

CHAPTER ONE

1.0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The cycle of living for human beings is in three transitions or eternities, that is, before birth, after birth (life) and after death (resurrection). Generally, life is a constant move from the beginning to the end and from the end to the beginning. Seydel, (1996; 2) defines living as:

...The process of manifestation and evolution within consciousness and matter. The manifested life/creation may be described as a spiral that begins in the center (positive pole) and spirals outward to the utmost part of the circumference (negative pole).

The process of evolution and the manifestation of all creation are governed by two of evolutionary forces, which are, space and time. Evolution is the changes that occur in every entity and in most cases the space each entity occupies is influential to such changes. Evolution is measured through time which is the duration through-which changes take place. Time evolves through the movements of the sun and the moon and space evolves through the movements of life occupying it. In the process of evolution, all manifested creation begins at the centre and spiral towards the outwards pole, and in the process of involution, all manifested creation begins at the outward and spiral towards the centre,

Hermes Trismegistus describes the centre of this spiral as an “*Indefinite beginning*” and the outer circumference as an “*Undeterminable end*”.

(Seydel: 1996; 3). It is unknowable beginning and unknowable ending.

And Armstrong, (2008; 26) also states:

It was Hermes Trismegistus who was credited with the formula, “*Deus est sphaera infinita cuius centrum est ubique nusquam circumferentiae*” (God is an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere but whose circumference is nowhere).

In the scriptures it is referred to as, The Alpha and Omega. This ideal of infinity in the beginning and the ending of the cycle of living formed the basis for the belief systems of particularly African indigenous people. The whole notion of the ancestral-ritualistic practices was/is based on the belief that life never ends at death, rather it changes form and level towards the divine.

Hobley, (1922; 27) states:

The belief in the ancestral spirit is merely a form of the belief in soul...

Life was perceived as spirit-ward journey of all things back to its beginning. The purpose of living was evolution/growing but as it grows, it moves away from the centre thus becoming weak but was the beginning of the journey/involution back to the infinite/divine mind of God.

The changing seasons and days/weeks were also other elements of the cycle of living. Seasons determined the kind of food available and the kind

of shelter and cloths to be occupied and worn. Days in a week determined the activities to be carried as (sometimes) an honour to a particular Deity.

Toth and Nielsen, (1974; 44) state:

Re, or the sun, whose daily disappearance past the horizon was considered as his death, was reborn as the sunrise each morning.

The cycle of the sun from rising and setting is perceived as a day. A day is made out of hours of twenty four units each. The week is the cycle of seven days and the month is the cycle of four or five weeks. The year is the cycle of twelve months or thirteen according to African perspective. Each year is divided into four seasons which affect nature's life cycle. Human life was also modeled in the same fashion as days, weeks and months. Human beings will go to sleep at the end of the day to wake-up the following day.

Therefore birth, death and resurrection were fundamentally perceived as the three main stages in the cycle of living; other stages such as initiation and marriage were essential in the cycle of living but they remain voluntary and unique to each community and individuals. For instance, some nations and communities do not practice initiation rites while certain individuals also do not get married. Most communities and individuals choose to highlight these stages by ritualistic performances of-which

dance and song are common features and the themes of these rituals were based on birth, death and resurrection.

Dance is a body language regarded as one of the earliest forms of expression. Dance develops from the normal body movements like rolling on the ground, running, jumping, turning and twisting. Before babies can talk, they begin by touching, rolling on the surface of the ground, crawling and walking/running to express their feelings towards the people around them. One of the opening statements on the script for the **Jazzart** dance theatre's schools program on creating awareness of the importance of dance in social development, (1994; 1) says:

...One of the first movements babies make when they are born is to follow their heads and reach out. After that they will be rolling around on their natural body surfaces to find-out what is going on around them.

As babies grow, the spoken language develops and that sometimes minimizes the reliance on body expression as a form of communication. But not everything can be expressed through the spoken word. Things which are perceived as beyond verbal expressions are then expressed through body movements like dance as a codified form of body expression.

It has always been contended that ancient peoples danced and designed their properties (dwellings, dresses, utensils and tools) according to their perception of the natural world (around them) and its elements. Huts, spoons/trays, hoes/axes, reflected man's view of the world around him/her. The most important features of the natural world according to the ancient peoples were the sun, the moon and the stars, others being the mountains, the sea, the forests and the plains. The behavioural nature of the sun and the moon affected time and space, which are, two fundamental elements in the existence of a man and his/her attachment to his/her world.

Time and space are two fundamental elements used to define a life of a man. Time in general was measured through the traveling of the sun but specific times like seasons, months and years were measured through the changes in the cycle of the moon. Therefore movement in space produces time. Changes in time affected the space occupied by nature, for instance, summer season brought about rain and heat which are the ingredients of plentitude. Certain spaces become densely populated due to the availability of food and water.

Koch, (2007; 3) states:

The universe is constantly evolving. From the human perspective we see change occurring in terms of time and space, but in other levels of reality time and space do not exist as we know them. They are obviously an essential feature of physical reality (as are polarities) in order that we can know that reality and function within it.

Man as part of nature had both post and prior responses to the changes of time. The responses to changes usually manifested themselves through cultural performances such as ritualistic dances and ceremonial celebrations. Man saw both the sun and the moon as rounded or spherical objects. Even though the earth man lived on was perceived flat, the sky above the earth took a rounded/curve shape. Therefore man was bound to regard the round shape as fundamental to his/her existence. Man then started to model his life according to his/her perception of the universe that includes the sun, the moon, the stars and the earth. The design for **lqhugwane**, seem to illustrate the curving of the sky above a flat earth surface.



Figure 1.A modern version of lqhugwane with a wall, door and a window.

The *Fibonacci* number system suggests that zero (0) is a figurative symbol of totality and unity in everything that **is**, **was** and **would be**. Zero is then followed by (number) one (1) which is also a numerical representation of

oneness and unity of everything. The following table is the representation of the *Fibonacci* number system;

0	1	1	2	3	5	8	4
		0+1=1;	1+1=2;	1+2=3;	2+3=5;	3+5=8;	5+8=13;

But no two units can occupy one space, so 13 becomes 1+3= 4.

As numbers go from zero numbers add up to nine and return to one and zero at ten, that is, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. The **Cabbalist** theory suggests that, from the void/nothingness came ten vessels of light (*sefirot*), the last one being the *Malkhut* which is the earth and its kingdom. The *Malkhut* is said to be the last stage of God and from it, the return to God the first (*Keter*) begins. The Fibonacci number system reflects a notion of always taking a step back to the previous number in order to produce the next number.

The movement of the sun from sunrise into sunset in order to rise again the following day, produced a circular motion to the eyes of an ancient man. It also provided the ancient person with the perception of periodic return (to the beginning) of time or the recurrence of the eternity of life. That is how life keeps on reinventing itself through time. If life comes from nothingness, it is bound to return to nothingness.

The movement of the sun also brought about the perception of the principle of compliments, that is, the sun rises in order to set and it sets in order to rise. Man is born in order to die and dies in order to be born again. Although the birth and death of a man was not only confined into the physical birth and death as it is generally perceived, it was manifested in abstract ways such as ritual performances and ceremonies. The rites of passage were a good example of the perception of death of the old and the birth of the new, for a person to get into a new stage in life; he/she had to relinquish the old one.

The future had to eat away the past and the past had to be born from the future, that is, the future will also come to pass and become history tomorrow. The living had to feed from the dead and death feeds on life. This consciousness created a perception of roundedness of everything that **is** in the mind of the ancient man. Man, therefore sought to conform to the demands and the dictates of the universe. Most of the demands and the dictates of the universe were so complicated to describe and comprehended by ordinary man, they had to be expressed through body language such as dance.

But man later started to develop an ambition to manipulate the movements of the elements of the universe, for instance, trying to force

the rain to come down in case there was a delay according to the season. In this regard, the space and movement (through it) was very important.

Some spaces were permanent while others were made to be temporal depending on the purpose for the use of that particular space, for instance, the huts, kraals and the fire places were the permanent spaces for permanent usage by the people in a homestead. But spaces such as the arena (whether outside the homestead, in the bush or on the mountain and the cave), were for temporal usage by the members of the community.

These spaces had to be constructed or occupied in a certain way so as to serve the intended purpose, for instance, the fire place had to be rounded so as to ensure an equal distance for everyone seated around it. The construction and the occupation of these spaces (which were always in a round) defined the movements of the people occupying them.

When entering **lqhugwane**, one had to bend down towards the ground as it was abnormal for anyone to enter the hut upright. When someone was sweeping the floor using the ancient broom made of **Umsingizane**, she (since it was always a female) was supposed to bow down throughout the processes in respect of the ancestors. No-one was allowed to walk over the fireplace as it was one of the most revered places in the house. The

fire and its place at the centre of the house represent the heart and the first cause of the household. The sitting was also occupied according to the gender, age and the status of each occupant, for instance, the old man would sit close to the door while the rest of the occupants will sit towards the **Umsamo**, the youngest being the last at the end. The right hand side (as you enter the hut) was for the male while the left was for the female occupants.

At the upper-end of the house there is **Umsamo**. **Umsamo** is a secluded place which is used for the storage of **Amagula** and other important food stuff. In houses such as **Ixhiba lotshwala**, **Umsamo** is used to store the beer dedicated to the ancestors. But in the grandmother's house, **Umsamo** is used as a shrine for the burning of **Impepho** and a prayer to and consultation with the ancestors. It is also the place where a young girl who is at the state of **Ukuthomba** will be placed and spends the rest of **Umgonqo** at.

Generally, **Umsamo** is a sacred place of the ancestors and the owners of the home, to be respected by everyone at home. It is the place of purity and sacredness since no one can approach it standing upright or (in the case of modern times) wearing shoes or sandals as it was the case with the story of biblical Moses where he was ordered not to approach God's place wearing sandals. In the case of the house of **Isangoma** or **inyanga**,

Umsamo is central to the everyday activities of **Isangoma** or **inyanga**. Both professions, that is, **Ubunyanga** and **Ubungoma**, consult and refer to **Umsamo** prior to the execution of their duties. The most important medicinal properties are kept at **Umsamo**. Sometimes **Umsamo** is always covered in a sacred cloth or in a mat (*Isicephu*) made out of **Incema**. This covering of **Umsamo** puts an emphasis on the sacredness of **Umsamo** since no-one should have a full view of this sacred place except **Inyanga** or **Isangoma**.

When **Ithwasa** is coming out, he/she will symbolically come out from **Emsamo**, behind the covering cloth, already cited above. **Umsamo** is the back of the house yet it marks the beginning of the future for **Ithwasa**. It is somehow like sunset preceding sunrise.

Berglund, (1976; 102) states:

Umsamo is the place of the shades because it is cool and dark.

It becomes therefore ironical that the place of darkness becomes the place of light and wisdom, since **Isangoma** or **Inyanga** will always ask for **Ukukhanyiselwa** towards the problem at hand from **Umsamo**. When **Impepho** is burnt at **Umsamo**, it invokes the potency **Isangoma** needs to see beyond the sight of a normal person. It is like **Amadlozi/ Abalele** (the dead) are responsible for the living and the life of the **Awake** (**Abaphilayo**).

Umsamo is supposed to be the back or the last of the house as opposed to **umnyango** which is the front and the beginning of the house. But **umsamo** is the first part in the construction of the house. And when a person consults with the ancestral spirits at **Umsamo**, he/she have to give his/her back to **umnyango**.

The place of the dead is responsible for and the fountain of the life of the living. The past is the roadmap of the future/destiny of the living. The place secluded from the everyday living is the cornerstone of the daily life. **Umsamo** is the place where answers for day to day questions are sought.



Figure 2. Inside Iqhugwane, Iziko is situated in front of Insika.

But what defines a person, confines him/her as well. The circle defined man while at the same time confining him/her within it. The movements took a form of swaying of hips, rolling of the shoulders (backward and

forward) and the spinning of the head or shuffling of the feet while going around in a circular formation.

The circular motion and design got reflected on the utensils man used such as pots, calabashes, spoons and dishes. Sometimes even those utensils that seemed to be rectangular in shape, like **Ugqoko** and the grinding stones, had a rounded finishing. When eating, everybody had to sit around **Ukhamba lwamasi** or **Ugqoko lwenyama**.

Isicoco/Ungiyane of a **Zulu** man and **Inhloko** of a woman are typical examples of circular design in a dress of a man. Circular designs on the face of a young **Xhosa** woman are a testimony to the perception of circular motion awareness of the ancient man.

1.1.1. On the Circle and the Cycle.

Abathwa are always shown dancing around the fire, that is, their dances are circulating around the centre which happens to be the fire. As Vinnicombe, (1976; 308) suggests:

Bushman dances are usually held at night round a special dance fire

The movement (cycle) and the presence of the fire transform the space into a circle. According to the **Kabbalists** view and interpretation, the light is the element of fire which is considered the world of emanation.

Encounters at **Ndumo's Ingoma (Isizingili)** festival during the 1991 Easter holiday was an arena in the middle of the bush with **Ubhoko** standing at the centre and the fire next to it. Every group participating had to, first dance/drill around the fire before taking its position for the commencement of dancing. All groups maintained the counter-clockwise direction during the drill around the fire.

Formed out of the elements of fire, these *sefirot* (*Keter*, *Binah* and *Chokmah*) are considered the world of emanation, or *Atzilut*-Divine Mind, the realm of spirit- the world of eternity and nearness to God (Cohen, 2005;14). ***Keter*** represents Crown and Will; ***Binah*** represents Understanding; and ***Chokmah*** represents Wisdom. Below the triad of *Keter*, *Chokmah* and *Binah* is the ***Daat***, although not considered as one of the three *sefirot*, is represented by a dotted circle. It represents the knowledge.

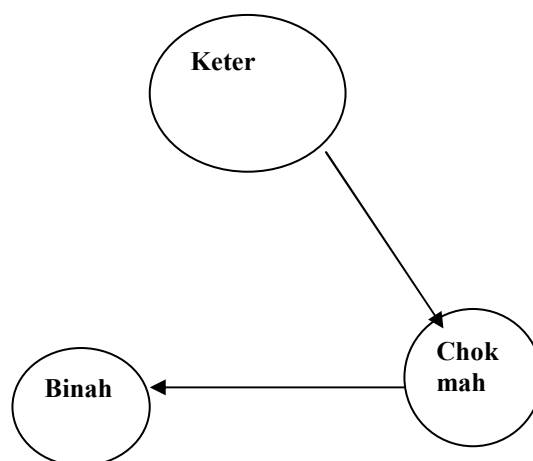


Figure 3.The structure representing the first *Sefirot* formed out the elements of fire.

[At the top is the crown (Keter), on the right is wisdom (Chokmah) and the left is understanding (Binah).]

'From the Void (total darkness), came the light which is an element of fire'.

Therefore the fire at the centre of the movement (dance) cycling around in the middle of the night is the symbolical reverting by the people towards their origin and nearness to their creator and knowledge. Motshekga, (1998; 5) states:

The process of emanations (or generations) began with the emanation of the first cause of principle of principles (Tapa or Pata) from the Great Silence or Absolute Darkness or Nothingness (Nahas/Nehas). Plotinus compared this Great Silence and the first cause or Principle of Principles to a point at the centre of a circle and described the Great Silence as the one which contained the possibility of all the future circles that could derive from it.

According to the Concise Oxford dictionary (p, 205) circle is,

a round plane figure where circumference is everywhere equidistant from its centre.

And, cycle (p, 288) is,

...a recurrent round or period. The time needed for one such round or period.

From the two explanations given above, it is evident that the circle and the cycle are complimentary to each other. The circle denotes a fixed spherical plane while on the other hand the cycle denotes the movement in time and space.

The triangle is therefore created by the mind (that forces movement), the time (required to complete the movement) and the space (occupied), that is,

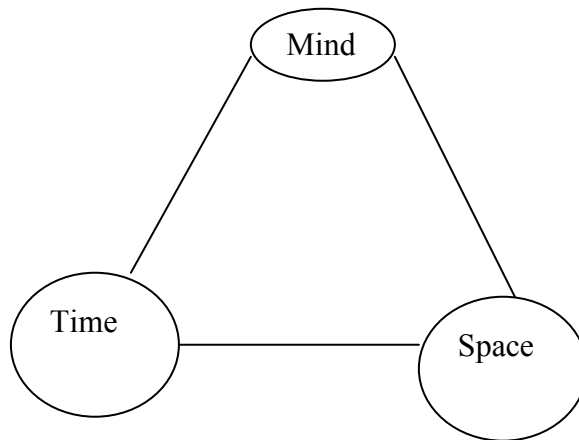


Figure 4. Mind-time-space triad

From the Hermetic tradition, which is regarded by many Western and sometimes African writers, as the basis of movements such as the Rosicrucian, Freemasons, Knights Templar and many other related organizations, the circle can denote that which is the last and it can also denote that which is the first. The circle is what **is**, **was** and **would be**. It represents, the past, present and the future. As Pike, (1871; 804) confirms:

The Hermetic science of the early Christian ages, cultivated also by...the Arabs, studied by the Chiefs of the Templars, and embodied in certain symbols of the higher Degrees of Freemasonry, may be accurately defined as the Kabbalah in active realization, or the Magic of works

The circle is the symbolic representation of things that are sometimes beyond the mind's ability to comprehend. Concepts such as the origins of

man, although through myths and legends man tries to explain and comprehend, have remained above human mind's understanding. The circle becomes the only perceivable symbolic representation and the explanation of the origins of man. What is commonly attributed to the origins of man are humility and enlightenment at the highest form. This is the place where we are all one and selfless. It is all in one and one in all that **is, was and would be**.

