separate traditional song lyrics from a people's culture, as culture also determines religious beliefs. These beliefs, in turn, are expressed during cultural events or ceremonies, and they serve to unite the community. In all, then, traditional African music serves as a means of expressing a people's culture (Obaje, 2018).

Music and dance also serve to assist communities in overcoming challenges. For example, *Hoso amabiza* music and dance is usually performed by the Ndebele people in Zimbabwe when there are problems in the community. The dance helps the community cope with anxieties, problems and challenges the community has. Examples of challenges could be lack of rain or drought (Impey & Nussbaum, 1996). In other parts of Africa, according to Nnamani (2014),

music forms an important part of culture and plays a major role in promoting individual spontaneity and voluntary participation in society. He states further that, music and dance can also be seen as an obligation imposed on an individual in a community as a type of identifier of their membership in a socio group, or a responsibility according to the role that they have in the community (Nnamani, 2014).

In any African society, music is seen as a natural phenomenon, because it forms an essential expression of life, following the life cycle of the individual. These begin with lullabies for babies and continues into childhood and young adulthood, with moonlight games songs and songs and dances associated with being an adult. All rites of passage, celebrations, such as christening, initiation, and other celebrations associated with adulthood, and eventually death are all accompanied by musical arts (Onwuekwe, 2009).

According to Manford (2007), African traditional music is a powerful tool of communicating and expressing the thoughts that individuals nurture in their minds (e.g., their feelings, norms and values, and general life). Music and dance are also inseparable in most African societies, as they complement one another in reminding community members of ethical behaviour and moral values of their culture (Ebeli, 2016). The musical arts serves the purpose of establishing cultural unity and also establish their uniqueness as a cultural group.

Another distinctive element of African music is the vast range of singing and dance styles, which are difficult to comprehend and appreciate for people unfamiliar with the heritage (Nnamani, 2014). Nnamani (2019), for example, states that this variation is due, in part, to linguistics, as many African songs reflect the many language groups' speech patterns, including common aspects of speech like rhythm and intonation. African people, thus, rely on music to communicate both within and outside of their communities (Lebaka, 2019). Tradition enables Africans to make the connection between the past, present, and future (Nnamani, 2014). The sound of African music, then, symbolises the bond between these different times (Nnamani, 2019).

Generally, in African traditional society, music is culture, and it is through music that other cultural milieu within a society can be given significance (Onwuekwe, 2009). Thus, through the performance of traditional music, cultural signifiers such as myths, spirits, culture, and the elements of the living and the departed are placed on the same level of activity and interaction; music is therefore given a mystical aspect (Nnamani, 2019; Lebaka, 2019; Enekwe, 1999; Adegbite, 1991). There is also the belief that supernatural beings originally taught and inspired music performers (Idamoyibo, 2011).

With specific reference to the Xhosa culture, music in traditional Xhosa society accordingly forms one of the most crucial aspects of their indigenous culture, as within this society, songs are often performed as part of rituals for specific occasions (Hansen, 1981; Hunter, 1964; Stinson, 1998). For example, during initiation ceremonies, songs are sung by boys in honour of their peers who are going to the initiation school. These songs according to Gulwai, (2007) are also often used to correct undesirable behaviours amongst these youths during the ceremony. Additionally, Dowling and Stinson (2011) posit that, music is integral to Xhosa traditional healing practices, as musical performance led by the diviner and supported by participating attendees is necessary for the success of a healing ritual.

Despite the strong association of music to culture, many traditional African societies, including the traditional Xhosa society, have, according to Sibani (2018), been increasingly

influenced by other cultures (most notably the Western culture). This external influence has led many young people in traditional African cultures into a state of confusion about what 'norms' to follow (Gulwai, 2007). Such confusion, in turn, has led many such youth to lose much, if not all, of their traditional music heritage (Gulwai, 2007). So, there seems to be an urgent need for revival of the traditional musical arts in the Xhosa communities. At the same time, there is also a need to highlight the socio-cultural role of musical arts in Xhosa society for the current and future generations and making them aware of the cultural roles traditional musical arts play in their society.

Research objectives

Based on the problems highlighted above, this article aims to document the traditional musical arts of the Xhosa culture, by discussing the societal value of traditional musical art forms.

