

GLOBAL IMPACTS UPON NGOMA

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Abstract

Ngoma² is a Kiswahili term which means traditional dance. In this essay the terms 'ngoma' and 'dance' are used interchangeably. The research was conducted in Dar es Salaam and Iringa among four ngoma groups of young people: Lumumba, Hayahaya, Alamano and Tanangozi. Theatre stakeholders were involved to seek their perceptions of the global impact on ngoma. In-depth interviews, participant-performer research, and group discussions were the methods employed, focussing on the content, costumes, musical instruments and the make-up used, to explore how and why cultures from around the world influence the way this traditional dance form is performed by young people. It emerged that a range of factors drive innovation in this dance form, including the dancers' quest for recognition, their individual creativity, the performers' desire to discover and display unique identities. The findings suggest that in this age of globalisation, international influences upon aesthetic sense and expression are inevitable. But in the case of Tanzania's ngoma, which has been preserved conscientiously for decades, protective responses to such influences should be maintained vigilantly, in order to shield this valued intangible heritage from fading away.

Keywords: *global impact, youth, hybridized ngoma, Tanzania*

Setting the scene

Evidence of the global impact upon various projects in Tanzania is not a new phenomenon. It is a long-standing experience dating back to the eighth century, when coastal communities like Kilwa Masoko, Kilwa Visiwani, Zanzibar and Bagamoyo traded with merchants from the Persian Gulf, Western

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² Further discussion of what ngoma means in general and for the purpose of it in this study is discussed shortly in the coming sections.

India and Arab countries. Historians consider an end-run of Vasco da Gama trip to Africa in 1492 as a marker for the inauguration of the global epoch of the world (Bentley 1996).

The intrusive influence of foreign missionaries upon Tanzanian religious institutions can be cited as a central example of the fact that the international impact upon Tanzanian agency is not a recent mania. Before colonial invasions, mainland Tanzanians (then Tanganyikans) expressed their own robust cultural systems and religious beliefs. Tanzania, with more than 120 ethnic groups, each of which had its own sense of godliness interdependent with the natural world, worshiped the manifestations of the divine in its variety of embodiments including stones, lakes, trees, and emulated the divine in sculpted and carved statues. The invasion of colonialism led the majority of Tanzanians to abandon their belief systems to adopt colonizers' religions. These transformations were fuelled largely by the activities of the foreign missionaries, who introduced e.g. Christianity in Tanganyika in 1860s. One can confidently argue that Christianity prominence in Africa today is a product of colonial conversion.

Apart from religion, other global impacts are detectable in virtually all aspects of modern life in Tanzania, including the dominant forms of language, modes of communication, land ownership, and education. This paper selects just one axis of such influence among the many that prevail. Before moving further into the exploration of global impacts upon the content, costumes, musical instruments and cosmetic design involved in Tanzania's traditional *ngoma* forms, let me define the term *ngoma*. This concept is crucial to define because it is central to an analysis of dance in Tanzania. As a Kiswahili term, *ngoma* is intelligible throughout Swahili speaking countries; but it is incomprehensible to the rest of Africa.

Defining *ngoma*

The word '*ngoma*' actually has different connotations in Kiswahili. Some scholars define it by its denotation, that is, by referring to the 'drum' which is the universal accompaniment of ceremonial dance music (Madan 1903: 280). Other scholars define *ngoma* in light of its therapeutic value. From this standpoint, *ngoma* is understood as an exorcising of spirits, or a specifically defined activity with healing potential (Tanzania Institute of Kiswahili Research 1971: 336). A good example of healing *ngoma* is *madogoli*, *mbina ya mabasa* from the Sukuma ethnic group and Ruhani. In Malawi, as in Tanzania, the term *ngoma* also stands for the coming-of-age initiation ceremony (Drews 2000). When a girl detects her first menstrual period, she is told to stay indoors for a week, a month, or longer. The ceremony that is prepared for her the day

she comes out is called *ngoma*. One might discover with some surprise that indeed any movement through an individual's life rhythm, transitioning from one phase or stage to another, is also called *ngoma*. For example, a change of someone's status from being married to widow-hood life is also called *ngoma*. This is especially true of the Waluguru ethnic group (Pels 2000: 102).