The circle is the representation of the perfect balance and harmony. That is where the beginning meets the end; the positive compliments the negative. The circle is where everything begins and it is also the place where everything collapses. It is everything and it is also nothing. It is the place of total silence and total darkness while on the other hand it is the place of absolute light and big bang. Among the Zulu, **Inkatha** is a symbol of national unity, completeness and totality. When **Inkatha** is wrapped with a skin of a python, it becomes a symbol of unity and the strength of the nation. The python is a symbol of strength and patience and it is highly associated with ancestors and divinity.

The circle represents the place where the unknown is revealed and is made known and the place where the known is concealed and made unknown. It is the representation of the duality of things that **are, were and would be**. As the Shamans dance in a circular motion they enter the dark

world of the unknown to be enlightened with the ways of the dead. To the ordinary person the world of the dead is the place of darkness and the unknown but to the Shamans it is the world of enlightenment and wisdom.

Koch, (2007; 5) states:

The circle is traditionally taken as representing God. Before the universe was created there was nothing else *but* God. Beyond the boundary of the circle nothing existed not even time and space. The circumference of the circle is that which encompasses all that is, and the area is all that is.

God is the creator of everything that is and God is everything that **is**. All forms and kinds of creation are contained within the circle (God) and it is God who defines their being. All forms and kinds acquire their identity from God. Each kind and form has its opposite which is identical to itself. But each kind and form recognizes itself from other kinds and form un-identical to it.

Koch, (2007; 5) further contends:

Implicit within a circle, and its most fundamental product or creation is its diameter. The diameter is a straight line- it defines two points, its end points, both of which lie on the circumference located at extreme opposite positions. The line represents a single object, unity, and its end points symbolize duality or polar opposites.

The diameter of the circle creates a sense of one in two or two in one. The two end points of the diameter are identical yet opposite. This is the source of creation and identity since one can recognize the other. A male

and a female (human beings) is one but at opposite and complimenting positions. If one is on the right the other is on the left. If one is above the other is below.

Cohen, (2005; 14) when quoting Rabbi Luria stated:

...When God willed to behold God, a vacuum or void needed to be created. After God provided this vacated space (which some people say is a black hole), a beam of light penetrated the space.

The cycle on the other hand is perceived as the evolution of and the devolution of everything that **is**, **was** and **would be**. In the case of human beings, the person is born to die and dies to be born in other sphere of existence. Both in life and in death, man either evolve towards the highest point of being, like puberty, marriage and aging or death, ancestry and deity. In other words, the cycle where everything is becoming (to reach its highest point and move towards degeneration towards its lowest point) and never get into a point where it should be perceived as done or complete.

1.1.2. On the centre

The centre is the point of complete and absolute silence, stillness and darkness. It is the representation of the first point of construction and it is also the representation of the last point of destruction. It is the point where everything begins and the point where everything ends. If the centre is the first cause and principle within the circle, it becomes therefore the

masculine component when the rest of the circle remains the feminine component. Nkeita, (1982; 210) states:

...Male dances may be angular or sharp, while female dances are rounded and flowing.

Long before the discovery by Copernicus that the sun was the centre of the solar system, ancient Hermits were aware of the fact that the sun was the centre of the solar system and it was not moving, only the planets around it were in motion:

...for the sun is situated in the center of the cosmos, wearing it like a crown, (Corpus Hermeticum XVI, 59),

Yates, (1964; 154-5) contends:

Copernicus's discovery came out with the blessing of Hermes Trismegistus upon its head, with that famous work in which Hermes describes the sun-worship of the Egyptians in their magical religion.

Although to some European scholars, the claims that *Hermeticism* originated from Egypt is not easily acceptable due to their perpetual view of Africa as a dark continent up until the arrival of the Europeans. And the claims made by Frances A. Yates on the influences of Hermeticism on astronomy raised some objections from some scholars such as Professor Rosen who was a science historian. (Bernal, 1987:156)

Rosen's argument, according to Bernal, is that, "the development of science is a succession of great men's heroic leaps from darkness into light". To Rosen, Copernicus was 'neither a Platonist, nor a Neo-Platonist, nor an Aristotelian, he was a Copernican, (Bernal: 1987; 156). But Alford, (1996; 113) contends:

When Copernicus placed the Sun at the centre of the Solar System, it might have seemed, at the time, a revolutionary suggestion. But Copernicus was not the first to identify the true picture- he was only rediscovering what had been known in ancient times. It may well be that Copernicus drew directly from ancient sources of information, for there is no doubt that pockets of ancient knowledge had survived, driven underground into secret religious traditions. For instance, the thirteenth century *Zo'har*, a central work in the literature of Jewish mysticism known as the *Kabbala*, stated quite clearly that the Earth turned around its own axis.

It seems as if the conception of the centrality of the sun in the universe was inherent to the ancient people and it was represented by the centre stage always occupied by the fire in their houses and some ritual performances. The planets are said to be revolving around the sun in the same way the San would dance around the fire during the trance dance.

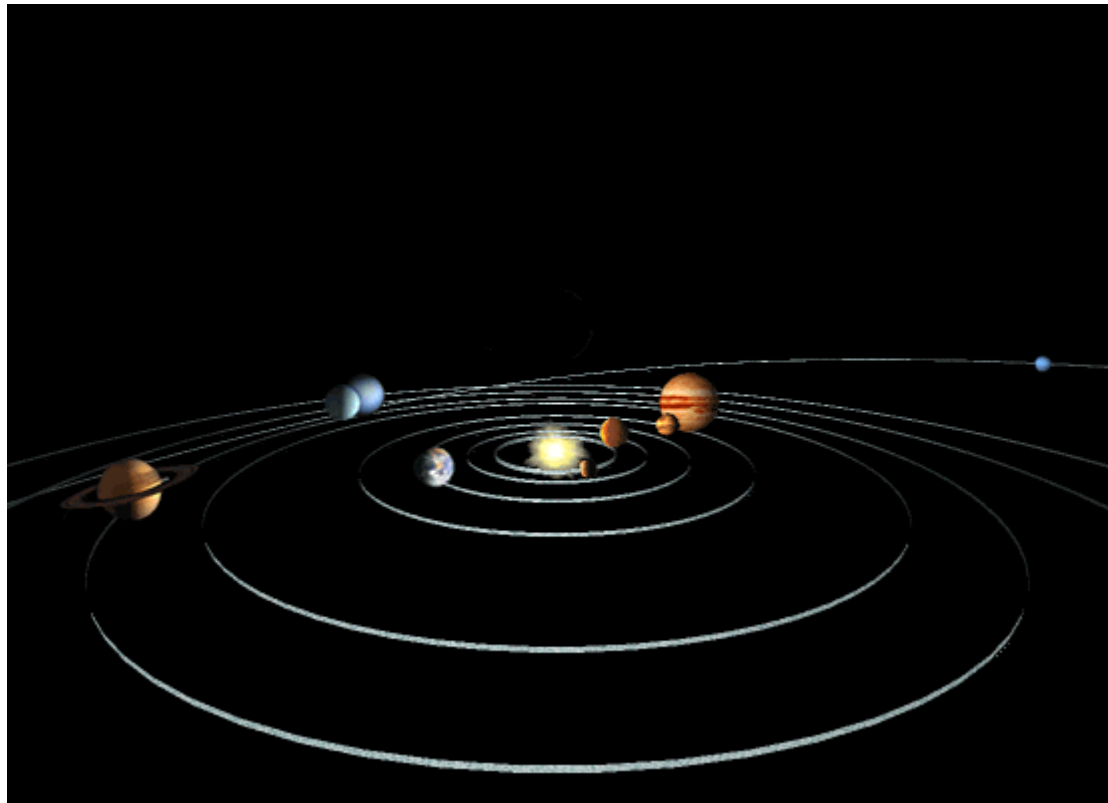


Figure 5. Showing the planets revolving around the sun in our solar system.

And the modern geophysical studies of the planet earth suggest that the core of the earth is a ball of fire which might be explained by the placing of the fire at the centre of **iqhugwane** of the Zulu people.

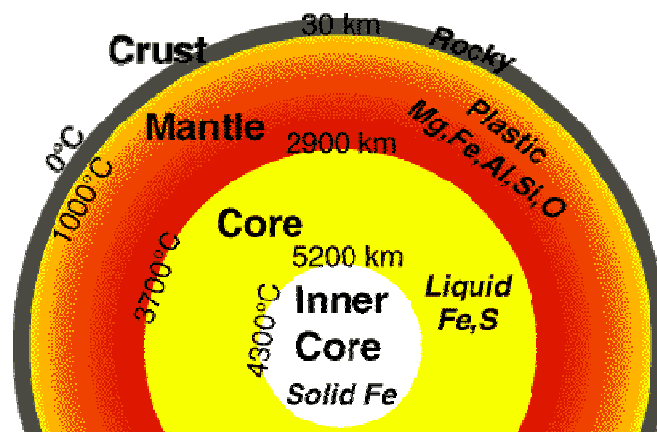


Figure 6. An illustration of the layers of the earth and their temperatures of heat.

Swerdlow and Neugebauer, (1984; 50-1) also suggest:

...the influence of Hermeticism on astronomy did not end with Copernicus. A century later, the great astronomer Johann Kepler was deeply immersed in Neo-Platonism or Neo-Pythagoreanism.

Thoh Hermes Trismegistus was a corruption by the Greeks of the name to an Egyptian sage known as *TauTau Harama*, the moon god and the great teacher of mankind to whom things like Mathematics, Astrology, Medicine and Architects are attributed. So the scholars who studied Mathematics, astrology, Medicine, Physics and Architect using the Hermitic doctrine(s) as the basis, were referred to as Hermits. Kircher, (1652, vol 3; 568), translated by Yates, (1964; 417-18) gives expression to Hermes as:

...the Egyptian, who first instituted the hieroglyphs, thus becoming the prince and parent of all Egyptian theology and philosophy, was the first and most ancient among the Egyptians and first rightly thought of divine things; and engraved his opinion for all eternity on lasting stones and huge rocks. Thence Orpheus, Musaeus, Linus, Pythagoras, Plato, Eudoxus, Parminides, Melissus, Homerus, Euripides, and others learned rightly of God and of divine things.... And this Trismegistus was the first who in his Pimander and Asclepius asserted that God was **One** and Good, whom the rest of philosophers followed.

Modern scientists have taken Copernicus's discovery further into suggesting that while the planets are evolving around the sun, each planet is also revolving on its axis. That means, within each planet, there is a central point which is absolutely still.

The concept of the sun and the planets (heliocentric) is reflected in the family set up of the indigenous family of the people of southern Africa. The royal family was regarded as the family of families. It was the centre of all families and therefore an absolute family. It (royal family) was the origin and the last/end of families, the alpha and the omega of families.

As modern science contends, there are more than one solar system in one galaxy and more than one galaxy in the universe, so as the families of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa, that is, each family was a centre by itself and from it grew other families. These families will all be connected to the original family which then becomes a central family of them all. This will keep on repeating itself up to a point where a clan will be formed. As the clan multiply, more clans will be formed and a nation will be formed. The whole nation with all its clan units will be attached to the central family which was the royal family.

But within the royal family itself, there was a central family (**Indlunkulu**) where the king was supposed to be born. With all the expansion within the **Indlunkulu** itself, the absolute central point had to be kept tight and still so as to maintain the perfect harmony within the nation. Therefore the families, clans and nations were the microcosms of the universal macrocosms. This awareness of the universal set-up manifested itself not

only on the family structures. It also manifested itself and imprinted itself on cultural expressions such as dance, song and music.

1.1.3. On Hermeticism

Hermeticism is the belief in the magical, mystical and philosophical power of the **Hermetic texts**. Duquette, (2006; 107) on quoting Mackey states:

Hermetic Science-the art or science of alchemy, so termed from Hermes Trismegistus who was looked up to by the alchemists as the founder of their art. The Hermetic philosophers say that all the sages of antiquity, such as Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and Pythagoras, were initiated into the secrets of their science; and that the hieroglyphics of Egypt and all the fables of mythology were invented to teach the dogmas of Hermetic philosophy.

The Hermeticist movement existed in Late Antiquity and again in the Renaissance (Bernal, 1987: 130).

Bernal, (1987; 131) further states:

Late Antiquity was obsessed with the number three; This can be seen in Hermes Trismegistus.

Central to Hermeticism was the trinity of God with the main part of the trinity being hidden. The hidden God being, the First principle and infinite could be partially perceived. But more important was the view by the Hermetists that there was only one of everything.

The trinity is a further explanation of one, the totality of everything which is also better illustrated by the number zero (0) the beginning and the end of everything. But on the other hand zero is the symbol of that which has no beginning and no ending. Reality was seen as a single all-encompassing totality in perfect harmony. Baigent and Leigh, (1997; 27) state:

Within this harmony, everything was interconnected with everything else through a mesh of interlocking relationships. Such relationships rested on the principle of analogy. Things echoed other things, reflected other things, mirrored other things, paralleled other things, corresponded to other things. Reality comprised an intricate, incessantly vibrating and living web of correspondences.

Baigent and Leigh, (1997; 27) in reference to the Emerald Tablet, further elaborates:

The above comes from below, and the below from above-the work of the miracle of the one...the structure of the microcosm is in accordance with the structure of the macrocosm. In other words, the lesser mirrors the greater and the greater the lesser. (Emerald Tablet).

And Moteshegga, (1998; 2) also states:

...True without deceit, certain and most true. What is below is like what is above and what is above is like what is below, for the performing of the marvels of the One thing.

1.1.4. On Kabbalah/Cabbala

The Concise Oxford Dictionary, (1964; 155) defines Cabbala

... as a Jewish mystical tradition.

Cohen, (2005; 7) states:

The word *Kabbalah* means “to receive” or “that which is constantly being received”

It is an esoteric doctrine highly used by the Rabbis in the interpretation of the scriptures. **Kabbalism** is based on the belief that everything is made up of light and energy, all condensed in different sizes and packages. It is also based on the principle that God is everything and God is also nothing. Therefore if God is one, all is one. **Kabbalists** often use the expression “as above, so as below”.

1.1.5. On the indigenous knowledge systems

The family was central to the lives of the Indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. Everything a new born baby had to know was transmitted through family structures and institutions. The norms and values of the people were instilled into the young and old through processes intertwined into family daily life. Activities such as cultivating and processing of food, herding of cattle, use of medicine and the construction of shelter were crucial in the passing on of knowledge.

Such things like wealth and trading enterprises were either inherited from or taught to the young by the elders of the family. But it is important to understand the essence of the indigenous family, knowledge and values so as to make sense of the systems involved in the transmitting of indigenous knowledge by the indigenous people.

1.1.6. The sacred language.

The study on the livelihoods of Ancient people sometimes gives an impression that they had direct conversations with the gods. Therefore the language whether spoken or written, had to be sacred. Things like hieroglyphs by the Egyptians, paintings in the cave by the San, architectural and the positioning of the Pyramids, all suggest sacred conversation with the higher powers and wisdom.

Yates, (1964; 263) when quoting Bruno from the text, *De Magia*, says:

...the sacred letters used among the Egyptians were called hieroglyphs...which were images...taken from things of nature, or their parts. By using such writings and voices, the Egyptians used to capture with marvelous skill the language of the gods.

The images of the eland, rain making animals, arrows and humans featured prominently on the rock art by the San. But lines in forms of zigzag, circles and triangles were also a common feature among the San paintings and they were a representation of some levels of deeper meanings and symbolism.

1.1.7. The Indigenous family of Southern Africa

Polygamy was a common practice among the Indigenous peoples of Southern Africa like the Abantu. A man will have many wives and the wives will give him many children and the children produce more grandchildren. The man was therefore the centre of the family. Everyone in the family is (was) connected to one another through the man who is

(was) the father. But it is important to note that, although polygamy was accepted as a norm among Africans, it was forced, it was a matter of choice to individuals.

When all the children and grandchildren reach a stage whereby they themselves start their own families, the same set-up explained above will ensue. Within each family there is (was) **Undlunkulu** who is (was) regarded as the centre of the family. But every part of the extended family is a point on its own with its own centre, for instance, within **Indlunkulu** itself, there is (was) the central family of all the houses of **Indlunkulu**. **Ikhohlo** or **Iqadi** will also have its own central family which connects everybody who is **Iqadi** or **Ikhohlo** of that family.

This situation will continue repeating itself up to the point where the clan is formed and sometimes the whole nation. The clan or the nation will be held together by the knowledge and the recognition of its origin such as the common ancestor or the common house as in the case of **Abantu** who claim their origin from the common ancestor known as **Ntu**. The members of the clan and the nation regard themselves as the people of the same blood. The language is the same, although it may vary in dialects, it is still the same nonetheless. The set of customs, belief system and their livelihood (in terms of the food they prefer, the houses they built and the dress they wear) are the same.

One of the greatest proponents of the principles of Nationalism born out of Clan-sm born out of family-sm, Dr Sun Yet -sen , the founder of Taiwan, in his book entitled, 'The three principles of the people' believes that it is the people of the same blood/race, language, customs, beliefs and livelihood who form a nation.

He (Yet-sen, 1981; 2) states:

...nationality has developed through natural forces.

Therefore, the blood of ancestors transmitted through the family, the clan and into the nation, become the central point of the big circle of families, clans and the nation. The King or the Queen is the symbolical representative of this common blood/ origin and destiny.

The layout of a home is (was) the perfect illustration of how the people perceived their connectedness to one another. If one uses the layout of the Zulu home as an example, one is soon confronted by a very simple yet complex scenario. Firstly, there is the big outer circle which engulfs everything that is part of that homestead. In modern terms, that could be referred to or be used as the fence. Amid the outer circle are huts built in a circular layout. And amid the huts layout is the kraal.

Bleeker, (1970; 30) states:

In the centre of the large kraal was another and smaller circle, protected by a second fence that also had only one opening. This area was the cattle kraal-. The cattle kraal

was men's territory, and women were not permitted within it.