Background of the Xhosa People

The Xhosa people, according to Manyang (2019), are the second largest ethnic group in South Africa. Historically, the Xhosa people inhabited the Southern Cape region of South Africa. This area is inclusive of the cities of Cape Town, East London, and Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), as well as the areas of the former Transkei and Ciskei (Magopeni, 2012). Bongela (2001), reminds us that today Xhosa people do not only live in the Eastern Cape, but are spread throughout South Africa. However, the province of the Eastern Cape has been identified as a traditional area for heritage purposes. Furthermore, isiXhosa is the main language spoken in the Eastern Cape, which is a region, where traditional Xhosa culture has been practised for centuries (Bongela, 2001).

According to Gulwai (2007), one of the primary elements of Xhosa cultural identity that has been documented over the years is the interrelationship between the Xhosa and Khoisan peoples; the latter of whom were the first inhabitants of South Africa (Secorun, 2018). The music and linguistic, as well as socio-cultural links between the Xhosa and Khoisan exist due to an assimilation of the Khoisan culture into the Xhosa culture through practices such as intermarriage and subjugation (Gulwai, 2007; Campbell, 1974).

This article will show the relationship between Xhosa culture and the sociocultural role of traditional musical arts as practiced by the Xhosa people and reveal the cultural events that represents the Xhosa people existence and way of life. According to Ntshinga (1993), the Xhosa people celebrate each stage in the human life cycle with traditional musical arts performance.

METHODOLOGY

In indigenous Africa, traditional musical arts create an avenue of religious nature for engaging with cultural practices (Nzewi, 2007). According to Akuno (2000), musical arts are knotted in social and communal ceremonies that are understood and practiced by a community. As such, the sociocultural theory was adopted for this study. The focus of the sociocultural perspective is primarily placed on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organised activities have in a culture (Scott & Palincsar, 2013). As a human activity, musical arts performance involves members of the society in various circumstances and roles. Thus, the sociocultural theory was deemed appropriate for this study, as it enabled the exploration of the music, culture, heritage, and identity of the Xhosa people and, thereby, contributed to a better understanding of the sociocultural role of musical arts in Xhosa society,

as communalism, because traditional musical arts occur within a communal setting, which helps to shape understandings of the sociocultural roles of musical arts in Xhosa culture.

Akuno (2000) states that traditional musical arts are communal cultural activities providing socio-cultural significance to the community that practices it. Traditional musical arts are conceived of as a symbolic expression of culture, as the result of which wider connotations are attached to its musical components.

Since this article focuses on realistic issues associated with music (i.e., values, meanings, experiences, and cultural functions), as presented within the traditional music of Xhosa society, it was deemed best to apply the qualitative research method. This research method necessitates the precise descriptions of the roles and functions of traditional music and dance in Xhosa culture because this requires detailed descriptions that are best achieved through qualitative methods (Obaje, 2018). Patton (2005) posits that, qualitative methods are concerned with the ways in which individuals create, interpret, and give meaning to their cultural practices. A qualitative method, therefore, enabled the researchers to engage more fully in the rich cultural content and narrative(s) of the Xhosa people's musical practices. In so doing, it was possible to establish a better understanding of the significance of traditional music within the Xhosa society, based on an in-depth literature probe of data obtained through observation, participant observation and interviews.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Value of music in the Xhosa culture

Traditional musical arts are performed as part of social life and is used to communicate cultural messages (Mpola, 2007). Thus, the use of culturally appropriate traditional music serves as a major means to create social cohesion, promote good behaviour, and to impart moral and ethical values (Lebaka, 2019; Gregory, 1997). Musical instruments such as *igubu* (drums), *amafahlawana* (leg and hand rattles), and *impempe* (whistles) are mainly used during cultural and religious rituals, as well as during social ceremonies and celebrations (Gulwai, 2007). Indigenous Xhosa songs are also generally communally composed to local tunes, and they are often accompanied by dancing and the clapping of hands.

African scholars have highlighted the fact that traditional music is so deeply rooted in African culture that it has become an integral part of their everyday life. Additionally, Africans are sensitive to music and dance which dominates their lives and are one of the cultural characteristics that make the African who they are as a distinct cultural being in the world, for it binds Africans together and gives them common characteristics (Mbaegbu, 2015).