From the standpoint of theatre arts, which is the focus of this research, *ngoma* refers to a performance expressed through dancing, drumming and singing (Campbell and Eastman 1984: 467; see also Howard 2014). The purpose of *ngoma* in this sense is to express history, values, identities, and the custodial transfer of cultural values from one generation to another (Campbell and Eastman 1984). In this essay, *ngoma* is defined as a presentation of thoughts, emotions and inner-feelings through bodily movement and verbal communication. Such formal communication, however, is never static; a ritual art form with such a broad and essential remit does not remain fixed in equilibrium, but undergoes transformations which are commensurate with a community's changing realities (Sanga 2013).

Etymological overview of the global impact on ngoma

In the modern era, the global impacts upon *ngoma* date back to the 1890s, when the Germans imposed colonial rule in Tanganyika (Lihamba 2004, Hussein 1975, Ranger 1975, Sanga 2015). The German colonial administrators prohibited the performance of *ngoma* because they were taught to view the performers as wicked and savage, believing that the popularity of their aesthetic activities hampered the civilising process (Lihamba 2004). To circumvent this invasive policy, Tanganyikans attempted to modify *ngoma* to accommodate the concerns of the foreigners (Lihamba 2004). *Mganda* means the activity of *ngoma* among many; these were consciously modified to appeal to colonial authority. This intention implicit in the modification of *Mganda ngoma* at this time is evident in the adoption of military costumes, brass band-like drums, calabashes, props, and the use of commanding words notably incorporated from the ritual official chanting of the presiding officers in the colonial military. Tanganyikans introduced these changes in *ngoma* not because they took a fancy to colonial culture. Strictly speaking, they were in responding to the normative responsibility of preventing *ngoma* from dying out, as a result of foreigners' censorship.

After the end of the German colonial occupation, the global impact that it heralded did not end with the Tanganyikans' vanquishing of formal colonial rule. It continued after formal Independence from British rule in 1961. Studies indicate that after Independence, some global influences upon *ngoma*

were incurred unwittingly; while other early influences were incorporated deliberately with the intention of enriching local *ngoma*.

Policy actions and formal statements of the first president of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, can be cited here to illustrate that some global impacts upon *ngoma* were embraced intentionally. In the book titled *Freedom and Unity* (1966) Nyerere made the famous statement that a country reluctant to learn from foreign cultures is a country of idiots and lunatics. His keenness to learn from other cultures was evident from the very outset, through initiatives he made immediately after taking over power from the British. In 1965, for example, twenty youths from Tanzania were sent to China to learn about Chinese culture; and upon their return, they were distributed in throughout the regions of Tanzania to establish dance troupes (Edmondson 2010). The acrobatics and circus components noticeable in Tanzania's *ngoma* at present are not just a gradual or accretive process of random adaptation, but a product of these conscious initiatives orchestrated by Nyerere.

Despite the fact that the global impact upon *ngoma* today clearly is neither novel nor a recent craze, there is an accelerating concern and increasingly vocal complaint that the continuation of acculturation of foreign elements, particularly those induced in the art form by its young practitioners, homogenises and dissipates *ngoma* as it has been preserved by our forefathers for generations. The *ad hoc* adaptation of foreign elements tends to erase the unique qualities and the social power of *ngoma* culture. Therefore, a comprehensive study is called for, in order to examine the impact of globally-induced changes introduced by young people on *ngoma*.

It is against this historical background that the current research was embarked upon.³ This study was guided by three questions: Which aspects of *ngoma* have been impacted by globalised music and cultural industries? What are the factors behind this global impact? What are the perceptions of Tanzanians concerning this global impact? Striving to answer the first question, this analysis centres on four main aspects: the lyrical content of *ngoma* songs, the costumes, the musical instruments employed, and the facial and bodily cosmetics involved. However, before commencing with this analysis in further depth, let me introduce the fundamental concepts of authenticity and hybridity which are employed, to put the data gathered for this study into the perspective of more general scholarly assumptions about acculturation and artistic adaption.

³ Of the research works available that examine *ngoma* in Tanzania, the majority are etymological studies (Nyoni 1998, Songoyi 1998). Little work has been done to explore the recent global impacts on *ngoma*.