This can also be viewed as another subconscious conception of the structure of the earth and its layers. The earth consists of three main layers which are the crust, the mantle and the core; although the core and the mantle can be further divided into outer and inner core and mantle respectively, they still constitute one layer each.

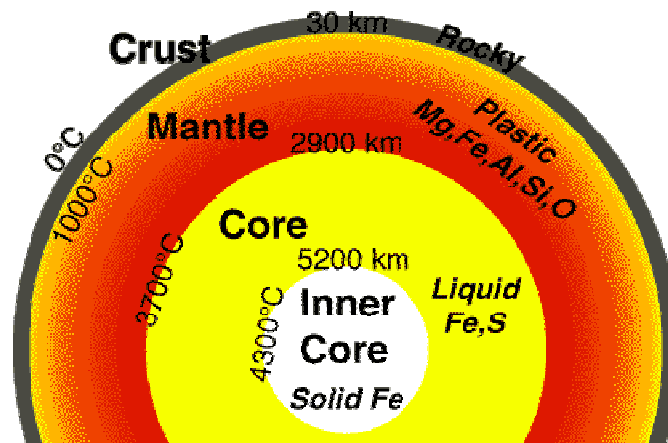


Figure 7. In the figure above; the crust can represent the fence, mantle representing the houses and the inner core representing the kraal and the pole usually found at the centre of the kraal.

From the statement cited above, one immediately comes across a situation of everything repeating itself on other spheres; that is, bigger units duplicating themselves in smaller units and smaller units duplicating themselves in bigger units.

Isimo somuzi Wesizulu

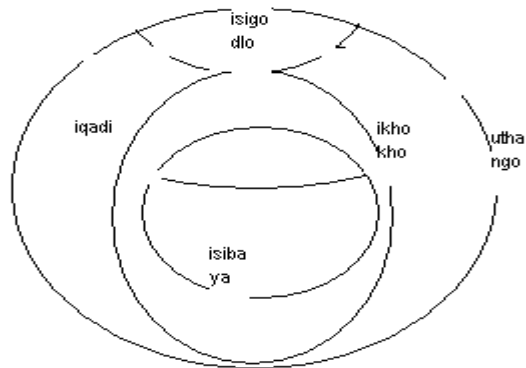


Figure 8. Isimo sesakhiwo somuzi wenkosi YaMaZulu

The kraal is like **Inkaba** (navel) of the entire home, like a child born connected to its mother through the navel. **Isibaya** is the centre of the home so as **Inkaba**, the centre of the body. The home is connected to its origins through the activities that take place in the kraal, like slaughtering of the beast in appeasement of the ancestors. When a girl is leaving her home to get married, she will be taken into a kraal and the family anthem will be sung as a way of informing the ancestors about the departure of the girl at the same time asking the ancestors to accompany the young girl and help her in her new marriage.

Like a baby in its mother's womb, feeds through the navel so as the kraal being the place where cattle that provide milk and meat are kept. There

are also things like **Upata**, which are stored in pits (**Isangcobe**) dug in the kraal which are part of food stuff for the members of the family.

The connection between the kraal and **Inkaba** is of great importance to the existence of a person. When the baby is born, **Inkaba** is cut and buried in the kraal. As the Zulu will ask, "*Ikuphi Inkaba yakho*" meaning where is the place of your origin. Therefore, **Inkaba** is both the centre and the origin of the body. During the formation of the baby in the mother's womb, the entire body is gradually formed out of and around **Inkaba**.

The place of origin (**Indabuko**) can also denote the identity (**Uhlanga**) of a person. **Amazulu** believe that they came/originated from the reed (**Uhlanga/ Umhlanga**). **Uhlanga**, therefore becomes the first cause from whence everybody emanates. When **Amazulu** refers to **UMvelingqangi** as "*Owavela Ohlangeni*", they mean the first to originate from the first cause. Berglund, (1976; 34) elaborates on the meaning of the name '**Mvelingqangi**'.

...is a word with roots in **-vela** (come forth, appear, come into view), and **-ngqangi** (the first, the origin).

Although **UMvelingqangi** is generally perceived as masculine,

Berglund, (1976; 34) further points out that, *ngqangi*, refers to,

...the first-born of the twins.

The second-born being the feminine but one with the masculine. In this case **UMvelingqangi** could be likened to the kabbalist's **Adam Kadmon** whom is referred to as the first to emanate from God and the blueprint of human being(s). It was from **Adam Kadmor** that both male (Adam) principle and female (Eve) principle emanated.

It has also become common with Africans, particularly those at the Diaspora and to such groups like Rastafarians, to refer to Africa as their roots. This simple means the place of origin. **Impande**, represents steadfast and growth, like a tree which relies on the depth of its roots on the soil for its growth. In this instance, **Impande** is used to refer to the place of origin and identity.

Berglund, (1976; 36) also suggests another reference to **UNKulunkulu** by the Zulus as **UNsondo**, that is, the action repeated again and again:

UNsondo is like a wheel which is returning to its starting place and then repeats again.

The biblical story of creation, Holy Bible, (1945; 1) suggests that God said,

“Let us make a man on Our image, after Our likeness”.

The statement above suggests the image of God repeating itself over and over through its creation. The plurality of God also is in line with the **Gnostic** view of the duality of God as in both the male and female, and also the **kabbalists** view of **Adam Kadmon**, God's blueprint of mankind

(**Tetragrammaton**). **Tetragrammaton** is one of the triad features of the Magical Circle and the magical Triangle of the Freemasons. **Tetragrammaton** is also featured in both the Hexagram and Pentagram of Solomon.

Therefore **Isibaya** as **Inkaba** of the home represents the origin of the entire home and everybody who live in it. **Isibaya** is the place of the ancestors, who are the forefathers of the home and the originators of the lineage of the home. But the kraal is also a big circle on its own right with its own central point or navel in a form of a pole right at the centre. At the top end of the kraal, there is always a semi-arc seclusion which is sometimes used to keep the new born calves or the exclusive cows for the head of the family. In the case of the king, the cows that produce the milk to be used by the king are kept apart from the rest of the cattle.

But looking at the layout of King **Dingane's** Royal palace (**Umgungundlovu**), one is confronted by the layout that is similar to that of the kraal. The general layout of the palace is identical to that of ordinary **Zulu** homestead but at the top end of the huts circle, there is a secluded semi-circular section of the huts which on meeting up with the semi-arch of the outer circle/fence, they complete a circle which forms the crown of the homestead. This is/was the area referred to as **Isigodlo**. It is where the **Indlunkulu** is to be found. **Isigodlo** is the mirror reflection of **Umsamo**

of the house, particularly the one of **Indlunkulu** and **Indlu-kagogo**. Sometimes these two houses are referred to as **Indlu-yangenhla** (upper house). The same pattern is also reflected in the kraal, whereby the special cows for the king are kept at the secluded place at the upper-end of the main kraal.

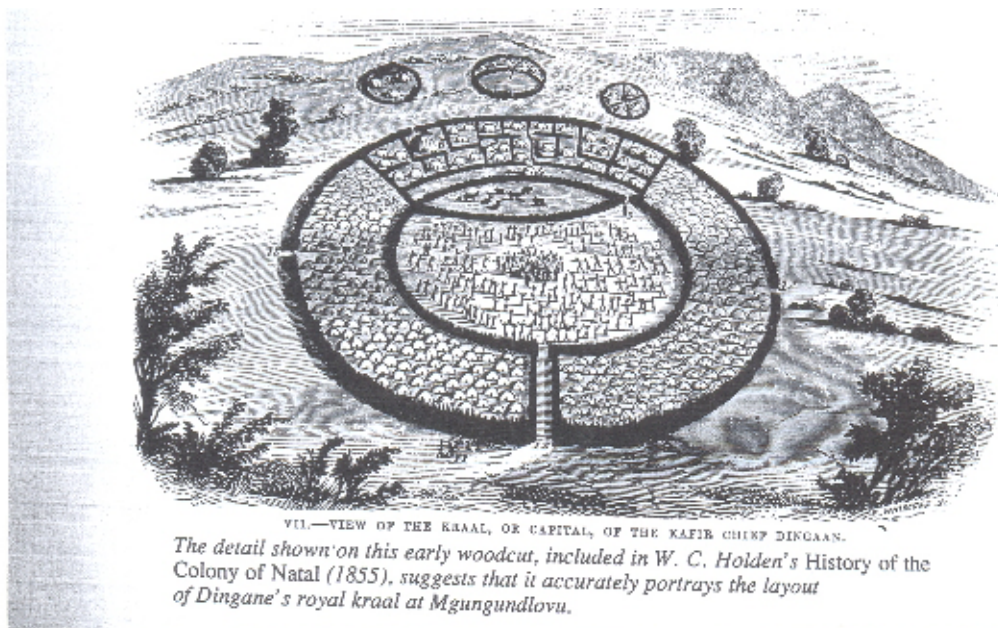


Figure 9. Layout of Umgungundlovu, capital of king Dingane.

On the left hand side of **Indlunkulu**, **Ikhohlo** is situated and on the right hand side of **Indlunkulu**, **Iqadi** is situated. Here the triangle is formed, that is:

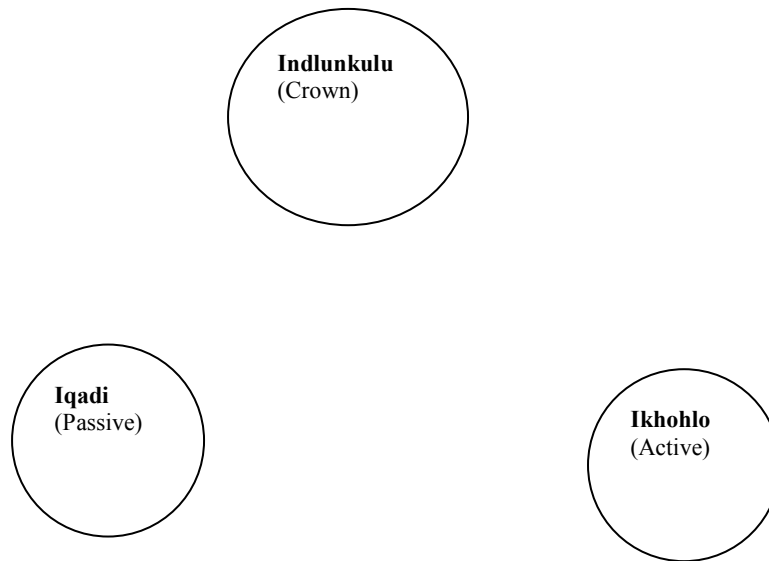


Figure 10. Zulu main houses triad

The Master Monograph of the Rosicrucian Order, private mandamus number 3; has got the following about the triangle:

...One, of itself and by itself, is imperfect. One represents a germ, a primal element, a beginning. It may be unit in itself, but it cannot manifest itself while it is alone.

The manifestation of **One** result into **Two** as in the case of a circle whereby the centre as a germ manifest itself into a bigger circle. This is the basis of the law of opposites which are in essence the same but in opposite direction and place.



Figure 11. The two circles above illustrate the law of duality and the manifestation of One into Two. The first is the centre manifesting into a circle and the second one is the diameter touching two points of the same circle.

The concept of **Ubuntu** which says, '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' (I am because You are) means that a human being can only know and comprehend his/her being through other human beings. *Indoda yindoda ngomkayo; Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu bayo*. The concept of such interdependency in all beings created a harmonious co-existence which resulted into a sort of Hegelian dialectical concept: *Thesis and Anti-Thesis produces a result, the Synthesis*. The life itself was a synthesis of compliments, contradictions and conflicts.

This universal principle (duality) as it has been cited above can manifest itself as complimentary, contradictory and paradoxically. This law/principle is central to every ritualistic engagement among the Africans. Every ritual act is a return to the beginning and the move to the last, which is an inherent conception of the cyclical nature of time. For instance, during the initiation novices/neophytes are striped naked, grounded and humiliated (made to feel like nothing, children and foolish) in order to be accepted as full human beings after.

Initiation also represents death and rebirth. This concept is well illustrated during the initiation of the **Chokwe** (and other related neighbours) boys whereby a female mask **Mwana Pwo** is danced as a reminder of the theme of death and rebirth. It is also a reminder to the male initiates of the role of the female in their lives and ideal values of a woman. Although danced by a man, it is supposed to bring fertility to the women of the village.

In the **Kabbalist's** tree of life or **Jacob's ladder**, the crown represents God, the Crown and the Absolute Will. This is the state where everybody is one in perfect harmony. But the perfect harmony is a result of two opposites or compliments converge in total balance. This is the law of the duality of all things that **are**, **were** and **would be**. Mutwa, (1969; 21) states:

The tree of life is the most revered deity throughout Africa, even today. Numerous representative designs are engraved on clay pots, burnt into wooden spoons, trays, and other vessels. It is also frequently depicted in all kinds of ornamental carvings, in ebony, ivory and mahogany.

He (Mutwa) further contends:

The Zulus, too, are strong believers in this deity, but some interprets it as a huge hollow reed, rather than as a tree. They call it Uhlanga LweSizwe.

(Mutwa, 1969: 21-22).

Therefore, **INKosi YoHlanga** is the personification of the crown, the Center and the reed of the nation. **INKosi YoHlanga** is the tree of life of

the nation. It is this tree of life that the maidens/virgins during the Reed ceremony bring to the King.

The King is the Crown and the Absolute. The left and the right are the principles of compliments, that is, the evil and the righteousness, the male and the female, the right and the left, the top and the bottom, the dark and the light. As the hermetic saying goes, "*As above so as below*".

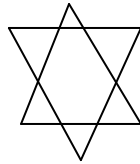


Figure 12. The Hermetic sign for compliments; *as above so as below*

The top gives meaning to the bottom so as the bottom to the top. The popular saying which goes thus, "*Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu bayo*" further illustrate the principle of compliments. On the other hand, there was no a people without the king or the Queen, although nowadays the king has been replaced by the president. The irony being that, man will always seek for the central being to give meaning to his/her living.

The active represents Adam (male principle) while on the other hand, the passive represents Eve (female principle).

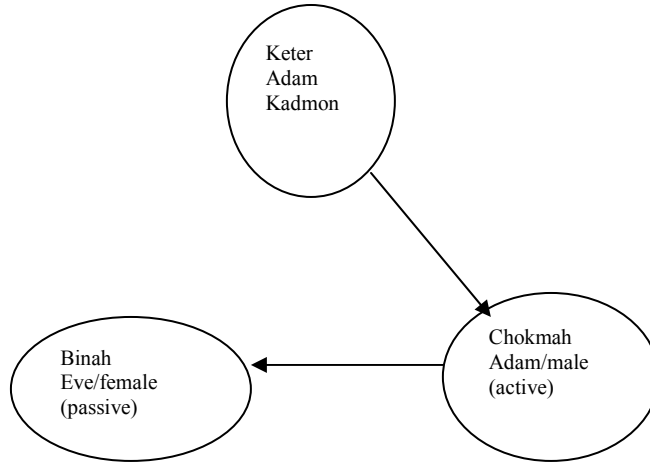


Figure 13. The first three sefirot of the Kabbala

Inside a normal **Zulu** hut, the above manifestation can be found whereby at the back of the hut there is a place called **Umsamo** where the ancestors are found; on the right hand side is the place referred to as **Isilili sabelilisa** and on the left is **Isilili sabelifazane**.

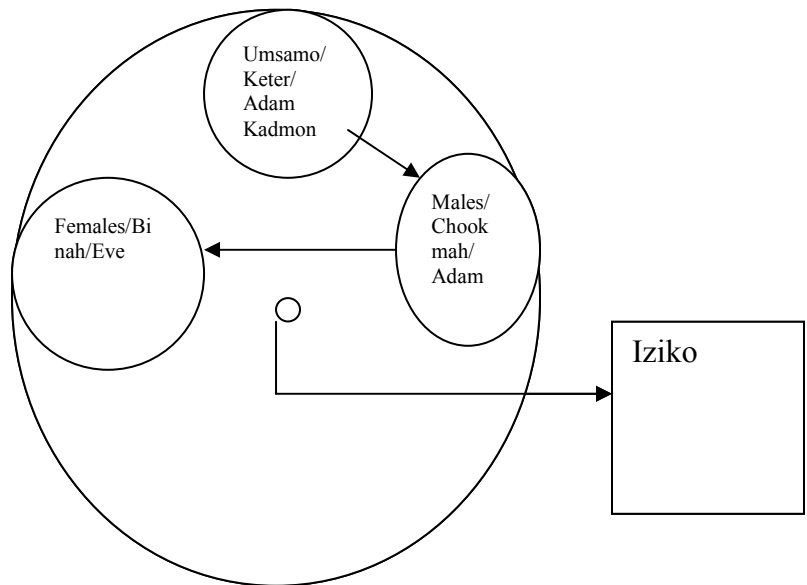


Figure 14. The inside of a Zulu hut in juxtaposition with three kabbala's sefirots

As the **Kabbalists** assert that **Adam Kadmon** is the blueprint for mankind from-which God created both males and females; **Umsamo** is the place for the shades or **Abadala** (elders) of the homestead from-which the family was formed or created. It is from their blood or gins that the members of the family are formed. Therefore males are like memory sticks carrying the formula for the formation of every member of the family.

Therefore the place known as **Isigodlo** is (was) a symbolical representation of the origins of the nation or the people. The king is the symbolic personification and the representation of the primordial penis and the first principle or the principle of principles and from him, everybody was created. The kingdom is the centre of all those that are living. As the King/Queen being the heir to the throne of the kingdom, he/she cannot claim it as his/ her personal property. The kingdom therefore belongs to the people and their creator.

Inside the huts the similar lay-out is repeated. The hut is a rounded structure with the fire place right at the centre. Cooking takes place there and fire besides being used for cooking, is the source of warmth and energy for the members of the family. At the top-end of the hut, there is a secluded place sometimes used as a shrine (for communicating with the ancestors) or to store food.