As noted previously, this article focuses on both the function and sociocultural role of Xhosa traditional music as part of the traditional African music genre. This article also considers the role of the musical arts in Xhosa culture, as well as the sociocultural values of Xhosa traditional music in the culture. The article further explores the various ceremonies wherein Xhosa traditional musical arts are performed, along with the Xhosa people's involvement and participation in these cultural events. According to Deplu (2009), Xhosa indigenous song performance is naturally tied to the socio-cultural events for which it is created. The Xhosa even have a saying, "*Ngaphandle kombhiyozo akukho kwambela*" ("Without the events, no music is produced") (Deplu, 2009).

The word *ihlombe* signifies the mystical feeling induced by the traditional music created by and in the Xhosa culture (Cilliers, 2019). Traditional music and dance provide the satisfying

benefit of healing; the collective performance at a ceremony or events invokes an elevated state of mental and physical elation, *ihlombe*, among the people (Faxi-Lewis, 2003).

Traditional music is also one of the most prolific aspects of the Xhosa culture that produces excitement within the broader Xhosa society (Hansen, 1981; Hunter, 1964; Stinson, 1998). The performer and audience are both sensitive to the music performance and respond on both physical and psychological levels. Receptiveness is crucial to the success of any traditional healer, because both the ritual setting and the musical content, including song and dance, provide the context for *ihlombe*, allowing communication with the ancestors (Dowling & Stinson, 2011). The Xhosa people have developed an inner feeling of *ihlombe* (i.e., a transcendent feeling induced by music as it transports individuals to a state of overwhelming joy) (Cilliers, 2014; Gulwai, 2007). When individuals experience this transcendent feeling, they tend to become so acutely moved that they are compelled to stand up and participate in the musical performance or proceedings (Cilliers, 2014; Gulwai, 2007).

Gulwai (2007) describes how *ihlombe* is most often evident when a song rises in volume and pitch and dancers work themselves into a frenzied trance-like state. Moreover, it can be stated that Xhosa traditional music, in its broadest sense, forms a quintessential part of Xhosa indigenous knowledge traditions, as *ihlombe* is evoked in the people specifically during traditional music performance (Gulwai, 2007). Sandlana (2014) states that the evocation of *ihlombe* during performance allows the body, mind and spirit, to be expressed through rhythmic movements and it provides an atmosphere that is conducive to effective spirit operation. Furthermore, as explained by Vontress (1999), 'It heals human imbalances, enhances communication with ancestors, spirits and the Almighty and causes a balance between the visible and the invisible world'.

According to Dargie (1996), almost every special occasion that takes place in Xhosa communities involves traditional music performance. Such performances can include play songs for children, *umntshotso* songs for young boys and girls, *intlombe* songs, initiation songs, and dances (Dargie, 1996). It is vital, therefore, for a community to learn the songs, so that they can participate in the rites and ceremonies associated with Xhosa cultural expression. Such learning usually occurs through observing, paying attention, developing music memory, practicing, and learning rhythms from others (Dargie, 1996; Deplu, 2009).

Of further note is that the nature of African music performance, in general, tends to be centred on accompanying different activities; thus, music is not used, in most cases, merely for entertainment (Mkallyah, 2018). African traditional music, instead, comes from the community itself and forms an intrinsic component of the community from where it was birthed (Lebaka, 2019). Ogunrinade (2012) states that music is intricately intertwined with all facets of life activities in African settings. For example, music is performed during initiation rites, and it forms part of everyday life. For instance, singing while washing dishes, singing for learning, and spontaneous dancing during social gathering.

In this article, therefore, having established that music and dance is not alien or extraneous to the Africans but part of their culture, and interlinked, we shall discuss the nature and role of music and dance in shaping the culture of the Xhosa people, especially in the spheres of morality, social life, religion and cultural traditions, not in isolation but with the roles they play in the society.

Music as a platform for promoting moral values among the Xhosa people

Moral values for the Xhosa people have cultural significance. Any action or behaviour is considered morally right or wrong through moral value judgments based on the traditions and beliefs of the community. Udokang (2014) is of the view that, in most African societies there are culturally laid down moral codes. Violations of these laws may lead to severe penalties being inflicted on those who break laws of morality.