Theorising authenticity and hybridity

In standard usage, the notion of authenticity refers to the disposition, quality or conditions that maintain the ‘genuineness’ or originality of an artefact.⁴ Historically, anything with ‘authentic’ qualities has been given a high valued status, deserving preservation for future generations to see. While authenticity is still associated with genuineness, ‘hybridity’ is the characterisation reserved for artefacts composed of heterogeneous parts. Hybridity is a pejorative trait, associated with being contaminated, polluted, dirty, deceptive, or an outright fake version of a valued original (Bendix 1997). Despite modern scholars advocating the importance of defining authenticity as something dynamic which reflects people’s changing realities, conformists still insist that it must be a feature that emulates the past.

Because of this intricate complexity, it remains unclear what should be considered ‘authentic’ in societies characterised as multi-cultural, that is, societies that are essentially composite with respect to the multiplicity of cultural influences and origins. This is why Grazian (2004) submitted the point that the meaning of authenticity is open-textured; that is, what counts as ‘authentic’ depends upon what people in a given social milieu imagine the symbol of authenticity to be. Supporting Grazian’s point, Bendix (1997) argues that to be authentic is not only a complicated status to assume; it may also be an unattainable aspiration, especially in this age when cultures from different parts of the world interact with one another without limit. Against the credible definability of authenticity, scholars like Taylor (1991, 2007), Prabhu (2007), and Bhaba (1994) argue that the very endeavour to be authentic is nothing other than an act of self-betrayal. Taylor (1991: 28-29) offers an interesting perspective which he traces back to the eighteenth century philosopher and theologian, Johann Gottfried von Herder, who contrasted being true to oneself with conforming to other people’s realities:

Each person has an original way of being human. Each person has his or her ‘measure’ was [Herder’s] way of putting it. Before the late eighteenth century no one thought that the differences between human beings had this kind of moral significance. There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s. But this gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point in my life, I miss what being

⁴ For instance, as defined by the Collins *Cobuild Student Dictionary and Grammar*, London: HarperCollins, 1994.

human is for me ... Being true to myself means being true to my own originality.

With respect to honouring a cultural heritage of which *ngoma* plays a part, Taylor's remark quoted above might imply that being human does not always mean emulating *ngoma* as it was understood during olden times. To be human means being honest with your inner-self by engaging in creative processes with which your inner self is caught up here and now.

But according to Ashcroft et al. (2007), this view overlooks the fact that the self exists within a culture, which changes as conditions change. Not all global impacts upon a person's culture are offensive or compromising. What matters is that people must make sure that the influences upon their artistic expression do not harm to their aesthetic integrity. In other words, the impacts of the sending culture should not disrupt or undermine the receiving culture (Ashcroft et al, 2002).

With this in mind, the concepts of authenticity and hybridity will be employed here to examine the extent to which Tanzanian *ngoma* has been impacted by global culture productively or destructively. The degree of hybridity is an indicator of whether an act of borrowing from other cultures is done vigilantly, and whether the process of borrowing is offensive to Tanzanian *ngoma*, from the standpoints of its practitioners. To establish validity of such an investigation prior to presentation of data, let me present the methods I utilised to collect data for this research.

Methodology

As earlier cited, data for this research was collected from four *ngoma* groups: Tanangozi, Alamano, Hayahaya and Lumumba.⁵ Lumumba was chosen on the basis of their variation of musical styles. They have always had the tendency to juxtapose the region's traditionally and locally derived musical instruments with brass band components, guitars, and keyboard. My attention was drawn to how, through hybridization, the group created an *ngoma* that has never existed before, and how they use their innovations to form unique identities and recognition. To collect data from Lumumba dance groups, I relied upon interviews conducted with dancers, and upon observations of live shows and of videos uploaded online by the group themselves.