The centre is a microcosm of the bigger circle and on the other hand the bigger circle is the macrocosm of the centre. The homestead is the microcosm of the clan or the nation and the nation or the clan is the macrocosm of the family or the homestead. The hut is the microcosm of the entire homestead and the homestead is the macrocosm of the hut.

Insika does not just hold the top of the hut from falling only instead it also connects the top of the hut to the bottom.

1.1.8. Microcosm and Macrocosm Expressions

The state whereby the small mirrors the big or the single mirrors the multiple is referred to as the micro-macrocosmic expression.

Baigent and Leigh, (1997; 28) elaborate:

The structure of the microcosm is in accordance with the structure of the macrocosm. In other words, the lesser mirrors the greater and the greater the lesser.

Baigent and Leigh, (1997; 28) further assert:

...Man is a mirror of the cosmos and vice versa.

The Judeo-Christian notion of 'God created man on his image' seems to owe its roots on the principle of micro-macrocosmic tradition. Everyman/woman is a mirror image of God. That simple means, a human being is a microcosm of a macrocosm which is God. But every living

creature is divided into male and female, therefore if God have created everything on God's image, it is appropriate to conclude that God is both the male and female.

The life on earth mirrored or complimented the life beyond and that should have prompted the ancestral "worship" among the ancient people. There was a general belief among the ancient Africans that the ancestors are those people who are asleep when the living are awake and they are awake when the living are asleep. Sleeping and awakening are two complimenting states of being so as being dead and being alive. Harmonizing the relationship between the living and the dead was of utmost importance.

The centre is the microcosm of the macrocosmic circle. All the elements of the circle are condensed in the centre. It seems as if the circle is born out of the centre and what give life to the centre is the circle since there could be no centre without the circle. There could be no microcosm without the macrocosm and vice versa.

1.1.9. Knowledge and Value System

Every nation in the world owes its being to its Sages and Ancestors. The Sages and Ancestors have a tendency of leaving certain rules and guidelines under-which the future generations should liveby. It is the duty

of the elders and expects of certain professions and knowledge to pass on the information and knowledge to the future generations.

The information and knowledge of the people is passed on through the stories of the legends, folktales, riddles, games and rituals. But when it comes to professions such as medical and spiritual healing, craftwork, architect, cooking and cultivation, practical tuition by the parents and mentors take charge. But some information is (was) passed on through imitation of the elders by the young ones, like in the case of a young San boy who learn to hunt by following his father. The young San boy learns to tiptoe by walking behind his father and placing his foot exactly where the father has put his. When the father decides to kneel and crawl on his knees, the boy will follow suit. Eventually the boy will grow up to become a formidable hunter without his father literally telling him what to do.

Some of the knowledge is (was) acquired during play. Young boys learn to carve pots and utensils while playing with clay and wood. Girls learn to tend households by watching their mothers and listening to the stories told by their mothers or their elders/seniors (**Amaqhikiza**). Children were taught at a very young age to value and respect their elders and the rest of the community. Self respect and pride were also cornerstones for values and virtue instilled among the young ones. From that a sense of

identity developed among the young ones which culminated to the accomplishment of self esteem and dignity.

1.2. Statement of the problem and hypothesis

Circular movements, circular formations and circular designs in the performances of indigenous dances of Southern Africa are beyond mere artistic expression. Instead, they are the common *entoptic* (mentally generated images) representation of altered state of consciousness and visual representation of the peoples' thought patterns.

Circular orientations in the African indigenous cultural expressions are a representation of the conscious awareness of the functions of the energies of the universe and the means of aligning themselves (people) accordingly for the enhancement of the power those energies emulate. They are both a revelation and concealment to processes of mythology, legendary and magic.

Fagan, (1998; 62) states:

...there are three general stages in the sequence of mental imagery during altered states of consciousness .

The first stage, according to Fagan, is the experience of images by the participant(s), the second stage is an attempt by the participant(s) to make sense of the images and the third stage is the realization of the images.

This is the world where images become real in an unreal situation. Sometimes, the circular movements and images become the sources of power for man above the elements of nature,

as Hackett, (1996; 116) puts it:

In San society, shamanism is practiced mainly at a trance dance. The combination of rhythmic clapping by women and the circular dancing of the men is believed to release the supernatural potency in the songs and the shamans themselves.

It is this (supernatural) potency by which shamans heal the sick and force the rain to come down or tame the game during the hunt.

Although the awareness onto the circular orientation among the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa was lived almost by every member of the society, its philosophical comprehension remained a prerogative of the few initiated and highly trained individuals. These were the individuals who were ever engaged in oral, physical or psychological discourses that took place on daily bases. As Peek, (1991:14) rightfully puts it:

... [m]any African peoples claim that 'real' knowledge is hidden, secret, available only to certain people capable of using it properly.

1.3. The rationale for the Research

African Renaissance is calling on every African in all walks and positions in life to wake-up into searching and asserting himself or herself in African wisdom and opulence.

For centuries, Africa's wisdom, her wealth and contribution in the civilization of the world has been nullified, devalued and misinterpreted. The irony has been that most of the highly valuables, in a form of artifacts, knowledge in mathematics, astrology and architect, Africa has ever produced have always been kept in secret and used in Europe while Africa was being reduced into and referred to as a dark continent.

Africans have a tendency to compare, contrast and define themselves in European terms. For anything in Africa to be termed or categorized, it needs the European frame work. For instance, for art to be regarded as such, it must fit into a Eurocentric template, for instance, the dance piece must have a sequence so as to qualify as choreography. African philosophy should compare to well known European philosophers and it should also be the sole property of the few intellectuals.

In Africa, every aspect of life, such as wisdom, religion, art and customs are functional for daily life purposes. There are areas of specialization such as medicine and artisanship but every homestead is able and

knowledgeable of certain herbs or craftwork. Every man or woman is able to communicate with God or ancestors without having to wait for the high priest or the king. But it is important to note that, there was little necessity for an ordinary person to communicate directly with God except for issues of national interests where the king, elders and priest/shamans were presiding. Ordinary people's daily spiritual engagements were confined to the conversation with the ancestral spirits of which the senior person in the family was to preside (pleading and reporting on everybody's behalf).

In European view, true and powerful religion and spirituality should happen in church, temple or any secluded building where people congregate on special days and periods. In Africa, particularly, southern Africa, spirituality and religion was an individual (family) affair. It was channeled through the individual (family) lineage and life style. Individuals (families) saw God as ever-present in their own homes and activities.

Life was not only for the living, it was for the dead too. Ancestors were perceived as those of us who are asleep when we are awake and awake when we are asleep. The homestead was not just a place occupied by only the living instead it was seen as a place of both the living and the dead. The irony is that, the living entrusted their daily life upon the dead. So life was a broader phenomenon, encompassing both the living and the dead.

African renaissance is therefore calling every African to re-align his/her psyche alongside the wisdom as was laid down and passed on by African Sages, Patriarchs and Deities.

This study therefore, is just a part of a very long and wide process by many Africans who are beginning to revert to and revalue Africa's wisdom as part of Africa's solutions and guide towards Africa's total and long lasting freedom and prosperity.

1.4. The aims of the Research

The aims of the research are to translate the functional nature of the circle and the cycle to dance and other cultural expressions like song, dress and architecture. The translation shall be based and focus on the conceptual understanding by the **Abantu** and **Abathwa** of the four spheres of being, that is,

(a) **Spiritual**, which is an attempt of man to comprehend the self and the essence of being.

(b) **Intellectual** and **Creativity**, which focus on the knowledge of the people, their morality and their ethics.

c) **Psychological**, which is based on their feelings and attitudes (towards life in general) their thoughts and speech.

(d) **Physical**, based on their actions and reactions.

The possibilities of not arriving at my own conclusion are imminent but an attempt shall have been made to refocus the attention and understanding of the functional aspects of both the circle and the cycle among the indigenous people's cultural expressions. It shall also be an attempt to forge a return to original and ancient sources of such as the language (**Kalanga/karannga**), tradition and oral history.

But this should not be viewed as an attempt to prove the uniqueness of the Africa's indigenous systems to make them accepted by the **other**. Instead, it should be viewed as an attempt to demonstrate the universality of African wisdom while addressing and appealing to the African first before anybody.

The view which perpetuates the uniqueness of African indigenous people must not be entertained any further since it only confines African indigenous people into primitive and mythical human specie. Like any other human specie who were faced with different experience and challenges based on the needs and means of survival, Africans had at certain given circumstances had to respond to situation in unique ways, yet remaining part and parcel of a universal consciousness evolving everywhere in different places and in different times.

Their prolonged attachment into the circular orientation should not be used as evidence to the primitiveness and the notion that Africans are the late comers to the world's civilization. In actual facts, they are the fountain and pioneers to the world's civilization and they should be the major shareholders in the custodianship of the world's civilization.

Africans perceives time as both cyclical (as at their ritualistic engagement and cultural heritage) and linear (as in political and socio-economical advancement).

1.5. Research methodology

The research is going to focus on direct interviews with the communities whose lives are still very much linked into the sites, objects and activities of circular motions and designs. Cameras (video and still), tape recorders will be used to record all the information obtained during interviews and site visits.

There shall also be an investigation and thorough analysis of the written text and records on circular orientation of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. Data on the historical and archeological records and ceremonial activities on the circular orientation of the people will also be collected. Libraries and archives will be visited with an aim of getting

relevant information from books, theses, dissertations, articles, journals and periodicals.

1.6. The scope for the Research

The study shall investigate the role of the circular movement and design in the indigenous performances by the **Abathwa** and **Abantu**. The focus shall be on the directions of the performances, the shape of the objects such as utensils, props and musical instruments. It shall also focus on the spaces and architect, dress and make-up by the participants in the performance. In short, the study shall take both the **Formalist** and **Structuralist** approaches. Although both **formalist** and **structuralist** theories apply to literature, they can be used to explicate art forms such as dance.

Dance is primarily derived from ordinary human movements. According to the **formalists** view, dance will then be 'an organized form of expression using ordinary body movements'. The texture, the rhythm and the meaning of each and every movement are the three main areas of the formalist approach. Each movement unit shall be explicated independently according to its own qualities.

Basic dance patterns and sequences form the basis for the **structuralist** approach to the explication of dance. The codification of movement units

and patterns, sequences and all other vital elements of performance such as space/locale, time/period, theme and participants bring about the meaningfulness.

The point worth stressing in this case is the fact that, although dance movements are fundamentally derived from ordinary (day to day) movements, the meanings they convey or suppose to convey bear some fundamental differences. In dance, elements such as the theme, purpose, quantity, quality (of each unit), time, space and all the general aesthetic principles of art-form, derive a different meaning from ordinary movements.

In the process, the study will not only focus on the performing arts, that is, dancing, acting and singing; it will also focus on the visual arts and design, that is, painting, sketching and drawing. The investigation on design shall also extend into the designs found in dresses and costumes used during ceremonies and rituals.

1.7. Definition of terms

1.7.1. *Uhlanga*:

- It is commonly referred to the maize, sorghum or any of the monocotyledonous plants' stem. This group of plants is characterized by

the stem with nodes and antinodes. They are all part of the broader grass family.

- Sometimes the term *Uhlanga* is used to denote identity or the race in modern terms.
- It can also refer to the scar caused by incision which is done either in a situation of medical administration (*ukugcaba*) or customary scaring (*ukudebeza*) by a particular clan or nation, like in the case of **AmaChunu** or **amaMpondo** and **AmaBhaca**.

1.7.2. *Umuthi*:

- Generally, the term refers to a tree which sometimes is called **Isihlahla**. But since most of indigenous medicine is derived from herbs, roots, barks and sometimes seeds from plants, any form of medicine is referred to as *Umuthi*.
- But there are other forms of **Umuthi** which go beyond just the mixing of herbs. This kind of medical practice involves the usage of animal parts and fats. Certain human and animal body parts are believed to possess some kind of potency, so when used, they release that potency to the person using/taking that medicine.
- Another kind of medical practice common among the indigenous people, is that which is referred to as **Ikhubalo**. **Ikhubalo** is believed to be possessed by certain animals or birds such as **Uthekwane**. Not anyone can be in possession of this kind of medicine, except for special medical practitioners who know how to trap a bird like **Uthekwane** and **Igwababa** and force it to release it. **Ikhubalo** is said to be magical in nature, although it is not just

magic as it is generally known by ordinary people. People will talk of using **Ikhubalo** when faced with the situation of life arrest or being attacked and be able to get away without a fight.

- *Umlingo*, on the other hand is generally the one commonly known as magic. This is the art of making things (dis)appear in front of the onlookers eyes. Usually it is used to amuse although some sophisticated medical practitioners use it to show their powers in medical know-how. Sometimes, *Umlingo* is called *Isalamuzi*.
- *Ilumbo*, Ntombela, Mathenjwa and Donda, (1997; 134) refer to Ilumbo as:

Uhlobo lokuthakatha lapho kudwetshelwa khona
Abantu noma babekelwe, okanye bacushwe lapho
bezohamba khona noma bathinte khona.

On the interview with the late **Inyanga Sidomadoma-salenkehli Ndlovu**,

(1992; **Kwabhadaza-Obuka**), he said:

is a mixture of a special medicine with the saliva of an infant (who is not at the stage to talk). During the process of mixing, both **inyanga** and the client are not supposed to talk. This is done so that the intended target must not report the sickness up until he/she is finished.

1.7.3. *Abantu*:

- Nowadays, the term *Umntu* (plural, *Abantu*), is used to refer to person/people or human being(s). But in actual facts the term *Umntu* or *Abantu* only refers to those who trace their origin from the common ancestor known as or the root *-Ntu*. Therefore, *Ubuntu*, as a divine essence and as

a practice of social compassion and cohesion, as it is generally referred, is only based to the common philosophy that form the bases of the life and existence of those who trace their origin from *-Ntu*.

1.7.4. *Abathwa*:

- People referred to as *Abathwa*, are nowadays referred to as the San. They were once referred to as the bushman by those who regarded them as less than human. They are regarded as the first to walk the planes of Southern Africa. They lived by hunting and gathering of wild fruits and roots as their basic food stuff. They lived in small groups and generally nomadic.

1.7.5. *Amalawu*:

- *Amalawu* is the **Nguni** term for the **Qoi Qoi** people who used to be called, Hottentots. Hottentot was also another derogatory term by the Europeans who regarded the **Qoi** as subhuman like their cousins (San). The difference between the **Qoi** and the **San** is that, the **Qoi** were cattle and sheep herders while the **San** were hunter gatherers, but they both lived a nomadic life.
- It can also denote or refer to an exclusive house belonging to Umnumzane or a young unmarried member of the family; as *llawu lensizwa noma llawu lezintombi*.



Figure 15.A re-constructed Ilawu of Isilo U Dingane at Umgungundlovu palace.

1.7.6. *Fibonacci*

- An arithmetic series beginning with any two numbers. Each succeeding number is taken as the sum of the two preceding numbers, for example, $1+2=3$.

1.8. **Literature review**

The study shall attempt to review the existing literature on aspects such as African Renaissance and Theosophical movement, Arts and Religions in Africa, Archeology and Civilization in Africa, Myths, Legends and Folklore in Africa, and Science, Medicine and African perceptions of Celestial bodies.

1.8.1. African Renaissance and theosophical movement.

Motshekga, (1999; 5) when quoting the then Deputy President of the republic of **South Africa, Thabo Mbeki**, from the speech delivered in **Tokyo, Japan** in April 1998, states:

The long-held dogma of African exceptionalism continues to weigh down the African mind and spirit, like the ton of lead the African slave carries on her shoulders, producing in her and the rest of the continent a condition which, in itself, contests any assertion that she is capable of initiative, creativity, individuality and entrepreneurship...

For centuries, Africa has been made to believe and live under the shadow of believing that she had no share, let alone an influence to the advancement of the world civilization. African people were made to believe that their continent and its people were savages, barbaric and uncivilized until the arrival of the Europeans.

After Africa was conquered by largely European and Arabian invaders, her history was subjected to manipulation to suit the conquerors. History has revealed that, in a situation of a people being conquered by another, their history and particularly religion is always re-written to suit the victors. Africa has been living under such conditions for centuries and her people and resources exploited by both the Europeans and Arabs.

Gardner, (1996; 4-5) asserts:

To a large extent we have all learned history by way of strategic propaganda, whether church or politically motivated. It is all part of the control process: it separates the masters from the servants and the fit from the unfit. Political history has, of course, long been written by its masters: the few who decide the fate and the fortunes of the many. Religious history is no different, for it is designed to implement control through fear of the unknown.

In article under the 'Ancient Anunnaki' series, from the Holy

Tabernacle Family Guide, York, (2001; 16) also contends:

In any war, stories gathered from only those who won the war will always place the blame on the losers.

Charles Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest must have formed the basis for and justification of perpetual subjugation and the exploitation of the peoples of the "third world". The best way to diminish the people of Africa was to deny them their achievements and contributions in the world body of knowledge and civilization so as to prove that Africans were less human, so in order for the Europeans and Arabs to survive, Africans had to be exploited. Even the San's rock art was once attributed to the Phoenician painters, as Lewis-Williams, (1990; 74) argues:

This recent claim and the older arguments in favour of Phoenician painters all seem to be based on the assumption that nothing good can come out of Africa...Even Great Zimbabwe, it will be recalled, was at one time said to have been built by people who came from beyond the shores of Africa.

God had to be the God of the conquerors, science had to be the sole inventory of the masters and enlightenment had to illuminate the superiority of the masters. As a result, things like the Pyramids and

San rock art, although they have been studied over and over, they have either been attributed to the alien gods or the results of foreign influence or sometimes (as in the case of rock art) get misinterpreted and dismissed as just art for the sake of art.