The existence of consequences for wrongdoing, create a sense of morality among the people (Mbaegbu, 2015). The Xhosa people use traditional music as a platform for promoting moral values through song text.

Beliefs, values, behaviour, and music constitute the way of life for the Xhosa people (Hansen 1981). Mkhombo (2019) states that African culture is embedded in strong moral considerations and consists of a system of various beliefs and customs that every individual is expected to abide by in order to live a long life and to avoid bringing curses onto themselves or their kin. More specifically to indigenous Xhosa culture, songs are often performed to promote good moralities (Deplu, 2009). Some songs are more instructional than entertaining in their nature and purpose (Moropa & Tyatyeka, 1995). The songs are sung by the Xhosa people to instil moral and ethical principles into their society most often include themes that are educational – either using direct words or through idioms, metaphors, and proverbs – and which promote good morals (Lebaka, 2019).

Traditional Xhosa music is therefore also seen as a powerful weapon that can be used to mould the members of the community, while, simultaneously, being structured in such a way that it relieves tension during social gatherings when it is been performed (Deplu, 2009). Ogunrinade (2012) states that music is generally employed in everyday activities as a means of communicating information of social interest and eliciting emotion. Music is also employed for and during important cultural events, such as initiations, rituals, and/or coronation celebrations (Ogunrinade, 2012). Traditional music, according to Ogunrinade (2012), is, thus, one of the most powerful aspects of humanity's cultural history, including the Xhosa culture. In this regard, traditional Xhosa music is often used as a medium to correct undesirable behaviours amongst its people (Sandlana, 2014). For example, Gulwai (2007) states that if someone is suspected of having an extramarital affair, a song would be created to correct that behaviour, as an affair is seen as unacceptable in the Xhosa culture. The lyrics of the song will then specifically be composed in such a way as to ridicule the person until he or she turns away from that behaviour (Gulwai, 2007).

The preceding example highlights how traditional music can be used as a potent vehicle of communication and, as such, has the potential to correct behaviour and self-appraisal to humans, as exhibited throughout history (Ebeli, 2016). Mkallyah (2015) further states that traditional music, to a significant degree, affect individuals' behaviours through its performance, function, and content. Similarly, Gulwai (2007) posits that a traditional Xhosa society without music would be devoid of acceptable behaviour, as it is traditional music that primarily instils good morals and acceptable behaviours into the community through its lyrics.

Traditional music also permeates or influences all other aspects of the African conception of morality (Mbaegbu, 2015). Indeed, Mbaegbu (2015) observes that traditional music acts as a kind of 'check and balance' within African communities. It can therefore be said that

traditional music upholds morality and denounces unacceptable behaviour (Lebaka, 2019; Asigbo, 2012). Asigbo (2012) also adds that the traditional music is a medium through which a lost society can be redeemed.

Cultural function of traditional music in Xhosa society as a cultural phenomenon

As noted previously, traditional music has existed within Xhosa society for many centuries and formed a key cultural aspect far before the invasion of culture on the African continent by Western forces (Stone, 2000; Khabela, 1996). According to Nwobu (2014), traditional music is one of the most powerful tools for cultural exceptionality and self-identity in the life of any society. To this end, traditional music also plays an important role in many aspects in and across the Xhosa people's culture. For example, war songs were often sung by Xhosa people for their warriors who were about to go to war (Mpola, 2007; Hansen, 1981). These songs were meant to inspire and urge the warriors on to fight their adversaries and come home victorious (Dlepu, 2009). Songs have also been dedicated to those who performed heroic feats within the community (Gulwai, 2007). Such songs were mostly used to praise individuals and to inspire others in the society to do good deeds so that their names, too, could be written in the history book of the community through music (Gulwai, 2007).

Jayeola (2015) further affirms that traditional music has a strong presence in African communities, as it encompasses the entire set of practices, rituals, norms, and values that govern people's daily lives. Similarly, Lebaka (2019) says that music serves cultural functions both for the individual and for society. Many traditional societies, believe that the rituals enable contact with the ancestors. According to Sandlana (2014) traditional healers and their initiates sing and beat drums to invoke the ancestors. This serves the purposed of paying respect to the ancestors and to beseech them for acceptance, forgiveness and protection against evil.