As well as Lumumba, a Hayahaya group was selected for respondents. Hayahaya was selected because their *ngoma* appears to borrow heavily from

⁵ Tanangozi and Alamano are located in Iringa whereas Hayahaya and Lumumba are located in Dar es Salaam.

muziki wa dansi, Taarab, and the dance cultures of Kenya. The inclusion of their data sheds light on the role of creative energy in the emergence of cross cultural dances. Collecting data with Hayahaya, I employed both the methods of conducting in-depth interviews and participant performer research (PPR).⁶

Among Hayahaya, the group selected for conducting the respondents' surveys was Alamano because of its location. The group is located in Iringa Urban municipality, which is a small town. The inclusion of Alamano was vital as it helped to compare the global impact upon *ngoma* performed by young people in a small town setting, with the impact when *ngoma* is performed in metropolitan cities like Dar es Salaam. Further, I chose Alamano on grounds of its sponsorship. The group is supported by an international non-governmental organisation. I wanted to test whether being under special foreign sponsorship induced the dancers to adapt global elements into their *ngoma* in order to charm their sponsor. This hypothesis, however, proved incorrect; the data revealed no detectable correlation between groups receiving foreign sponsorship and groups displaying global impact.

Finally, but no less importantly, the Tanangozi group was included in the study. Similar to Alamano, Tanangozi was selected on the basis of their location. The Tanangozi group is located in the Iringa countryside, twenty-five kilometres from Iringa town. The purpose of choosing a group located in a remote area was to explore whether remoteness safeguards *ngoma* from global impacts. An additional touchstone for singling out Tanangozi was the variation in the ages among its members. The group was comprised of children, adults and young people. Such a combination was useful for understanding the role of elders in protecting *ngoma* from global impacts. Theatre stakeholders ranging from cultural officers, art directors, and lecturers in the performing arts at the University of Dar es Salaam, were also interviewed for their perceptions about the global impacts on *ngoma*.

⁶ PPR is a method proposed by Na 'Allah in 2009 to be employed by researchers in African performance studies instead of observation. As for him, there is a huge difference between an observer and a participant performer researcher. Whilst the former means the researcher sits with the informants to observe them, the latter means that the researcher takes part in the performance. Thereafter, the researcher sits down to analyse aspects of the performances to which he or she has played a part (2009: 36-37). In his opinion, by using this method the researcher cannot collect substantive information first-hand, but remains restricted to observing the performance on the surface. In order to understand what is going on in the performance, observation of events is not enough. The researcher requires interacting with performers in order to collect first-hand data essential to penetrating their insights and perspectives on the work. Otherwise, the researcher will be presenting second-hand data based upon other peoples' experiences and interpretations of the dance. It is against this critical background that I included the PPR method to collect data

Global impact on the content of *ngoma* songs

Similar to other countries of Africa in the 1990s, Tanzania became exposed to globalisation through the presence of the world wide web and electronic telecommunications. Not only did globalisation impact the economy and political system, but also the country's cultural performances including *ngoma*. Historically, *ngoma* song lyrics have revolved around warning, consoling and teaching young people good morals. Songs together with other methods are traditionally employed to chastise and reprimand youth as well as older members of the community who demonstrate immoral behaviour, such as greed, idleness, cowardice, prostitution, adultery. Further, in an orally transmitted culture, songs have been employed to build a society marked by generosity, justice and fairness. Based on the current data, significant changes have occurred in the content of songs as a result of globalisation. The song lyrics below exemplify this.

Original version	Author's translation
<i>Tuiheshimu misitu</i>	Let's take care of our forests
<i>Tusikate miti hovyoyote</i>	Let's not cut down trees carelessly
<i>Tuheshimu vyanzo vyote</i>	Let's take care of all natural sources
<i>Hiyo ni mali ya taifa</i>	They are the national assets

This song, titled '*Tuiheshimu misitu*' or 'Let's take care of the forests', was composed by Tanangozi group to urge inhabitants of Iringa countryside to conserve the forests. Line three, for example, urges the listener to stop cutting trees because these are the wealth of the nation. By interviewing dancers, it became apparent that the song was not composed out of the group members' imaginations. On the contrary, the village government commissioned dancers to compose the song to awaken rural dwellers about the importance of conserving the local forests. Dancers claimed the song was composed around the year 2000, after an interval of four years since Tanzania ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1996 (The United Republic of Tanzania 2003: xiv). Given such an interval, one may confidently argue that in giving this directive to the dance group, the Village government acted in conformity with United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Another song which reflects a shift of lyrical content was entitled ‘*Niache baba*,’ or, ‘Leave me alone father,’ as follows:

Original version	English translation
<i>Niache baba</i>	Leave me father
<i>nisome</i>	I want to acquire my education
<i>Mimi shule napenda</i>	I like schooling
<i>Haa haa nisome</i>	I want to pursue my education
<i>Lungulye nene</i>	Things are unbearable
<i>Pendi mwana ndi mdodo</i>	And I am too young (to bear this)