Alan Alford in his two books namely, *GODS OF THE MILLENNIUM: Scientific Proof of Flesh and Blood gods* (1996) and *THE PHOENIX SOLUTION* (1999) contest that the Pyramids and other monumental structures were the works of the gods not of the ordinary people. But Alford continues to argue that the biblical story of creation as found in Genesis 2 is based on the African continent. Alford proclaims that god **Enki** who begotten **Thoth** (*Tau Tau Harama*) the god of science and medicine, was based in Africa and his brother **Enlil** was based in the east. God **Enki** was represented by a snake which was also a royal symbol of royalty for both the upper and the Lower **Egypt**. What ever the argument might be, the conclusion will always put Africa as the first in human existence and civilization.

The dispute (Alford, 1996: 271-2) between **Enki** and his brother **Enlil**, resulting in the snatching of Adam from the Garden of Eden in **Africa** and brought to the Garden of Eden in Mesopotamia explains the denial by the non-Africans of the status of Africa as the cradle of mankind. The story of the snake (Satan) in the Garden of Eden

explains why the children of **Enki** (the black headed ones) were always labeled as evil, backwards and unholy.

The call to African renaissance and the rise of movements such as African Theosophical movement is the means to correct this situation. The new wave of scholars (African and non-African) is beginning to gain momentum in reclaiming the African origin of some of the world's religions, philosophies, sciences and civilizations.

Motshekga, (1999; 4) mentions:

The first cause or the principle of principles is also known as *Atum*.

This fact is further alluded to by York, (2001; 7):

Amen is the **Egyptian** God of life and reproduction, represented as a man with a ram's head. *Amen, Amon, Ammon, and Atum* are all the same. *Amen-Ra, Amon-Ra, Atum-Ra, the Sun*.

Gardner, (1996; 10-11) also states:

Pharoah **Akhenaten** closed all the temples of the Egyptian gods and built new temples to Aten.....On many fronts he became unpopular, particularly with the priests of the former national deity Amun (Amen) and of the sun god Ra (or Re), as a result of which plots against his life proliferated

Although Egypt is always referred to as the centre of ancient African wisdom, it should be seen as an outlet of such wisdom to the rest of the Mediterranean and Asia Minor's region. Before the Arabian

occupation, Egypt (land of Pata) was occupied by the Nubians. The region's religious influence was Ethiopian (land of Tapa). The term Ethiopian was used to refer to all the pure black people of the continent that includes, the Abyssinians, Zinj, Berbers and people from the Yemen.

Motshekga, (1999; 11) further assets that:

*...the famous Emerald Tablets were all the works of an Ethiopian sage in the name of **Thau Thau Harama**, who is affectionately known in Greek language as; **Thoth-Hermes** or **Hermesnubis**.*

He (Motshega; 11) further quotes Harama stating:

True, true. Without doubt, certain: / the below is as the above, and the above as the below, to perfect the wonders of the One. / And as all things came from the One, from the meditation of the One, so all things are born from this One by adaptation.

The above principle forms the bases for the law of correspondences. In this situation it is applied vertically but when it is applied horizontally, it forms the bases for the micro-macrocosmic principle. The principle of the **one** was later to influence African philosophers such as **Plotinus**, who compared the **One** to a point at the centre of a circle, which contained the possibility of all the future circles that could derive from it. The point at the centre is also regarded as the Great Silence (**Mbe/Mbo**).

(Motshekga: 1998).

Motshekga, (1998; 5) further states:

The process of emanations (or generations) began with the emanation of the first cause of principle of principles (*Tapa or Pata*) from the great silence or absolute darkness or nothingness (*Nahas/Nehes*). Plotinus compared this Great Silence to a point at the centre of a circle...

One of the Legends about the origins of the Bantu speaking people of the South states that, ‘ Abantu came from a place called eMbo, and when there was chaos and fighting, they drifted down towards the South where they disintegrated and scattered into small clans and “tribes” across the land’.

Thau Thau Harama was not just an influence and a symbol of learning and enlightenment to people such as **Pythagoras**, **Socrates**, **Plato** and **Plotinus** (to name just a few), but, he became the symbol and the personification of the divine. Those who were highly learned and thinkers were to be known as the Hermits and those who were highly religious and spiritual in the ways of God were given the title ‘*Harama*” or ‘*Harama Theo*”, like in the case of the biblical Joseph of **Arimathea**. **Arimathea** is a Hebrew translation of *Harama Theo*. Gardner, (1996; 72) contends:

Arimathea was, in fact, a descriptive title like so many others in the New Testament. It represented a particularly high status. Just as **Matthew Annas** held the priestly distinction ‘**Levi of Alphaeus**” (Levi of the succession), so **Joseph** was not his true baptismal name. **Arimathea** derive (like Alphaeus) from a combination of Hebrew and Greek elements- in this case, the Hebrew: *ha ram or harama* (of the height or top) and the Greek: *Theo* (relating

to God), together meaning 'of Highest of god' *a rama Theo*) and as a personal distinction, Divine Highness.

In the Judaic and Cabbalalist tradition, the patriarch **Joseph** is aligned with the Arc-Angel, **Gabriel**. It is not surprising that the angel who came to inform **Marry** of the birth of **Jesus** was **Gabriel** and the man who was to be a foster father to **Jesus** was **Joseph**.

1.8.2. Arts, craft and religion in Africa.

Religion in Africa has always been about;

- The creation of the universe and everything found within it. Human beings have always seen themselves as party to the ongoing creation of the universe. The ability to create or creativity through the arts and craft was seen as a manifestation of the essence of God, the expression and the control of the spiritual forces believed to be active in the people's environment. These beliefs had to be crafted in forms of myths, legends and icons. For instance, the Zulu story of the lizard, although sent by God, it was the people who accepted its word hence death came to humans.
- Shamans, artisans/craftsman or woman and artist were seen as the vision and the representatives of the spiritual realm.

- The themes and the texts had to be about the ethos, cosmic relationships and interpretation, and the perceived universal hierarchy.
- The purpose was always about the revelation (of the world of the unknown) and the concealment of the secrets of the initiated to the uninitiated.
- As a medium of expression, art and religion was seen as an Antidote and a Transformer of the society.
- Shrines and all other sacred spaces such as, the kraal and **Umsamo** provided aesthetical elements to rituals and ceremonial activities. Spatial elements such as direction, focus and design were central to the usage of any space and worship.
- But, religion was also an allusion and illusion of people's perception of the universe and their existence.

The attempt to re-assert Africa and her ancient past as an equal partner with the rest of the world in the development of the world civilization should not be viewed as another racist, bias and emotional exercise. Instead it should be viewed as a starting point towards the issue of finding the real meaning derived from Africa's arts and religion.

Dwelling on who does the arts and religion represents will only jeopardize the purpose of the study. Like in the case of the San rock art, the issue is not about what the art depicts as in animals or human beings but it is about the meaning and the potency those items represent and emulate. The questions to be asked are; Why the San used blood for painting? Why did they paint on the rocks? What is the significance of the python movement during the **Domba** dance? And what does the circular-anticlockwise direction represents in both the **Tshigombela** and **Tshikona** dances?



Figure 16. Male students (at the University of Venda) practicing Tshikona.

Although sometimes it is important to know who does what in terms of the gender and the age, where and when does a performance take place, but

that should always be done for the purpose of deriving the meaning rather than to prove the superiority of a particular people. For instance, it does not matter whether the shaman is a man or a woman, what matters is the ability to heal and the significance of the dance performance towards the trance state and the artistic representation on the rock of the visions afterwards.

Both the visual (painting, engraving and sculpture), and the performing (dancing, music and poetry) arts rely heavily on geometrical expressions such as, circles, lines (straight or zigzag), squares and triangles, and other elements such as, colour, texture and space so as to either convey the message or emulate potency required by the participants. But African spiritual world was never separated from every day's living and practices. Arts and Craft used as the tools and bridges to link the spiritual world, creative/imaginative and real/every day life. As Lewis-Williams and Dowson, (1989; 36) contend:

When viewing Bushman rock art, we should remind ourselves that we are looking at a bridge between two worlds.

Arts and Craft are also used as depiction of human point of view towards his/her relationship with the universe and other fellow creatures. Elements such as masks, costume, make-up and musical instruments do represent certain deities and their commandments to the society, symbolism of the cosmic order, and power and belief system of the society.

1.8.3. Archeology and Civilization in Africa

The study of civilization in Africa has always been based on evidence/sources provided by missionaries, explorers, traders and colonial masters, who did not always understand what they were observing and were also prejudiced in their assessment of the continent and her people. Although the people of the Nile and latter the rest of north and west Africa, written word had developed many years, there is no evidence proving such development among the people of the central and southern Africa. Most of the stories pertaining to the past and civilization of the people of central and southern Africa were based on oral tradition.

But the concept of 'civilization' itself has always been a problem. It is generally perceived that 'civilization' means the emergency of the cities and as Gordon Childe and many of his generation implied:

Civilization is the existence of writing (Childe, 1951: 161; 1957: 37).

The results of this misconception stated above have led many scholars on African civilization to concentrate mainly on Egypt as the place of the origins of civilization and regard her as the only civilized land before colonial occupation.

Therefore, if the definition of civilization is beyond the emergence of cities and the existence of writing; how then shall we explain and justify the evolution of the San who built no cities and did not write any manuscripts? Shall we continue perpetuating the notion that the San and the rest of the people of the southern part of Africa were uncivilized until the arrival of the Europeans?

It has been cited earlier that things such as San rock art and Egyptian hieroglyphs were not just arts instead they were a sacred language used by qualified people like priests and shamans to communicate messages and knowledge of another world. They were the craft learned as a specialization in the knowledge of the world beyond the normal living. Both the hieroglyphs and rock paintings are an evidence of a highly developed, advanced and sophisticated spiritual realm. Their endurance and everlasting presence through time shows that they are not just ahead of any known civilization, but they are also a mystery to modern thinking and civilization.

1.8.4. Myths, legends and Folktales in African societies

Folklore (myths, legends and folktales) is the body of knowledge for the people about their perception of their Deities and issues of their origin (myth), their past history and their heroes (legend), and stories educational and nursery purposes (folktales).

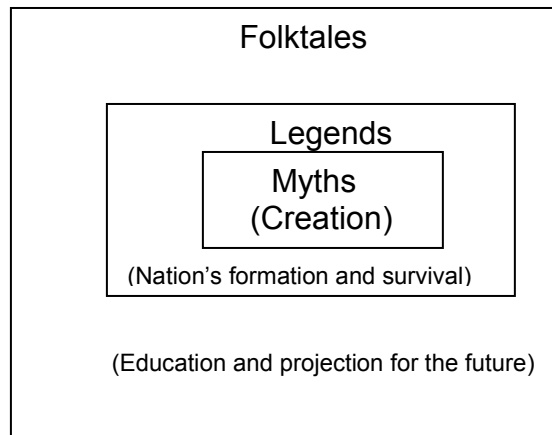


Figure 17. Myths, legends and folktales

Msimang, (1986; 24), when quoting Bascon on the myth states:

Myths are prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past.

Myths are the embodiment of dogma; theology and ritual...
 Myths account for the origin of the world, of mankind, of death, or of characteristics of birds, animals, geographical features, and the phenomena of nature...

Schwaller De Lubicz, (1961; 181) states:

Myth is the means of expression employed by sages who teach the esoterism of natural facts inexpressible in words.

It is becoming clear that all the elements of the folklore are told with the aim of pointing at the common origin and the common destiny of the people. Myths always pointed at the, and attempted to justify the origin and the existence of such people. Myths always try to explain how certain things such as birth and death came about. Sometimes myths try to explain the existence of things such as special monumental objects such as mountains, rivers, trees and gorges.

Sometimes stories of animals living in those monumental objects were told as in the case of the blue bull that lives under the **Drakensberg** Mountains and **Mamlambo** (the snake) who dwells in the rivers of the **Xhosa-land**. The explanation of a severe thunderstorm was attributed to **Inkanyamba** which was a snake known to be the dweller of sacred rivers and mountains. **Inkanyamba** was known as the snake with seven heads. The most recent form of the myth is the one of the woman in the moon.

Maphumulo and Thwala, (1989; 69) state:

Izinsumansumane (Myths)zizama ukusixoxela
ngezehlakalo lapho izinto ezingaphezu kwemvelo
zithinteka khona. Izinsumansumane ziyinzululwazi yabantu
bakudala bechaza izinto zemvelo ezizenzekelayo.

But Msimang, (1987; 54) refers to this kind of folklore as **Inganeko**. According to Msimang, (1987; 55-56), **Insumansumane** is that kind of folklore whose characters are a combination of people, animals and other creatures. But Mathenjwa and Maphumulo, (1999; 79) seem to concur with Msimang on the Zulu terminology and categories of folklore.

The inconsistency among the Zulu scholars and writers should not derail the focus and the understanding of the subject of the folklore since there could be a number of reasons for deviation in this regard. One such factor could be the vastness of the Zulu language in terms of dialects according to **Izigodi**. The second one could be the one cited by Msimang himself, (1987; 54) where he states:

...kogogo inganekwane kwabe kuyinganekwane nje kwaphela; sasingazehlukanisi izinhlobo ngezinhlobo. Nokho ezinsukwini zanamuhla lokhu kudingekile ikakhulukazi kulabo abasezikoleni.

But what is important is that there is agreement on the functions and categorization of different kinds of folklore, that is, the myth will always point to the events on creation and death or the acts of gods; legends pointing to the historical events and the triumphs of the people's heroes and heroines; while tales entertains and educate the youth.

The Zulu story of the lizard sent by **Unkulunkulu** to tell people that they will die could be likened to the story of **/Kaggen** of the San who told them that they will die. **/Kaggen** refers to the praying mantis. According to the San informants such as **Qing** quoted by Lewis-Williams, (1990;53), entering death as it was usually the case during the trance-dance, was a metaphorical journey to the spiritual world as it would happen during the physical death. What can never be disputed is the fact that, myths were and still are an integral part of many societies whereby issues of creation and existence are explained. Armstrong, (2008; 1) affirmed:

Myths were not mere fiction but more like reality as lived through the imagination... It (myth) is a manner of describing what lies behind the dry facts as noted by the perceiving mind, and it is the recurrent way in all civilizations for giving expression to the innate hopes and desires of man, and his sense of the past.

Legends are there to point at the common and shared history of the successes and challenges of that people past. The characters in a legend are people who once lived in history yet their deeds are fictional in nature. The story of *Amatungwa 'ehla ngesilulu; alandela izintethe'* is somehow fictional yet it is about the real people.

What is essential is that, as performing arts, folklore maintains a particular setting such as, around the fire place, at night and always told by the elders to the young. The functions are common throughout Southern Africa. Their characterizations are always gods, people and animals.

1.8.5. Science, Medicine and African perceptions of Celestial bodies.

The first of the celestial bodies to be recognized by the Zulus was **Ilanga**. The day (**Usuku**) was referred to as **Ilanga**. Time was calculated by the traveling of the sun or according to the reaction and relationship of the living things towards the sun. For instance, *emini bebade*, referred to the mid-day when the shadows are long; *kusempondo zankomo*, was when the morning was still very young and the only thing visible was the horns of the cattle; and *seliya ngomutsha wendoda* was towards sunset.

Inyanga on the other hand was seen as the controller of the menstrual cycle of women and responsible for the seasonal changes which were very crucial in the survival of the people based on things such as

cultivation of the soil, harvesting, the availability of certain fruits, grazing land and water. Men were not supposed to be around their women during the menstrual period since it (cycle) was regarded as death of a woman. In this regard a woman was equated to the moon, that is, every month the woman is born and at the end of it she dies as the moon itself does. Also stated in the article, (paradoxhtm/culture; 13) is the:

...normative belief associating menstrual with lunar periodicities among San peoples.

The San believed that the moon controlled the rain which was considered to be a supernatural personage, who sometimes appeared as a black bull. Rain-making dance was also referred to as 'the bull dance'. As it was the case with the Zulu cultural belief, women especially girls were highly associated with the rain and the moon as special subjects of attention.

The term **Inyanga** also refers to the healer/doctor. It is not very clear whether the term is derived from the function or the act of healing which is *Ukunyanga* (doctoring) or it is derived from the moon itself. But what is important is the fact that, **Inyanga/Ngaka** is one of many aspects of medical practices which are associated with African magic, arts and science.

As in other aspects of living, **Abantu** and **Abathwa** never separate medicinal and scientific practices from everyday life and activities. Scientific

know-how manifested itself on many fronts of the people's daily living such as the use of plants, animals, control of climatic conditions and food production. Another form of the scientific know-how manifested in medicine. Medicine could be divided into three forms, that is,

- **Botanical:** This is the form of medicine derived from plants (herbs, roots, barks, flowers and seeds).
- **Zoological:** This is the medicine derived from the use of animal parts and products.
- **Chemical:** This is the medicine derived from chemical substances although this section can hardly be separated from the botanical and Zoological ones since there was no clear distinction between zoological and botanical chemical reactions.
- **Magical:** This is the medical practice based on the use of magical spells, hypnosis and *psychotronic* or *teletronic* methods.

But these medicines could either be used positively (to heal and construct) or negatively (to kill and destroy). For instance the **San** could call upon the rain bull (thunderstorm) when there was drought but the **Zulu** on the other hand could cause thunder to destroy someone's home and kill everybody in it.

Moral and personality issues also played a significant role in the administration of medicine. Some medicines could not work if used against certain people of moral standing such as elderly, babies and disabled. Some would not work if used by individuals who are cruel or disrespectful and ill-disciplined. Some would not work if used by or against individuals in a particular condition, such as a woman on her menstrual periods. Some medicines would not work if were mixed by someone on a standing position instead it will require that person to kneel, squat or sit. But if the person on the squatting position was a woman that might change the whole thing since woman were not expected to squat particularly among the Zulu unless the intention was to distort the outcome (*Ubuthakathi*).