A poem by Mzwakhe Mbuli (as cited by Gulwai, 2007) asserts that traditional Xhosa music is so rich because it houses the Xhosa people's very cultural heritage. Gulwai (2007), states further that Xhosa traditional music inhabits the people's pride, because they sing praise and worship through traditional music. Through reference to Mbuli's poem, Gulwai (2007) highlights Xhosa traditional music as a key part of ancestral veneration. It is through the performance of such music, then, that Xhosa traditions are preserved. Dawn and Alvin (2008) believe that most Xhosa traditional songs are linked to ceremonies and events pertaining to their cultural practices and are founded on traditional activities aimed at promoting Xhosa culture.

During a performance, traditional Xhosa music is most often accompanied by traditional dances (Sotewu, 2016; Dargie, 1996). According to Smith (2020), the Xhosa people have a variety of dances that are performed in and across different age groups. The various dances serve as a means of communicating the salient elements of Xhosa culture. These traditional Xhosa dances remains a powerful expression of traditional values, beliefs, and practices especially to the younger generations as they will be the community's future leaders and are, thus, expected to uphold the cultural traditions of the Xhosa people (Smith, 2020).

Furthermore, traditional praise singers within the Xhosa culture, known as *imbongi*, and who are mostly found in the royal family, also perform a vital cultural role, as they assess the relationship between the chief and his people. The praise singer is someone who mediates between the chief and subjects, serving as both upholder of the chief's status and as social

critic (Opland & McAllister, 2010; Jadezweni, Mqhayi, & Mkiva, 1999). If anything is wrong within this relationship, the traditional praise singer will correct the chief by using the praise singing style, which is repeated until the situation returns to normal (i.e., the relationship improves) (Kashula, 1994). Kaschula and Diop (2000) state that the *imbongi* has several roles; he is a mediator, and a political and social commentator in relation to the leaders in the wider Xhosa community. This function has been retained over the years (Kaschula & Diop, 2000).

The praise singing presented by the praise singer also normally deals with history as well as current events within the community (Jadezweni et al., 1999). The praise singer usually wears a distinguishing costume that symbolises his important role in relation to the chief (Kaschula, 1993). According to Mathe (2016), *imbongi* are traditionally a male, but women can take up the role. When performing the *imbongi*, emotions are often heightened – to the point where the singer may seem to be in a trance (Jadezweni et al., 1999). An *imbongi* performer is an intelligent individual who possesses a wide range of knowledge on a diversity of subjects (Jadezweni et al., 1999).

Consequently, indigenous Xhosa music has over time, played an important role in Xhosa culture, as it is essential in representing the cultural heritage of the Xhosa people (Heunis, 2013). The importance of traditional music, can also be seen in many aspects of the Xhosa culture. While many cultures today do not venerate ancestors through music, there are several South African cultures that do so, including the Xhosa culture, where music is often linked to ancestral veneration.

Social and entertainment function of Xhosa traditional music

In African societies, music making is usually organised as a social event and forms part of the larger culture, which in turn, influences music performance (Phibion, 2012). According to Odunuga, and Yekini-Ajenifuja (2018), traditional music serves as both entertainment and a source of social engagement in Africa communities, and anyone is free to participate in the performance process. Gulwai (2007) states that the Xhosa people are extremely festive and use traditional music at their community gatherings, such as the *umdudo* (a wholesale term used to refer to important gatherings like weddings and war meetings), to make the occasion livelier and more enjoyable. Music often accompanies *umgidi*, which refers to large feasts to honour the chiefs as well as other celebrations, such as harvesting festivals and initiation ceremonies that honour boys (now young men) who are returning from the initiation school (Gulwai, 2007). In addition, Gulwai (2007) states that these large gatherings are not complete without the traditional Xhosa songs that are accompanied by dancing, which may even involve an entire village or the broader Xhosa society.