This song was composed by the very same group, Tanangozi. In this song, a girl calls upon her father to stop forcing her to marry early. In lines three and four, the girl insists her father leave her to continue with studies because things are not easy when someone marries at a young age. When asked whether the song was composed to support the Second Millennium Development Goal which came into effect around the early 2000s, the group members appeared to be unaware of the United Nation Millennium Development Goals agenda. All they knew was that the government had sponsored the process of composing this song in 2005. However, there is a match between the launch of the first Millennium Development Goals and the period in which this song was composed on commission. This suggests that the song was composed in support of the Second Millennium Development Goal which, among other objectives, resolved to ensure the achievement of universal primary education in all countries by 2015.

Global impact was not only noted in songs commissioned by the government, but also in self-driven songs. Prior to globalisation, young artists composed songs which praised political leaders no matter how wrong or correct they were generally perceived to be. According to Songoyi (1988), Tanzanian artists including dancers were compelled to compose propaganda songs which echoed the ruling party’s interests, to avoid harassment and detention. This study discovered a distinct dissimilarity between the period after Independence in 1961 and the later period of globalisation when freedom of speech was promulgated as one of the basic human rights ensured from the mid-1980s by the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania. At the time this research was conducted, between 2011 and 2015, young people appeared to compose songs which criticised their government. Based on the political climate of that time, youth felt free to criticise their government without fear of being tortured or abducted. They were reinforced in such political outspokenness because their

government in some cases listened to their demands promulgated through song lyrics and where possible the government openly sought solutions to social problems popularly publicized in this way. Notably, the song ‘*Matumbo Makubwa*’ (‘People with big Tummies’) by Lumumba group is prototypical of songs composed by young people which challenged their government. Here are the lyrics.

Original version	English Translation
<i>Ubeti wa kwanza</i>	<i>1st stanza</i>
<i>Baba Ndinda</i>	Father Ndinda
<i>Wenye matumbo makubwa</i>	You who have big tummies
<i>Kwa kweli mnatutesa</i>	In fact you’re torturing us
<i>Sasa tumeshuka sie</i>	We are now aware of your actions
<i>Mpaka kwenye magereza</i>	Even those in the jail
<i>Sasa tumeshtuka sie</i>	Are aware of your deeds
<i>Mpaka kule mahakamani</i>	Even there in the court
<i>Sasa tumeshtuka sie</i>	Are aware of your deeds
<i>Mpaka kule mama lishe</i>	Even there in food kiosk
<i>Aaah itakwisha nchi</i>	Aaah the country is collapsing
<i>Tabia hii itakwisha nchi</i>	This behaviour collapses the country
<i>Wenye matumbo makubwa</i>	You with big tummies
<i>kwa kweli mnatutesa</i>	For sure your torturing us
<i>Ubeti wa pili</i>	<i>2nd stanza</i>
<i>Mimi ni muuza mchicha</i>	I am a vegetable vendor
<i>Kutembea kwa miguu</i>	Walking on foot
<i>Kutoka Tandika mpaka Feli</i>	From Tandika to Feli
<i>Ili watoto wangu mie</i>	So that my children
<i>wapate kula</i>	can have something to eat

<i>Ubeti wa tatu</i>	<i>3rd stanza</i>
<i>Unataka leseni wakati mimi si dereva</i>	You demand a licence while I am not a driver
<i>Unataka kitambulisho</i>	You demand the identity card
<i>wakati si mwanafunzi mie</i>	While I am not a student
<i>Mimi ni Mtanzania</i>	I am a Tanzanian

Interviews with Lumumba youth revealed that the song ‘*Matumbo Makubwa*,’ or ‘Big tummies’ was composed to challenge leaders who tend to take the lion’s share while the minority live in abject poverty. Engaging in group discussion about the song *Matumbo Makubwa*, young people claimed they composed the third stanza to demand their constitutional rights as youth, objecting to the unfair depersonalisation they receive from government. Using the identification card and licence as metaphors, they demand their right to freedom of congregation – the right to socialise and hang out with friends in public without being questioned about who they are. They lamented the tendency of police to implicate youth as thieves, as marijuana smokers and subjecting them to arbitrary arrest. They explained that the song was composed to problematize this abuse of authority and misconduct of the police because it compels young people to feel like refugees in their own land.