1.8.6. Conclusion.

Most of the evidence about Africa's past civilization and wisdom is based on the Northern part of the continent, particularly that of Egypt. Although attempts have been made in trying to show evidence that points at the influences of the South (Nubia/Sudan and Ethiopia) in the civilization of Egypt, but it still favors Egypt as the most advanced form of ancient civilization in Africa with nothing pointing at the developments supposedly taking place further south (**Azania/Zinj**) of the continent.

Gumede, (1990; 7) argues:

The origins of 'traditional' healing lie in central Africa-**Kwamadrantule** (Sahara). From there the art of healing was disseminated northward and southward.

Mtaka, (2007; 10) on the issue of 'traditional' leadership and its origins states:

*Umlando wamakhosi noma ubukhosi e-Africa akuyona into yamanje kepha yinto endala eqale enkabazwe, lapho kukhona izwe i**Kemet** (elibizwa nge**Gibhithe**). Yilapho kwaqala khona impucuko yase-Africa neyomhlaba wonke jikelele. Njengoba uZulu kuthiwa wehla ngesilulu nje, lokho kwehla kuyinqenye yomlando wemvelaphi kaZulu nawo wonke ama-Africa.*

Although it looks like there is inconsistency (among the writers) in as far as the centrality of the African continent is concerned, but there is a clear agreement from all writers referred as to in the origins of African civilization. They are all in agreement that there was once a striving and advanced civilization around the place which was later to be known as Sahara. What is not yet clear is whether the name **Sahara/ Tenere/ Madlantule** came as a result of the hostile climatic conditions that gradually forced the people to migrate elsewhere or it was used to be called like that even before those conditions.

Maybe the centrality in this regard refers to the fact that, the place in question was the centre of all civilizations big and small found and was to be found around the continent and abroad. All other forms of civilizations established later on were attempts to duplicate the original/central ancient one. And all other civilizations to emerge were the off-springs of the civilization and wisdom of the people of **KwaMadlantule**.

As Sahara affectionately known as the land of fear (**tenere**) people were bound to flee for their survival but that had to happen at the time when civilization was at its peak. It seems those who migrated north had to quickly find some kind of settlement along and around the Nile River while those who went southwards had to contend with all sorts of obstacles such as mosquitoes and *tsetse* flies. Both the mosquitoes and tsetse flies were the cause of unbearable diseases among both the people and the livestock such as cattle. A mosquito bite in humans causes a disease called **malaria** fever while on the other hand a bite by a *tsetse* fly on cattle causes a disease called **Unakane**. These two diseases proved to be too much for certain people to put-up with, so they had to march further South in search of a much conducive space for settlement.

The legend that says thus, '*Abantu behla ngesilulu*', further suggests that people came down through the great rivers such as the **Congo** and **Zambezi** on reed or papyrus boats, (Gumede, 1990; 8).

Gumede, (1990; 8) further suggests thus:

The way of life they enjoyed **KwaMadlantule** (Tenere/ Sahara) was re-established in the Southern end of Africa. It is unnecessary to mention the pygmies, San (Abathwa), Basarwa) and the Khoi-Khoi (Hottentots) as they were moving faster ahead of the 'Abantu'. There are striking similarities between life in the old Saharan civilization and the life of the 'Abantu' in southern Africa or Azania.

As different groups of migrating people finding conducive spaces to occupy and settle and others march on further south, there were those that decided to stay behind and try to adapt to new yet hostile conditions Sahara had to provide.



Madonna Egyptian style



Inkehli of the Zulu

Figure 18. Comparisons of the north and the south women hair dress

In illustration of this point, he (Gumede) uses comparisons tabled below;

Sahara	Azania
The Tassili Rock Paintings	Bushmen Cave/Rock paintings
Life of herdsmen in a Herder civilization	Tending domesticated animals, cattle, sheep, goats
Economy based on ownership of cattle	Cattle are the measure of wealth of an African
Diet heavily based on milk	Milk used to bring up children. Sour milk for adults
No tsetse fly to breed Nagana	No tsetse fly in Southern Africa (to breed Unakane- Ukufa kwezinkomo)
Madonna Egyptian style	Inkehli among the Zulus
Isanuse devining doctor in	Isanusi sangoma among the Zulus- 'the

Tunisia- north Africa	smellers'
White bandoliers of the diviners in Tunisia	Goatskin <i>Iminqwambo</i> used by <i>Izangoma</i> in South Africa
Communalism – the spirit of sharing with other members of the community	Communalism–sharing with neighbours to the tune of drinking beer from one pot
Polygamy	Polygamy

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 HISTORICAL ASPECT OF THE DANCE PERFORMANCE BY THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

2.1 Introduction

The history of the performance of dance by the indigenous people(s) of Southern Africa can be divided into three stages. The first stage pertains to the ancient and timeless dance performances. These are the performances which can never be attached to a specific date or period. For instance, dance performances pertaining to the cycle of life and all other ritualistic performances can never be said to have been composed by any individual and at any specific time. Most of the ritualistic performances conform to that stage.

The second stage involves the dance performances that were/are a reaction or response/commentary to a specific historical circumstance. Historical circumstances such as slavery, colonization, Christianization, industrialization and educating (in western ways) of the indigenous people of Southern Africa had an effect on the lives of the people. These performances tend to follow trend which can be labeled and reduced as craftwork because they become so popular in a way that everyone begins to perform them with very little re-interpretation and alteration.

The third category concerns those performances/dances created by individuals or groups inspired by day to day events and mere artistic stimuli. Although sometime these performances can be repeated and recopied, they remain subjective and individualistic to those people who created or recreating them.

2.2. General historical background of Abantu and Abathwa.

The term Abantu refers to the people who trace their origin from the common ancestor known as *Ntu* while on the other hand the term *Abathwa* seem to only refer to the people often referred to as the San, living out the people referred to as the *Qoi Qoi* who are often referred to by the Bantu speaking people (of the South- especially the *Nguni*) as *Amalawu*.

By modern definition, *Abathwa* and *Amalawu* are the one and the same people though diverse by a very thin margin and they are commonly referred to as the *Khoisan*. The *Qoi Qoi* seems to have a common root which is *Qua*, for instance, *Griqua* (of the Eastern Cape), *Namaqua* (of the northern cape) and *Goringhaiqua* and *Gorachoqua* (of the southern part of the Cape), *Chainoqua* (of the inland-Cape province), *Cochoqua* (of the West coast), *chariguriqua/Guriqua* (of the lower Berg river) and smaller groups such as *Attaqua*, *Hessequa* and *Hancumqua*.

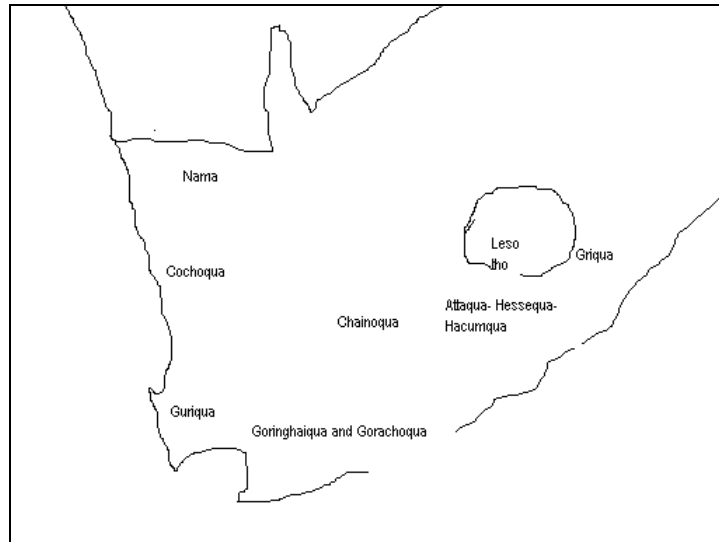


Figure 19. Map showing different Qoi-Qoi groups and their 'ancient' locations.

But the **San** is different, although it can be true that they also claim their origin from a common ancestor, they are so diverse in such a way that they can only be referred to according to their dialect and place where they live, for instance, ***Khomani*** (san), ***!Xun*** and ***khwe*** of the Kalahari and the ***!Xam*** of the Cape.



Figure 20. Map showing locations of different San people's language groups.

San people are well known world wide for their rock paintings. Sometimes they are regarded as among the very first people to walk the earth. Their enduring lifestyle causes them to be one of the most studied human specie in history, maybe second only to the Egyptians. Besides rock paintings, San people(s) life is rooted in rituals which are mostly expressed in dancing and music.

Although there is dancing for recreation such as doing the Ostrich mating dance by the San of the Kalahari, most of the dancing is based on the means and needs of their survival such as healing, rainmaking and hunting. As the map above shows, the **San** are found in mostly deserted areas, so the living conditions are extreme, so are the means for survival.

Although the **Qoi** people are closely associated with the **San**, there is nothing much said about them concerning the rock painting and dancing as it is the case with the San people, except only for the dancing during moon worship; The **Qoi** people seemed to be very much concerned about their cattle, sheep and goat herding. Nowadays, there is a popular dance form among the **Nama** people which seem to be a product of the **Nama** coming into contact with the Europeans. That kind of dance expression is closely related to what is commonly referred to as "*lang arm*" in Afrikaans. It can easily be associated with *waltz* and **Latin American** dances, like *salsa*, *rumba* and *samba*.

On the other hand, **Abantu** are also a very diverse unit and are found almost in each and every part of the now called SADC region. Abantu are believed to have originated from the great lakes region, that is, **Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda-Burundi** and around the eastern part of the **Congo** basin. It is not clear though whether Abantu were once homogenous group or they had always been a diverse unit yet claiming a common ancestor.

As Abantu started drifting southwards and westwards, they were bound to come across some other people who occupied those regions. Among those people there were the **Pygmies** of the **Congo** rain forest, the **San** of the **Godwana** and vagabonds such as the **Qoi Qoi** and the **Tutsi**. The need to communicate with these people forced the language of the Abantu to diverge and resulting in many dialects. Needs to survive and adapt to new living conditions encountered in newly found locations forced them to develop new habits and set of customs.

Trade and advancements in technology, such as, iron smelting and mining brought about new dispensations and settlements among the indigenous people of **Southern Africa**. Settlements such as **Thulamela, Maphungubwe** and **Zimbabwe** bear evidence into the sophistication and advancement of the civilization of **Abantu** speaking people.



Figure 21. A part of the Great Zimbabwe ruins

2.3. Livelihood of Abantu and Abathwa

2.3.1. Subsistence and cultural expression.

It has been cited earlier that the lives of indigenous people of Africa (North, Central and South) almost duplicated one another. As they (people) were drifting apart, migrating to different parts of Africa, Africans tried to re-lived the lives of 'golden' era in their history of civilization. Their basic life was to have access to shelter, food and good health. Although means used to acquire such basic needs were different from people to people, fundamentally they were the same. For instance, cattle herding or hunter gathering was the same and done for the same purpose across the board.

Whenever the ritual was performed, it was always more or less for the same reasons such as initiation, rainmaking, casting away evil spirits and praying to the highest deity. Participants or characters were almost of the same gender, age, social status and profession. For instance, the initiation can either be for boys or girls of a particular age, rainmaking can only be

performed by shamans or certain spiritual leaders such as queens or priests.

Although at a certain stage people had found some sort of permanent settlements, there was once a time when everybody (pastoral or hunter) had to be nomadic. Each group came out of natural formation such as kinship which developed into clans and nations. The groups, for survival purposes, had to maintain common languages, religions and customs and adopt/adapt to a particular style. Climatic conditions determined the kind of shelter they had to construct; kind of dress they had to wear and sometimes food preferences according to availability.

But life was not just about food, shelter and health; it also incorporated the pursuit of education, entertainment, search for knowledge and recreation/games. Shelter whether in a form of a hut/house or a cave, open spaces/fields, forest/bushes and rivers/ponds played pivotal roles as platforms and venues for participation. Time/period (season, day or month) was also a main factor in determining who should partake in an activity, where the activity should take place and how it should be done.

Ritualistic performances by the indigenous people of Africa could be categorized according to three factors of time:

1. **Human transformation:** Performances in highlight of particular stages in a human being such as; birth, puberty, initiation, death and resurrection, and the preparation of the body to perform certain duties such as healing.
2. **Seasonal changes:** Performances marking the beginning/ending of a season or preceding/succeeding the planting or reaping of certain crops.
3. **Day-time changes:** Performances taking place at specific times of the day such as; morning, mid-day and mid-night.

Muller, (1999; 134) states:

Rituals bring a framework to society and nature by imposing a cycle upon them so that the people do not deviate from what they should do during any given period.

Rituals are therefore an illustration of Africa's cyclical perception of time. Like the movement of the sun returning to the rising state after setting and again back to setting, illustrate a cyclical understanding of time. Stages in the cycle of the moon further illustrate the perception of the cyclical nature of time. Rituals are an application of the cyclical perception of time in the living of Africans. Rituals were/are the points of return to the original state of being while at the same time starting the forward movement. Rituals are marking the *'end of the first and the beginning of the last'*.

Life experiences tend to be based on repeated important processes and events. There are those (processes) that take only a day to repeat themselves; others take about a month while some takes a year. Some

experiences are seasonal as in a case of soil cultivation and harvesting. For a herd-boy, his daily life begins with the driving the livestock to the veld, returning home for the milking (**inhlazane**), then to the water hole and later driving them back to the kraal.

Rituals were/ are the means required to anchor time down so as to make it a reliable and predictable tool. Although the linear perception of time was/ is conceptualized by Africans, the cyclical perception was dominant particularly for rural life. Combining both the linear and the cyclical conception of time, Africans were able to keep track of, control and synchronize their living.

The following table illustrates the different categories of dance performances among few of the **Abantu** and **San** dances.

Category	Stage	Name of Dance	People	Gender	Time
Human Transformation and Bonding	Birth/ Naming of a child	Isukuti	Kakamega	All	Day
	Puberty	Eland bull dance	San	Female	Day
		Ingcekeza	Zulu	Female	Night/Day
		Vhusha	Venda	Female	Day
	Initiation	Kibuiya	Kikuyu	Male	Night
		Ngoisia	Kikuyu	Female/male	Day/Night
		Domba	Venda	Female	Day
		Ndege and Kunguwiya	Zanzibar	Female (mkinda)	Day
	Marriage	Umphendu	Zulu	Male/female	Day

		Gqumushela	Zulu	Male	Morning
		Getiro	Kikuyu	Female	Day/Night
		Mbende	Shona	Male/Female	Day
	Healing	Umqhuqhumbelo	Nguni (Zulu)	Diviners (female/male)	Day/Night
		Trance-Dance	San	Shamans (male/female)	Day/Night
		Vimbuza	Tumbuka (Malawi)	Female/ Male	Night
		Gule Wamkulu (Zilombo) <i>mask dancers</i>	Chewa (Malawi)	Male	Day
Seasonal Changes	Crop planting and harvest	Kivata	Kikuyu	Male	Day
		Mugoyo	Kikuyu	Male/female	Night
		Kichukia	Kikuyu	Male/female	Day/Night
		Incwala	Swazi	Male	Day
		Muzogo	Kikuyu	Male/female	Night
Day-Time Changes	Rest/leisure-time (no work in the fields)	Nguru	Kikuyu	Male	Day
	Year-end	Ndumo	Kikuyu	Female	Day

2.3.2. Housing, shelter and other spaces as venues for performances.

Msimang, (1986; 21) in quoting (Scheub, 1975: 3) describe *inganekwane*

as:

.a performing art which has, as its mainspring, a core-cliché (a song, chant or saying) which is, during a performance, developed, expanded, and dramatized before an audience...

As **Inganekwane** (folktale) was performed in order to entertain children, time (night) was of great importance and the setting around the fire place was a perfect spot for both the projection of the story (round theatrical formation) and to capture the attention of the audience. In most cases, **Indlu-kaGogo** (grand-mother's house) was a perfect place for the performance of **Inganekwane**. **Ogogo** (grandmothers) used to be the performers of **Inganekwane** although at times children took turns to perform.

Some performances take place outside the hut/house yet addressing the issue inside the hut, for instance, the Eland Bull Dance by the San. This dance is performed when the girl enters puberty.

Lewis-Williams, (1990; 77) states:

The girl is isolated in a small hut, and the women dance around it imitating the mating behaviour of eland cows.



Figure 22. Women performing the eland bull dance. The girl is secluded in the hut at the centre of the performance. The males allowed in the performance are very old ones since the rest of the young male are chased away from the camp.

The direction of the performance in the eland bull dance is counter-clockwise and as it is the case with most (female) puberty dance performances, the participants are strictly female only except for one old male who perform the role of imitating the bull eland. Lewis-Williams, (1990; 77) further states:

As the old man approaches the women, they sway their hips thus causing the 'tails' of ostrich eggshell beads they are wearing to swing from side to side, just as the eland cows flick their tails when they are mating.

The act of women swaying their hips is the symbol of fertility of the young girl who has just entered puberty.



Figure 23.An old San man performing the eland bull dance

Schapera, (1930; 119), alludes on the centrality of the eland bull dance at the girl's puberty ceremony among the Naron, Auren and Kung:

The central feature of the girl's puberty ceremony is the eland bull dance, which is held in the girl's honour...By day she is kept in a special hut, tended by women only, and no man may come near her; while every night until her period has passed the eland bull dance is performed. All the men and boys leave the camp, save two old men, who tie eland's horns or wooden imitations thereof to their heads, and wait in the bushes.

On further description of the dance performance itself, Schapera, (1930; 119), states:

The girl is brought from her hut, and sits or lies on the ground by them (older women). The younger women then circle round before them (older women), or make a figure of eight. They dance with their arms outstretched before them, and have a peculiar slow, swaying step. As they dance they lift their karosses and aprons to one side, and expose their buttocks, which they waggle from side to side.