Ramadani (2017) adds that music plays an important role in everyday life as well as within human beings' natural interactions. Music allows for unique expressions of social ties and the strengthening of social connectedness. For example, the Xhosa people are often engaged in organising formal dancing parties for each age group. From childhood, both girls and boys have arranged 'get-togethers', while older married men and women tend to gather at organised parties that usually take place in the winter (between harvesting and ploughing season), as this is their leisure time when few other activities occur within the community for social interactions (Gulwai, 2007). To this end, Chulkin and Raglan (2014), opine that, culture-bound music is tied to diverse social gatherings and is a binding factor in our social background. According to Odunuga, and Yekini-Ajenifuja (2018) traditional music are closely

linked to the local dialect. In this way the music retains its meaning and psychological impact on those who use it, through oral tradition.

During these gatherings, according to Mugandani (2016), while citing Hansen's work on categories of Xhosa music, opines that, the attendees of these gatherings often perform songs to entertain themselves and these performances are filled with pomp and pageantry. Mugandani (2016), opines further that, the attendees most often perform *amagwijo* (personal songs). These songs are created and performed in moments of rest and relaxation (e.g., when people are at leisure, such as when they smoke their pipes, play their bows, or sit around the fire). The performance usually occurs outdoors and is performed by both men and women for self-expression. These songs also help in accompanying individuals through every stage of life, by giving individuals space to reflect on their emotional, physical, and mental states in an unrestrained manner, since these types of songs do not require following of rules and/or standards (Heunis, 2013).

The songs that are presented on such occasions could be vocal or instrumental, and the audience can join in the performance if they wish, provided that they do not obstruct the soloists' words and melody line (Gulwai, 2007). This is an example of Xhosa song making where the lyrics cannot be changed, as they contain the emotional core of a specific individual's thoughts and feelings. Hansen (1981) states that these personal songs are emotive, thereby often enabling the listeners to identify with the emotions that are evident within the song lyrics. Such songs can also be accompanied by instruments such as the *umrhubhe* (friction mouth bow) and *uhadi* (unbraced musical bow), as these local instruments are able to simulate or copy the sound of a cry and, are therefore ideally suited for this type of music making (Levine, 2005).

The Xhosa tradition and dance

Traditional dance, serves the role of upholding the Xhosa people culture and connecting them to their cultural roots (Smith 2020). Onwuekwe (2009), states that traditional dance has a crucial function in social and spiritual expression and communication since the dancer is more than a performer; he or she is also a teacher, historian, cultural commentator, healer, and storyteller. Smith (2020) moreover says that Xhosa traditional dance is one of the ways that the living interacts and pay respect to their forebears. The Xhosa people believe they owe the spirit adoration for the good fortune they have received, so dancing often takes on a ritual significance.

Furthermore, according to Onwuekwe (2009), each culture has its own specific styles of dance and motivations for dancing. Dance may therefore reveal a lot about a culture and its people. During both social events and cultural ceremonies, distinct dance forms particular to the Xhosa culture are also performed alongside musical performances (Heunis, 2013). The different dance types that are performed together with music, in social gatherings in the Xhosa culture, are discussed in more detail in the paragraphs that follow.

UKUTYITYIMBA – This dance, according to Nombembe (2014), was originally performed only at wedding ceremonies but is now performed at other events. For instance, during circumcision ceremonies, *ukutyityimba* dance performances are accompanied with recreational songs to cheer people up while they wait for the circumcision process. Women go into the yard to perform the *ukutyityimba* dance while men remain in the cattle byre, all the while singing and dancing to other traditional Xhosa songs (Nombembe, 2014). Levine (2005)

describes this dance as one with the biggest movements of any other Xhosa dance. Both women and girls perform it and, as they do so, the “entire body quivers and the knees are pushed forward and backwards”.

UMTEYO –The *umteyo* dance is performed by the *amakwenkwe*. These are young men under the age of about 20 or 21, who have not yet been initiated (Grau, 2004; Kehinde, 2016). Gulwai (2007), says that this dance is highly distinguishing, and a dancer who can perform the movements of this dance exceptionally well, is most applauded. The performers often wear small bells across their chests. They also wear tin rattles filled with stones called *izikhunjane* around their calves to emphasise the vibrations of their shaking bodies. Due to the nature of the dance movements, Kehinde (2016) ‘nicknamed’ the *umteyo* the ‘shaking dance’, because during this dance the performer rapidly shakes the thorax so that the whole length of the spine appears to be undulating (Kehinde, 2016).