Extending the discussion of self-driven songs revealed that those lyrics composed out of the dancers’ imaginations followed global trends. Dancers confirmed that they composed songs based on their audiences’ shifting interests. They reported that as time goes by, their audiences lost interest in messages but were more interested in the music and movements. Dancers confirmed that because of this shift of audience interest, there emerged a massive increase of songs empty of meaningful verses. A song from Alamano group illustrates this trend:

<p>Yeyelele mama Ahee yelele mama Aheee</p>

Conversations with Alamano group members indicate that the song above is sung at various events routinely, not because of the lyrical content but because the rhythm appeals widely to audiences.

Findings from this study tally with those of Songoyi (1998), who observed that present-day audiences are more interested in the dance moves and less in the messages of performers. They prefer songs which soothe their

disappointments and allay their anxieties, over songs which educate them and rouse dissent. Indeed, the urban audiences do not demand messages from *ngoma* songs any longer because technology has empowered them with television, radio, and gadgets connecting them to the internet which ensure they receive all the up-to-date information they need at the right time and place. Given the profound impact of these new technologies, Alamano claimed that they were radically transforming the focus and thrust of their songs, responding their audiences' changing tastes.

The global impact on *ngoma* musical instruments

The effect of world-wide changes in telecommunications and current events was observed to be greater on young performers' musical instruments in urban areas than it was in the countryside. The study found that the group in the rural areas sustained the uses of drums, whistles, bells and handclapping in their *ngoma*; whereas groups in the urban areas fused the traditional musical instruments with modern and imported musical instruments including piano, cymbal, and guitar. Performers explained that their fusion of new and old percussion and strings was based on the effort to capture the interest of people from all over the world. They saw the piano, cymbal and guitar as universals, reflecting trends in music going on everywhere in the world. Thus, once fused into *ngoma*, they believed they were attracting the attention of people globally. Cowen (2002) supports that the practice of merging traditional culture (in this case traditional musical instruments) with modern musical culture (in this case musical instruments such as piano, violin or guitar) offers the traditional culture an opportunity to secure new patrons who can profit from it. This was corroborated by my informants, who reported that their fusing *jembe* and piano, for example, creates music that distinguishes their group from the rest. The mixture of these old and new instruments in itself constitutes an outstanding identity, as no group can be found creating this fusion in the same way.

Further discussion with young *ngoma* performers revealed that they associate their practice of mixing modern musical instruments with traditional ones with the circumstances in which they find themselves. They present their innovations as expressing their desire to transmit *ngoma* to children. They pointed out that children, typically born in cities, are not exposed to lifestyles in the rural areas – which means they are out of touch with *ngoma* altogether. Merging a piano, which urban youth are accustomed to, with a traditional drum such as *jembe*, was thought to appeal to their aesthetic sense better than the *jembe* could when played without the more familiar sound trends. Young performers wondered how they could capture the attention of children without fusing the traditional musical instruments with modern musical instruments.

As for these youth, embracing the impact of global instrumentation makes it possible for them to transmit the *ngoma* and to hand it over naturally from their own generation to the next.

Global impact on the costumes

It is widely agreed that the costumes used in the *ngoma* performances of olden days were made from hides of wild animals and the bark of trees. Dancers preferred costumes from these natural sources intentionally. Their purpose was to gain power which trees and animals possess. Trees and animals are recognised to have the powers of all nature, representing the provision of life giving air, fuel, food, medicine, and all the essentials of survival and the transmission of life. The decision to use costumes from natural sources stems from the admiration and reverence for this power, and the desire to be enveloped in it through the ceremonial costumes (Harrold 1981).

Globalisation, arriving aggressively in Africa alongside the European industrial revolution, initiated the transformation of costumes from natural sources to industrially made costumes. At present, fabrics such as cotton, batik, kanga, satin, kitenge and kikoi are widely used in designing costumes for the dance.⁷ Costume designers serving *ngoma* groups were interviewed, revealing that industrially made apparel was preferred because of their affordability. A machine-made costume is far less time consuming than a traditional costume which takes from five to eight hours to produce.