Then the two 'bulls' stamp up,...They join the line of dancers, sometimes leading it, sometimes in the middle of it, and dance with a slow, jogging step.

But in the case of a **Zulu** girl reaching puberty, she is isolated in her mother's hut where she will remain for the rest of her first menstruation period secluded from the rest of the family. During that time she will be joined by the youths at night to sing *izithombiso* songs accompanied by *ingungu* (menstruation) drum.



Figure 24. Ingungu drum

The playing of **ingungu** (placing the reed on the membrane and Milking it with the wet hands) symbolizes fertility of the young girl. It is said that the reed represents the penis and how it is milked during sexual intercourse.

The circular orientation is evident in the performance of *ingcekeza* which takes place when the Zulu girl finally comes out of her seclusion. Bryant, (1949; 650), observes thus:

Out in the courtyard, the girls formed themselves into a ring, into the centre of which two girls at a time advanced, (**Pumepi** and her *iphini* leading), and performed an *ingcekeza* dance while the other girls sang and clapped with hollowed palms (*ukuNqukuza*).

And Schapera, (1930; 276), observes the last days of the 'Hottentot' girl puberty rite:

Towards evening the girl's friends enter the hut to fetch her out, and for the last time she must leave it by the special opening made for her at the back. Her friends surround her, and for a time try to keep her from the view of the youth, for she is very shy. The youths now start a reed dance, forming the inner ring, while the girls, with the *oaxais* in their midst, dance round them in an outer ring.

Circular orientation in dance performance in puberty rites can be viewed in three forms:

- Dances that take a circular formation when performed. In this form, dancers and audience always form a circle facing the centre, while taking turns to perform at the centre. The example for this form of performance is *ingcekeza* among the Zulu.
- Dances that move or cycle around a particular point during performance. Often performances of this form are in a single file cycling around a drum, as in the case of **Domba** among the **Venda**, around the hut, as in the *eland bull dance* of the **San**.
- Dances that do not necessarily form a circle or cycle around a particular point but which mark a particular point in the stage of a growing youth. An example to this form of dance performance will be at '**Untonjane**' among the **Xhosa**. According to Dizu Plaatjies (the former leader of **Amampondo** music band and a **Xhosa** cultural exponent),

.. "although girls usually come from a *rondavel* house in a file, they sometimes form a circle in the arena, but they usually perform in a straight line formation", (Capetown; 2009).

Architecture, shape and size of the performance venue are also an important determinant of the functional nature of a performance. Almost all the early writers on the 'Bushman' girls puberty dances concur on the structure, shape and size of the hut prepared for the girl's first menstruation. The hut is always made out of simple branches/ thatch, small and rounded with a small entrance. Schapera, (1930; 120) states:

At the onset of her first menstruation, a girl is isolated in a small round hut (*hawa omi*, hut for waiting), which is completely closed in except for a small entrance.

2.3.3. Properties and performance iconographies

Almost every subject of ritual-performances among the indigenous people of Africa is illustrated by images, figures, portraits and artistic symbols. These can be grouped as:

- Symbolic staffs and weapons
- Magical charms and ornaments
- Potency paintings and engravings
- Crafted furniture and tools

Their functionalities are invariable determined by (their) sizes, shapes and usage.

2.3.4. Costumes for performance

Costumes were a major feature in any kind of performance. Costumes help explain and define the performance/occasion and also help to identify different roles each performer play in the performance, for instance, the leader can be identified by a certain form of a head gear. Costumes help differentiate between the performer-participants and spectator-participants.

(a) *Colour*

In cases of ritual-ceremonial performances, there are specific colours associated with each ceremony. For an example, in rituals associated with divinity, red and sometimes white are standard features. In ceremonies associated with virginity the white colour is central since it is universally associated with purity.

Harriet Ngubane in her book '**Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine**' (1977), describes the red colour as associated with two twilights, that is of sunrise and sunset. It represents the point between day and night which could be between life and death. It also represents a transition from one stage to another. It is therefore appropriate for **Amathwasa** (trainee diviners) to use red ochre (**ibomvu**) on their faces during their training.

Schapera, (1930; 281), when quoting Wikar, (1779; 78-138), states that:

When a young **Hottentot** is "made a man" he is first cleansed with water, to do away with his 'child" or "goat dirt", next rubbed all over with fat,- after which he is

leaned with the blood of an animal specially killed for the purpose.

But in situations of recreational performances such as **Ingoma (Isishameni)** festivals and competitions, colour plays a role by-which different teams and individual get identified.



Figure 25.The three pictures above illustrate how colour is used to distinguish different groups, gender and age.

In the case of a communal dancing, sometimes colour is used to distinguish gender and status among the members of the community. Among the **Nguni** of South Africa such as **Xhosa** and **Zulu**, the colours of items such as beads and bangles determine the positions such members (like **Izimbongi**, **Izangoma**, **Amadoda** and **Izintombi**) occupy in the community.



Figure 26. Maidens'-Matron at Umhlanga ceremony (and)

Maidens at Umkhosi woMhlanga.

(b) Texture

The texture of the costume generally used at puberty rites represents the hardships often faced by the neophytes during the processes of initiation into adulthood. The costume is therefore rough and uncomfortable. Although neophytes spend most of their life naked at initiation lodges, they do sometimes put on costumes to keep them warm or for dancing purposes. But those costumes are of a very poor value and rough texture.

The costume is either made out of grass, palm leaves, tree bark or leaves from special trees. For instance the costume worn by the *makishi* at the **Chokwe** and other related peoples' *mukanda* ceremony are made out of the bark fibers of trees.

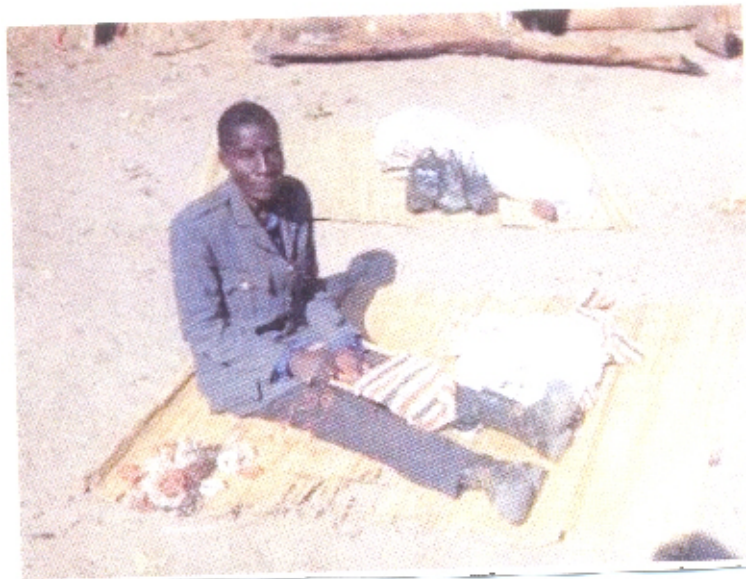


Figure 27. Attendant weaving ceremonial costumes which are made of bark fibers that are woven or crocheted. The fibers are given color with natural pigments and waxes - (Komandoga)

There is a tendency for the costume at initiation ceremonies to either take a form of a dress or a skirt. Although it can never be concluded that costumes are suggestive of a feminine principle during the initiation of both boys and girls, but the theme of fertility always lean more towards feminism. The reason could be that fertilization takes place inside the female body and mother earth is the one who is seen as fertile as opposed to the father sky. For example the following examples illustrate this point:



Figure 28.Chokwe initiates ready to return to the village.



Figure 29.Xhosa *umkhwetha* dancer



Figure 30.Sotho girls' initiates

(c) *Make-up*

The make-up for the novices either for puberty rites or the possession rituals carry a strong earthly element in a form of clay or red ochre made out of soil and some colouring agents from trees. Some make-ups cover only the face while others cover the whole body. There are those which are referred to as dotted or striped like the one for the **Ndembu** novices.



Figure 31. Ndembu initiates

Other make-ups like those of the Sotho girls' initiates tend to mask the whole body.



Figure 32. Sotho girls initiates

Make-up serves two purposes during the observation of the rites in question. First they symbolize the state between life and death under-which every novice finds him/herself in during the passage. The use of red

and white colours is symbolic to life. Secondly make-up symbolizes a state of nobody-ness, neutrality and a state being grounded ready to be given identity by the rest of the society.

2.3.5. Conclusion

The meaning attached to every performance is rooted in the understanding of that society's cultural expressions. Cultural expressions for every given society are informed by the identity of those people, their language, customary engagement, belief systems and the way that society live their daily life.

Every society has a form of a myth of creation which normally explains their relationship with some form of a deity. The myths are also used to explain and justify the people's existence and their continued existence. It informs the way of their worship and rituals. The myth of creation is at the heart of every society's identity.

The space which is geographic location determines the shelter they will possible built due to the weather, material and purpose. Geographic location also determines the food the people can be able to obtain or generate. This will also have bearings on the kind of dress people will prefer.

The people cosmological awareness explains the timing and venues for ritualistic performances and observance. For instance, the **Sandawe** celebrate the first menses of their girls at full moon.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. THEMES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN DANCE PERFORMANCES BY ABANTU AND ABATHWA.

3.1. Introduction

Almost in every society there are situations whereby participation in cultural performances such as dance is restricted to a particular gender such as males or females only. Sometimes a performance would be an affair confined to a specific age group like teenage boys or girls. A theme and the purpose (ritual and recreational or educational and sport) of a dance performance determine the participants, place and time for the performance.

The structural requirements such as movements, tempo and the duration of the performance are also the important determinants for participation in a performance. Any dance performance that requires physical demanding movements such as acrobatic, jumping and tumbling on a very fast pace will be performed by males of a particular age group. Dances such as **Muchongolo** of the **Shangaan** and **Pada** of the San are typical examples of physically demanding performances. When the San children perform **Pada**, they are required to squat and jump like frogs which can only be done by young people of a particular age. In the performance of **Muchongolo**, young males do somersaults, tumbles, kicks and some stampings which can only be done by physically capable performers.

Sometimes a historical perspective to a dance can determine the gender and age of the performers. A performance could be about a particular event in the history of the people, such as war, floods or outbreak of a disease. In enacting and commemorating such events, those members of the society who were directly affected or those that survived caused others to survive will be the participants, that is, if it was an old man that helped or was affected by the situation, it will always be the old man who will be expected to participate.

3.2. Male dances

Both the Bantu speaking people and the **Khoisan** are patriarchal societies, which means, that men always represent the memory of the origins and existence of the people. Men always carry and keep the name/surname of the lineage so the rituals aiming at re-enacting the presence of the ancestral spirits and deities are performed by males.

Acrobatic dances such as those performed while wearing masks and pure convulsive/trance dances such as those done by shamans, demand strong masculinity in performance which can only be provided by male performers. Also dances relating to situations such as hunting, death of a warrior and war, can only be performed by men since such activities were done by men.

Dance performances relating to male puberty rites were/are exclusively performed by males since women can never be allowed inside the secluded area during initiation of a male novice and vice versa.

3.2.1. Agrarian cult dance performances

Dances that fall under the category of Agrarian cult in Africa varies from rain making, cultivation, harvest and crop production. Such dances are only performed during ritual ceremonies pertaining to those (rain-making, harvest and crop) purposes. But to communities such as the San who are neither pastoral nor agricultural in terms of cultivating the land, rituals such as rain-making is always for different purposes compared to most other African communities.

San shamans are renowned for their trance dance which is capable of changing the weather, healing the sick and taming the animals. To the San the making of rain is solely for the purpose of bringing more game closer and making more food for both the people and the animals, plentiful. Lewis-Williams, (1990; 29) assets:

..San also believed the shamans could make rain and guide antelope herds into the hunters' ambush.

But the San can also dance not to bring about the rain, instead, they dance for the rain in order to use the medicine or the power/potency obtainable from the falling rain for healing or prevention of some diseases,

as Marshal-Thomas, (1959; 152), reported of the **Khu** (ceremonial dance) associated with the rain by the / **Kung** and the **San** north of Mafeking:

The singing was very hard, very fast, and as the dancers swung around the circle dancing harder and faster, it suddenly began to rain. It was like a miracle. It was the first rain of the year.... The people had not danced to bring the rain; they had known that the rain was coming and had danced to use its strong medicine.

The coming of rain enables trees to produce more fruits and animals become fatter because of greener vegetation and plentiful water in the land.



Figure 33. Rock painting showing San rain-making dance.

But in the case of the **Qoi Qoi**, who were/are highly pastoral and nomadic, the changing of seasons always characterized by the changes of the moon were highly revered and celebrated. As Hahn, (1881; 56-60) quoted by Schapera, (1930; 403) mentions a dance where:

Tsui//Goab is prayed for the rain, which is held when the Pleiades first appear above the eastern horizon; still another, in which, **!Gurub**, the Thunder, is invoked, even takes place, as we have seen, when a heavy thunderstorm is approaching.

In most cases these dances were performed by men hence they are referred to as reed dances. Boys were taught at a very young age how to play the reeds- pipes as part of musical accompaniment to reed-dances or reed-songs.

Among the Kikuyu of Kenya, there is a dance called **Mugoyo** which is danced when the *njahe* or *cajanus* bean is planted. Hopley, (1922; 268) states:

Mugoyo is held at night when there is no moon, and is one of the most picturesque dances of the country. A circle of fires is made and maintained by men appointed for the purpose, and round the outside of this circle stand the dancers.

Hopley, (1922; 268), further describe the **Mugoyo** dance as follows:

The men stand with their backs to the fire, each holding his partner, who stands with her feet on his... Forming a diameter across the circle stands another row of dancers...Except for a slight movement of the shoulders among the dancers the whole dance has an air of quietness which is presumably intentional. There are masters of ceremony who go about and check noisy persons, preserving general quiet and the regular formation of the circle.

Although women are part of the **Mugoyo** dance, the dance remains a male affair. Women are there as mere partners to *Anake* (warrior class).

As Hobley, (1922; 266) puts it:

The principal dances of the **anake** are connected with harvest and crops.

Of the dances by the **anake** among the kikuyu the most important is the **Kivata** dance. **Kivata** is danced when the **mawele** grain is reaped.

According to Hobley, (1922; 267) observations at **Kyambu**:

The dancers march round in rows of six to eight, the dancing consisting mainly in a continued jumping from one foot to the other. The women bring gourds of **uji**, or gruel, which they give to the dancers and thereby signify affections. The dance is said to be a general occasion for choosing brides by old men as well as by **anake**.

Hobley, (1922; 267) further gives account of his observations as:

Many of the onlookers (not the younger **rikas**) run madly round the whole circle, brandishing swords and leaping into the air. The name of the dance is said to be derived from this... Even the old men who are spectators become infected with the spirit of the dance, cast off their blankets and trot round the outside of the circle.

Among the **Bantu** speaking people of the Southern part of **Africa**, **AmaSwazi** and **AmaZulu** are the ones with elaborate ritual ceremonies that are aimed at celebrating harvest or first fruit occasions. **AmaSwazi** call this ceremony **Incwala** while **AmaZulu** call it **Umkhosi Wokweshwama**. Both ceremonies are presided by the king of each nation. Men are the main actors in the dance and it normally takes place in the main kraal. Although dancers tend to stand in rows but for the fact

that it takes place in the kraal which is in a circular form, gives the performance that necessary circular orientation.

3.2.2. Talisman cult dance performances

The dance performance associated with African talismans or shamans is sometimes referred to as ecstatic. It is referred to as such because of the way it is performed or the outcome of its performance. It is performed by those people who are capable of getting into a state of a trance or being possessed. As Lewis-Williams, (1990; 28) explains:

A shaman is a ritual specialist who goes into a state of altered consciousness (generally known as trance) to heal people, change the weather and so forth.

In order for them to get into that state they need to be transformed through the performance of repetitive and vigorous movements. As Vinnicombe, (1976; 310) assets towards the trance dances:

These special curing or protective dances have their own special style, the men dancing in a circular rut, stamping around and around, hour after hour, now clockwise and now ant-clockwise. Within the circumference of the circle sit the women, shoulder to shoulder, facing inwards towards the central dance fire.

Other healing dances cited by Vinnicombe, (1976), are the ones performed by the **Gwi** of the central **Kalahari**, which are referred to as the gemsbok and the Iron dances. Vinnicombe, (1976; 311) states:

The women are thought to be most susceptible to the invisible evil-containing missiles sent by **Gawama**, and by

dancing around them, the men are able to absorb the evil into their own bodies, which finally induces a trance.

Among the San shamanism is often practiced by men although there are exceptional cases whereby women also train as shamans but under normal circumstances, they are there to accompany men shamans. Lewis-Williams, (1990; 28) states:

At one of the large dances in the Kalahari today the women sit in a circle around the fire as they clap the rhythm and sing special medicine songs.

In the encounter with the southern (San) people, Lewis-Williams, (1990; 29) points at a variation on the formation of the trance dance:

Sometimes the shamans (or a single shaman) danced in the centre while the women stood around them/him.

Both Lewis-williams, (1990: 29) and Schapera, (1930: 202) refer to the trance dance by the San of what is now called Lesotho as **mo'koma**, or the dance of blood.

In the case of Bantu speaking Africans, the shamans, which are commonly known as diviners, trance performance is never so severe as that of the San shamans. And the formations in a performance are not that elaborately circular as with the case with the San. But the repetition of steps and intensity in performance of those steps create a sense of a circular orientation to the whole performance of the dance. The most

remarkable feature on both the San and Bantu shamanic performances is the shuffling and pounding (of the earth) feet movements.

3.2.3. Life cycle dance performances

The most celebrated stages in a cycle of living of a human being, almost in every society, are puberty and initiation. In both stages a person is being transformed either by nature (in the case of puberty) or by the community (in the case of initiation). Puberty is the beginning of fertility and readiness to fertilize and initiation is the beginning of wisdom and readiness to enter the inner circle of the society. Arnold van Gennep, in the book, *Les rites de passage*, discerned a fundamental tripartite form inherent in all rites of passage: which is, separation, transition and incorporation.