UKUSINA – This is another common dance, practiced amongst all age groups across Xhosa societies. The *ukusina* entails dancers kicking their legs upwards and outwards in any direction, which is then followed by stamping each foot into the ground (Gulwai, 2007). This dance is most often performed at social gatherings for entertainment purposes (Hansen, 1981). As such, *ukusina* dances, according to Sithole (2016), are socially constructed, and revolve around the song leader chanting interlocking phrases of words. Sithole (2016) further asserts that no religious gathering is complete without at least one *ukusina* dance performance.

The preceding descriptions of traditional dances reveal that these dances are a significant part of the Xhosa people's social, religious, and cultural life. The close relation between body movement and music brings everyone present into a cohesive action atmosphere. Xhosa traditional dance is similar to traditional dance in African culture, in so far as it is form of expression, and by their very nature, involve all the senses in both the performer and the audience to express thoughts and feelings (Okafor, 2005).

Religious functions of traditional music and dance in Xhosa sacred ceremonies

The most compelling reason for music creation in Africa, according to Nketia as cited in Cogdell DjeDje (2008), is religious functions, because it is widely believed that the spiritual realm is responsive to music during sacred or religious ceremonies. Mbaegbu (2015) says that religious music inspires community members to express their devotion to the gods during rituals and communal rites. Hence, Xhosa people find its most intense expression in traditional music performance during religious ceremonies. These are described, following.

DIVINATION

Diviners, who are known as *amagqirha*, are often excellent musicians because they are expected to have a large musical repertoire, as a means of evoking ancestral spirits to open links of communication with them (Mlisa, 2009). According to Gulwai (2007), diviners also continually compose traditional Xhosa songs to enhance their divination work. Songs incarnate the diviners more with Mother Earth and their ancestors. This enables transformation and spiritual revival (Mlisa, 2009). When the ancestors call an individual to be a diviner, he or she usually becomes ill, and one of the main remedies is dancing. Therefore, dance and song form a part of the spiritual aspect of the daily activities of diviners (Mbiti, 2000; Mlisa, 2009). The Xhosa also people believe that the ancestors have a great love for divination music (Gulwai, 2007). For example, an ecstatic dance for a possession ceremony can be performed at a social gathering of the Xhosa people. This can occur where a diviner

may be called on to prepare and purify the community for a new year. The combination of these movements symbolises the traditional Xhosa music and dance traditions (Gulwai, 2007). During the dance the diviner is surrounded by people who clap and sing (Janzen, 2000). These spectators who are community members, are often given refreshment to encourage them to participate (Gulwai, 2007). During this divination ceremony, one drum is beaten with curved sticks, while another drum forms an essential part of the séance music. If there is no drum available, participants will simply substitute the drum by beating the ground or cardboard boxes with sticks (Hansen, 1981). The diviners also use reeds or ankle rattles worn on their calves to create percussion for and rhythm to the songs (Mlisa, 2009).

UKWALUKA (MALE INITIATION)

The *ukwaluka* is a male initiation ceremony practiced in the Xhosa culture (Magodyo et al, 2017). It is only at the end of this ceremony that a boy is recognised to be an adult member of society. That is, once he has been circumcised (Manona & Hurst, 2018). The date upon which a boy is circumcised is considered by the Xhosa people to be as important as the date of his birth (Anathi, 2015). After the circumcision has been performed, the initiates (*abakhwetha*) go into seclusion for approximately 3-6 weeks (Kepe, 2010; Mdedetyana, 2019). In the past, this time of seclusion could last up to three to six months (Van Vuuren & De Jongh, 1999). During their time of isolation, the initiates remain separate from the rest of the community and have their food brought to them by children (Mhlahlo, 2009). They are only able to communicate with their community by blowing a horn, called an *isigodlo*, to indicate that they are hungry (Gulwai, 2007). According to Dargie (1986), once the initiates' are healed, they sing *umtshotsho* and *amagwijo* songs for their own amusement.