Further discussion with costume designers revealed that they experience the pressures of globalisation which increasingly hamper their efforts and desire to preserve culture through traditional costume production. Procuring the hides of wild animals was becoming more and more difficult especially in metropolitan cities like Dar es Salaam; this problem was likewise reported in the rural areas, since nowadays wild animals in both urban and rural areas are fiercely protected by conservation laws. Owing to this challenge, a costume designer from Hayahaya group claimed she had resolved that to replace the hides of wild animals with cowhide. The costume illustrated in Figure 1 exemplifies the point.

Despite the fact that the costume designer from Hayahaya was proud of her creative venture in using hides from domestic animals instead of protected wild species, some dancers claimed that this was not a viable option because cow skins are rough and when they are not tanned and processed as leather, they smell badly. So they think costumes made of hides from wild animals

⁷ Kikoi ideally resembles a sarong fabric.

in the traditional way remain the better option – a claim which is no longer feasible in the current aggressive climate of environmental protection. There is an ongoing movement advocating the treatment of wild animals as rights-bearing and as valuable ends rather than as means to ends (Korsgaard 2012). This environmental ethics movement, driven with a Victorian zeal of civilizing Africa, advocates animals to be left to live for their own sake and not for the sake of humans. This trend renders it wholly indefensible and practically unworkable to kill a wild animal simply for obtaining a costume according to customary practice.



Figure 1: *A traditional costume made of cow hide*

Globalised cosmetics

While visiting a Hayahaya group for interviews at Makumbusho village museum one afternoon in December 2011, the first person I encountered was a young lady who claimed to have just come from a performance. She had painted her face with white and black make-up and looked as if she had not yet performed. The photo below is self explanatory.



Figure 2: *A dancer with a beautiful make-up pattern*

While interviewing her, I asked about the source of her make-up materials and whether the patterns she drew on her face communicated any message. She stated frankly that the make-up she applied on her face was basically water colours of Chinese origin which she purchased from one of the shops at Mwenge.⁸ She would mix the paint with water and use a small brush to paint her face. Further discussion with her indicated that she preferred Chinese cosmetics because of their resilience, retaining their vividness on the face longer than the traditional products. Regarding the meaning of the patterns she drew on her face, she said that throughout her life as a dancer, she had never heard that the patterns dancers draw on their faces were intended to convey a specific message. She understood that facial make-up was applied for purely aesthetic reasons. In his study entitled *Customs and culture of Tanzania* Otiso (2013) discovered that in *ngoma*, facial designs carry significance beyond mere adornment. Especially those applied generations ago, a dancer's facial markings communicate specific cultural meanings to audiences. Through make-up, audiences were informed about the dancers' state of mind, their mood, age, level of maturity and their social status – whether single, married or widowed. This remains true particularly of the Maasai ethnic performances. Knowledge of the specific meanings conveyed by the patterns drawn on a dancer's face is crucial for young dancers to acquire, in perfecting their craft and retaining their heritage. The current state of ignorance among dancers should be regarded as a call to all those who possess such knowledge to insure its perpetuity by sharing it with the younger generation.

⁸ Mwenge is the sight of one of Dar es Salaam's largest comprehensive and locally affordable open market districts, far from the city center's high-end shopping malls.

Theatre stakeholders' views of global influences on *ngoma*

The perceptions of theatre stakeholders concerning the global impacts upon *ngoma* vary greatly. This study revealed some as optimistic about the effects of global trends whereas others are altogether pessimistic. Those who were positive argued that global influences should be welcomed because they enrich the art form, keeping *ngoma* relevant and in demand. As with all popular culture, once *ngoma* borrows from other cultures, it increases its fan base, and this subsequently increases the demand for and thereby the income of the dancers. Further, they argue that it is important for *ngoma* to change in order to reflect people's current realities. This is the role of every living cultural expression. There is no point in compelling dancers to replicate the *ngoma* as it was performed by their forefathers in the effort to preserve its authenticity.

Apart from the argument that the ideal of authenticity is itself a fiction, compelling dancers to emulate *ngoma* as it was practiced in the deep past, is a stylised way of enslaving dancers. Kwame (2007: 9) supports that culture should not colonise people but instead should be a springboard for liberty, a vehicle for the creative inspiration and original expression; it should therefore function as a comfort in life. Cultural expression should be a venue for the individual artist to flourish without restriction, rather than suffering the regimental control of conventions. More generally, culture should be understood as a state of flux where the on-going dialogue between permanence and change can take place (Lull 2000).

Theatre stakeholders who perceive global impacts positively, appreciate the power of globalisation to actively frustrate cultural performances which hamper development (Sanga 2015). In his study entitled *Conformity and change: Tanzanian Rural Theatre and Socio-Political Changes* Nyoni (1998) asserts that *ngoma* festivals which rendered a high consumption of food in the early 1990s, were subsequently prohibited on the grounds that the festivals fostered famine. Further, the initiation dances to celebrate puberty entailed the practice of ritual female genital mutilation (FGM); these were aggressively uprooted under the umbrella of global human rights initiatives.

Informants whose perceptions of global trends are negative, on balance, allege that foreign influences homogenize Tanzanian *ngoma* and dissipate its inherent value. Historically, Tanzanian *ngoma* differed from the other regions' *ngoma* because it mirrors the socio-economic conditions and the political concerns specific to the ethnic group to which the performing group members belong (Songoyi 1998). Correlatively, one can hardly establish a common thread between a social dance, an initiation, or a war dance, owing to the fact that in all these dances the participants sway their hips (Green

1996). A traditional Kiduo dance, for example, which has never included hip-swaying movements, now has adopted hip swaying because of globalisation. A new tradition of incorporating hip-swaying movement in all *ngoma* was disparaged by theatre stakeholders as nothing other than ignoring the richness and disregarding the detailed specificity of Tanzania's *ngoma* performances.

Furthermore, theatre stakeholders with negative perceptions of globalisation display their dissatisfaction by pointing out the foreign pressures which led initiation *ngoma* which meant for indoor participation, to be performed outdoors. Sindimba *ngoma* is a case in point. It was meant for initiating the novices into the sexual stage of their lives, but due to globalization it is performed – highly inappropriately – before children of all ages. It is an easy step to attribute children's stimulated curiosity and engagement in premature sexuality to this new custom of exposing children to sexually related activity at the wrong age. One theatre stakeholder was of the opinion that the inclusion of provocative movements in *ngoma* has resulted in some prominent and influential families avoiding attendance at the traditional *ngoma* performances altogether.

Young dancers, with the proclivity to modify *ngoma* as a business, are urged to learn from successful artists everywhere about how to widen their audience-demand by using foreign cultures to heighten the universal appeal of their own culture, while maintaining the original flavours that satisfy the tastes of their traditional market. Ethiopians, for example, borrow from western cultures while retaining all that makes their dances uniquely distinguishable from other cultures' dance forms.⁹ In Tanzania, cultural dance troupes such as the JKT and Police excel in this way, and the youth in other *ngoma* groups are encouraged to regard them as role models. Although these internationally touring groups perform traditional songs with brass-band, one can still feel the original taste of the song. Such practices are approved because they prevent dancers from feeling out of touch or left behind by technology; at the same time these fusions make the traditional audiences, whose songs are chanted, to feel a sense of the currency and relevance of their cultural identities while enjoying the taste of their familiar rhythms and tempos spiced with modern trends and highlights.

Conclusion

Relying on the information and views of *ngoma* group members located in the Iringa and Dar es Salaam regions, it is evident that the global impact upon *ngoma* has become an established fact of Tanzanian cultural

⁹ Personal interview, March 2017

performance. These dynamics will continue to be driven by the creative quest for innovation and individual creativity, the time-held role of *ngoma* as reflecting the local community's specific changing concerns and transformed realities, intercontinental technology, intentions to capture the attention and retain the participation of children, and the demand for a global audience. All these factors have ushered in the obvious contemporary changes in all aspects of *ngoma* – its lyrics, instrumentals, costumes, rhythms, bodily moves, and cosmetics. Despite the fact that these global influences upon all aspects of local culture and lifestyle have proven to be unavoidable, these changes can be introduced into *ngoma* consciously, gradually, and vigilantly. Therefore, there is an important place for theatre stakeholders and scholars of the creative arts following the custodial role of our ancestors, to maintain an attentive critique of these developments so as to shield the Tanzanian *ngoma* as a precious cultural heritage, and to protect it from fading away.

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