INTONJANE (FEMALE INITIATION)

In *intonjane*, which relates to female initiation, the seclusion period centres around a dance and song known as the *umgqungqo* (Dargie, 2015). This song and dance are performed outdoors by married women and is restricted to only women being responsible for its performance (Sotewu, 2016). The women also form concentric circles and perform two main movements as part of this dance. Both these movements are characterised by walking, swaying, and balancing on the balls of one's feet before stamping the heel down (Gulwai, 2007).

In the first movement, the dance involves the dancers moving clockwise, while in the second movement, the dancers face each other (Hansen, 1981; Gulwai, 2007). The dancers move gracefully, shaking their shoulders throughout, while their spectacular costumes of braided skirts, red blankets, colourful handkerchiefs, and beaded ornaments enhance their movements. The female dancers also hold sticks in their right hands. This imitates men (Mtiya, 2012). The *umgqungqo* dance usually lasts for two days, while an additional dance, the *umdudo*, is performed thereafter by the men. The *umdudo* lasts between three to eight days (Ngoma, nd; Sirayi, 1997).

As part of the *umdudo*, the men form lines made up of approximately 10 people each (Gulwai, 2007). The dance begins with the older men, who perform this dance, ululating (*umyeyezo*) while the women sing and beat the *ingqongqo* drum (Mtiya, 2012). The dance performance, according Gulwai (2007), entails stamping the left foot, flexing the body forward, and jumping up; then returning to an upright position. Magubane (1998) opines that, the *umdudo* dance is also performed when the bride thrusts a spear belonging to the groom's father into the

gatepost of his cattle byre. This indicates the importance of the dance because the history, customs and traditions of the Xhosa people is enshrined in it.

From the information presented in this section, it is evident that traditional musical arts are the main driver of religious activities amongst the Xhosa people. The male and female initiation ceremonies highlight the Xhosa religious values. In the Xhosa tradition the ancestors act as intermediaries between the living and God. They are honoured during these initiation ceremonies to bring good fortune to the people. Gregory (1997), states that religion has long been a driving force behind the development of music in and across many societies. This also applies to the Xhosa society. Mbaegbu (2015) is of the view that, music plays an essential role in religious worship and music is one of the cultural characteristics that make the African people a distinct religious being in the world, for religious practices binds the people together and gives them common characteristics to interact with the spiritual realm. To this end, Gregory (1997) concludes that, music is not an independent art form to be enjoyed as a discrete art form, but that it is an essential part of religious practice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditional music and dance play a fundamental role in shaping the cultural identity of the Xhosa people. It was articulated in this article that traditional music forms a vehicle for transmitting Xhosa cultural knowledge and values to individuals. Music is also used not only for social events but to encourage good morals and serve religious and cultural purposes. For example, the songs used by the *amagqirha* (diviners) during initiation ceremonies serve as a link to the ancestors, while *amagwijo* (personal songs) help to accompany individuals through every stage of life by enabling them to reflect on their emotional, physical, and mental states. It is possible to claim that almost every Xhosa ceremony is accompanied by traditional music fit for that specific occasion. In particular, there are distinct dance forms unique to the Xhosa culture that are performed alongside these traditional music performances. For example, the *ukutyityimba* dance is performed at wedding ceremonies, while the *umteyo* dance form involves communal participation during various ceremonies, and the *ukusina* dance is practiced amongst all age groups for entertainment purposes.

The literature reviewed in this article demonstrates that indigenous music and dance are a natural phenomenon, and an integral part of the life cycle of the lives of the people, in much of Africa, including in the Xhosa culture. This article also indicated that the use of traditional music in cultural ceremonies amongst the Xhosa people has helped to sustain the Xhosa culture. Individuals' cooperation during both performance and practice were also found to contribute to the Xhosa people's general cohesion, participating in communal ceremonies, helps to build community and homogeneity.

These ceremonies continue to express the cultural values and musical arts traditions of the Xhosa people. Therefore, it is recommended that researchers, ethnomusicologist, artists and anthropologists explore factors responsible for the dynamism of the Xhosa musical arts culture. Additionally, the authors recommend that traditional musical arts performances are preserved as part of the indigenous Xhosa history and societal beliefs.

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