During separation, the novices are made to part with their previous habits of acting, thinking and feeling like children. And during the transition, they are placed in a highly susceptible state of learning to become what he/she is expected to be by the society. During the transition stage, the society is enabled to inscribe its design of norms and values into the novice in both conscious and sub-conscious of the novice directly or indirectly. At incorporation, the novice is born into a new status and role in the society.

Turner, (1969), however puts an emphasis on the passage itself, which is that between the stages of separation, transition and incorporation. Turner terms this “betwixt and between” a “liminal phase”. In the *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, (2006; 4), Edward Croft Dutton of the **University of Aberdeen**, states:

The word “liminal” is drawn from the Latin “limen” meaning “corridor”, a passage between one room and another.

It is the experience by the neophyte in this passage that Turner draws our attention into. As a passenger, the neophyte is in a state of transition whereby he/she lacks a place in cultural space. The neophyte is made passive, humble and grounded down to be refashioned as a new person.

Although the celebration of these two stages varies from society to society, there are historical evidences which suggest that almost every society once celebrated both stages and due to certain circumstances one or both were to be abandoned. The reason for the apparent abandonment or continuation of certain parts of the rites can be attributed to the fact that some societies regard either women or men as predominant in production.

Boys’ puberty stage was not a well celebrated (in song and dance) affair as compared to the girls’ puberty. The reason could be that boys’ puberty was marked by the first nocturnal emission which happened only once

during the boys sleep, unlike the girls menstruation which lasted for some-days and was very visible.

For the (Zulu) boy, after his first genital discharge have taken place, he will rise very early, when it is still dark, and drive all the cattle out of the kraal and hide them in the forest. The boy will then have to bath in the stream before sunrise. This marked the beginning of the **Thomba** process which will culminate into a seclusion period right-up to the last dance ceremony.

Krige, (1936; 88) states about the Zulu-boy's first genital discharge:

It is of interest in this connection that the boy at this stage is considered "just about to be born" and at the end of the ceremonies has to dive in the water, on emerging from which he is supposed to be newly born.

The above mentioned stage can be likened to a ceremony called **Ku-chiaruo ringi** among the **Kikuyu**. **Ku-chiaruo ringi** means 'to be born again', and it is a ceremony a boy have to go through before reaching a stage of circumcision. The difference between the **Zulu** and the **Kikuyu** is that the **Zulu** one is observed during the first genital discharge while the **Kikuyu** one is observed at about three to six years after birth.

But initiation was always viewed as the most important and most celebrated stage for boys. The San (at the early stage of initiation) performed a dance called **/gi**, men dance which is very sacred and is held all through the day and often continued at night. Schapera, (1930; 123),

on the description given by Miss Bleek on the dances by **Naron** and **Auen**, says:

All gather in a circle, clap their hands, and sing a weird, solemn tune with the refrain 'honk a honk'. Then they stamp round the circle waving their arms to another phase of the melody (no words are used); and they stand still and sing the first part again and so on.

Miss Bleek's description continues, Schapera, (1930; 123) stating:

On one of the nights of this dance, "a supernatural being called **Hishe**" approaches the dancers, circle round them, and is driven away by the medicine men.

But among the San of the Kalahari, as Lewis-Williams, (1990; 780) puts it:

A San boy's entry into adulthood is not marked by such (Eland bull) dance as it is usually the case with a girl. Instead, he is considered a man when he has killed his first large antelope, preferably an eland. He is then scarified with fat taken from parts of the eland that are considered to have potency. This is done while he is sitting on the eland's skin. Using a leg from the eland, one of the older men makes a circle of hoof prints around the skin.

Although the above quotation does not mention any dance performance but it does highlight the centrality of an eland and a circle in the puberty ritual of a San boy. The circular motion by an old man around a sitting boy combined with the leg of an eland provides the boy with potency that will help him as a hunter in the future. Lewis-Williams, (1990; 79), also make mention of: northern Kalahari men's respect for eland, **tchemi**, which means 'dance'. Therefore the use of an eland leg during the ceremony is enough to suggest dancing by and for the boy.

Some societies like Bantu speaking-**Ndembu** of **Zambia** celebrate the coming in ceremony during circumcision of boys. Turner, (1967; 207), gives a brief description of **Ing'ungu** dance at **Ijiku daMukanda** (on the first night). The dance takes place at a circular clearing around the **chikoli** tree where strengthening medicine was pounded. **Ing'ungu** is the dance by the circumcisers. According to Turner, (1967; 207), the scenery at the **Ijiku daMukanda** is thus:

Around the circumference of the clearing are camp fires for relatives of the novices. At the centre of the clearing is, the **Chikoli** tree and the drums. Cycling around the tree and the drums are dancers in a clockwise direction. Two most important fires are placed opposite to each other; that is, **Ijiku** (fire) of circumcisers and **Ijiku daMukanda** (fire of the novice).

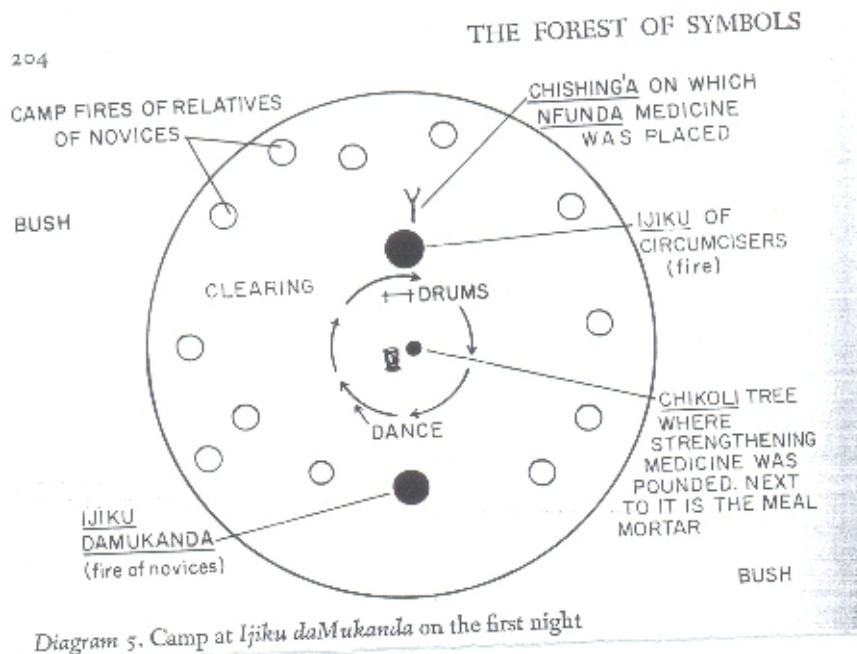


Figure 34. The layout of the Ijiku daMukanda on the first night
Turner, (1967; 207) further mentions:

The **ing'ungu** dance began to thud out its heady rhythm- it was a wilder version of the circumcisers dance in the afternoon. Immediately, the senior male kin of the novices, father or older brothers mainly, lifted the boys on to their shoulders and all proceeded in a cavorting circle round the drums.

But on the eve of the operation/circumcision, there are a number of dances that are performed by either the circumcisers or novices and ordinary people who might be present at that time. Turner, (1967; 211) states:

Besides **ing'ungu** and **ku-kundisha**, other **Mukanda** dances and **Wubinda** (hunting cult) dances and songs were performed...A circle for the **Chikinta** (a modern secular dance) also formed up, consisting as usual of younger people.

But among the **Bagesu** of **Uganda**, dance performances take place before circumcision. Roscoe, (1924; 28) states:

..the boys stamped their feet as they moved round in a circle.



(2) Dancing at the initiation ceremony
(Bagesu Tribe)

Figure 35. Bagesu initiates dancing at the initiation ceremony

Roscoe, (1924; 29) further attests:

From time to time one of them (youth) rushed into the surrounding crowd, striking about in a furious manner.

And again he (Roscoe), (1924; 30), states:

The spectators who surrounded the youths and followed them about shared in the excitement, and women often became hysterical and shook all over, dancing, as the people said, under the influence of the spirit.



Bagesu initiation dance

Figure 36. Bagesu initiates dance

The coming-out off seclusion or the end to the circumcision (feast of coming out) among some of the Bantu speaking people is always marked by a dance(s) by the circumcised (boys) and certain circumstances accompanied by other members of the community. Wagner, (1949; 367) gives description of the dances during the feast of coming out by two of the Bantu speaking people of North **Kavirondo** District of the **Nyaza** province of **Kenya**; that is **Logoli** and **Idaxo**:

On the dancing-ground, where the (**Logoli**) initiates of several circumcision huts assemble, they dance for several hours, moving slowly in a circle, each lad holding in both hands a strong pole (**omudigelu**) with which he pounds the ground in a slow rhythm. After they have danced for a while, the cow which they have selected is led into the centre of the circle formed by the dancers. While they

dance round the cow it gradually gets weaker and weaker and finally collapses, spreading its legs to all four sides.

And the *vuxulu*-song dance by the **Idaxo** people, Wagner, (1949; 369)

accounts:

After having danced in a circle for few minutes they proceed in close formation, running and singing, to the dancing ground on the large 'common' where the initiates of the various clans assemble in quick succession...each unit forming a wide circle about a hundred feet or more in diameter. In the centre of each circle the female guardians, stripped to the waist and with their heads and shoulders painted with white clay, clap their hands to the rhythm of the dance, constantly repeating the refrain of the *vuxulu* song.

Wagner, (1949; 369) further gives account pertaining to the direction of

the initiates' dance thus:

The initiates dance side by side, in an anti-clockwise direction, gripping their *tsimbu*-poles with both hands and pounding the ground with them at each step they make. A further but less regular outer circle of dancers is formed by the ordinary people. They dance in a clock-wise direction and may leave off and rest whenever they please.



Some of the novices, 1967.

Figure 37. Idaxo novices pole-dance

And the coming out at the **Ndembu** boys circumcision have its own kind of celebrations. Turner, (1967; 255), mentions that:

The guardians ran around in an inner circle, the mothers danced besides them waving scarves, cloths, anything they could lay hands on, while other female relatives and friends made up an outer ring of joyful chanting dancers. After three or four turns around the **chikoli**, the male procession headed off once more into the bush. First, the novices were taken into the lodge which they circled clockwise inside;....Meanwhile, the mothers and other women were still dancing merrily round the drums at **chikoli**.

Although circumcision rites take place at different stages among different Bantu speaking peoples, they all carry a sentiment of being born again of the novices. For instance to communities such as Kikuyu, circumcision rites normally take place between the ages of three and six while to other

societies they take place at puberty. There is a great sense of being naked and which is followed by being dressed in new clothes; also being introduced into the inner circle of the society and secrets of the living. After circumcision/initiation, a new person is born.

3.2.4. Social bonding dance performances

Dance performances associated with the ritual of social bonding can be divided into two that is courtship and marriages. Normally these bonding ceremonies involve the coming together of two people of opposite sexes. In most societies, the performances related to courtships are said to be very erotic and sensual while the ones related to marriages are meant to be jubilant yet respectful.

It will be very hard and rare to find a male only courtship dance or female only dance because usually these dances are meant to seduce or to arouse the opposite sex and they are done in the presence of the people of the other sex. Schapera, (1930; 202-203) makes suggestions about the erotic character and courting motive in most of San dances, whereby a woman may leave the line of singers and dances round beside some man, or a men dance round alone, then approach the line of singers holding out their arms.

Umphendu by the **Zulu** people, although sometimes is performed at ceremonies such as **Umemulo** and **Umkhehlo**, it is mainly a dance for **Ikhetho** at the wedding ceremony. Each clan/family has its own **Umphendu** in terms of the wording yet the movements are the same, which are stepping and minor stamping on the ground. The dancers arrange themselves in two files in opposite direction, that is, clockwise and counter-clockwise. Clapping is always provided by older women while younger women are participating together with young and old men in the dance.

3.2.5. Spirits dance performances

Performances that are supposed to be a representation of spirits in Africa are done by performers wearing masks. There are good and there are bad spirits. Masks are specifically created to depict the nature and the purpose of each mask. Generally spirits are expected to appear at special and specific times. At certain times spirits appear as messengers from higher deities or sometimes as officials at ritual-ceremonies.

Masks always represent divine changes in the lives of the people such as the rites of passage and seasons. A good example of a spirit's appearances at the boys' initiation ritual of Bantu speaking people would be at the **Mukanda** of the **Ndembu** of **Kenya**.

Turner, (1967; 243) argues:

Traditionally, **Ndembu** have only ***Katotoji*** and ***Mvweng'i***.

Katotoji is said to be the one (***ikishi***) to appear first to the novices dressed (***nkambi*** kilt of stiff grasses) like them at ***Kwidisha*** (the rites of return).



Figure 38. ***Ikishi*** appearing at the Ndembu boys' circumcision ceremony.

Almost all the ***makishi*** that appear at the **Ndembu** boys' circumcision rites are males except for ***Mwana Pwevo*** "the young woman" said to have been borrowed from **Luvale** (**Angola, Republic of Congo** and the **Democratic Republic of Congo, Bantu speaking people**). Among the **Ndembu**, she is known as ***Chileya yawambanda*** "the fool of the women". Bastin, (2008; 10) states:

Although **Pwevo** represents a woman and a female role model, she is created by men and performs in events related to **mukanda** male initiation.



Figure 39. Mwana Pwevo at the Ndembu/Chokwe boys' circumcision ceremony.

Generally, masks were danced during initiations, funerals, war and hunting. The **Boa** people, for instance, had masks used to disguise for hunting monkeys.



Figure 40. Old face mask of the Boa people Congo

The features of the mask shown above might resemble those of the monkey, which explains the reasons why they were used during the hunting of the monkeys. When masks were supposed to represent the spirits, they took a form of deities, ancestors/the dead or nature. During the times of war, they were used to scare-off the enemies.

3.2.6. Animal-Human relationships dance performances

San lives were very much dependent on the environment surrounding them. San generally believed that animals and plants were part and parcel of their existence. They did not see or regard themselves as separate to nature. They gave to it as they expect to take away from it. At times they felt necessary for them to appease nature so as it can give them what they need. As hunter-gatherers, animal life and behaviour was central to the lives of the San. Schapera, (1930; 203) says that:

Most of the dances (by San) appear to be based on episodes in the lives of animals; the dancers imitate the animals, and go through the actions characteristic of them.

Although, most of the dances (mentioned by Schapera, (1930)) do not have circular structure or cyclical conception in their performance, but they do carry some ritualistic characteristics in them. Those dances are, the Jackal and Wolf dance, the Gemsbok dance, the Baboon dance (**t’Gorlo’ka**), Frog dance (**’kloo-rou-o**) and the bee dance (**t’Oi**).

But Vinnicombe, (1976; 307) from Doke, (1936; 469) gives detailed accounts of the baboon dance recorded from among the **Khomani San** in

Gemsbok park:

This dance is carried out in the usual circular style, the dancers following one another around forming an eclipse rather than a circle in the sand...As the dance warms up, one of the women...will from time to time leave the group of clappers, cross the ring and approach the principal baboon dancer with obvious sexual movements, to which the man...responds with contortions in imitation of baboon.

Sometimes the baboon dance is referred to as the 'Dance of Acrobats', as Vinnicombe, (1976; 308) quotes Stow, (1905; 118) from Sparrman, (1786; 356) as follows:

In hoping and jumping about in a ring, it appeared as if all their efforts were directed to place themselves in every possible position and contortion, the leader taking his place in the centre, and occasionally joining in the posture-making going on around him, while the dancers moved in a circle, writhing, twining and twisting their bodies in whatever droll and uncommon attitude their fancy suggested,...the changes from one posture to the other were rapid and continuous, and the entire circle was ever in ceaseless motion.

But in the case of the horse dance, Schapera, (1930; 203) gives an account of the structure of the performance as:

The Horse dance is likewise danced by men only, who go round quickly in a circle, while the women clap their hands in imitation of the sound made by a galloping horse.

The Ostrich-mating dance by the San of the Kalahari shows strong characteristics of circular orientation in performance. The dance is

performed by both young and old males, while women clap their hands in a [3 3 2 2 2] rhythm. It takes a form of a game whereby one person (usually an elder) stands at a particular point in the middle of the arena and the rest of the performers cycle around him in a counter-clockwise direction. Dancers take turns in interacting with the dancer/elder in the middle, doing movements imitating the act of mating by the Ostrich.

3.2.7. Popular dances

Some dance performances are referred to as popular because they are performed by almost everybody in the community either as a nation, “tribe” and a clan. Sometimes as a gender group, that is, male or female of a particular age group of a particular people/society. Some dances are popular within a particular class and place, for an example, gumboot dance which became popular with the male- working class.

Ushameni is popular amongst the young **Zulu** men and women. **Umzansi** is popular amongst the young men and women from **Umsinga** and **Bergville** in **KwaZulu- Natal**.

3.2.7.1. Popular-national/communal dancing

The **Venda** people regard **Tshikona** as their national dance. **Tshikona** is often performed at major national celebrations and ceremonies. It seems

as if every **Venda** boy/male has to learn or have to perform the **Tshikona** at some stage of his life.



Figure 41. Male-students (at the University of Venda -music department) practicing Tshikona.

As the picture above shows, the dancers dance around the drums in a counter-clockwise direction while playing pen-pipes. The movements are simple walking and shuffling yet complex in terms of their rhythmical arrangements. Rhythms are arranged according to the tuning in the pipes and the drums providing the basic beats. Although the dancers mainly move in/facing a forward direction but sometimes there are changes in focus/facing, whereby dancers, inwards and outwards of the centre of the circle.

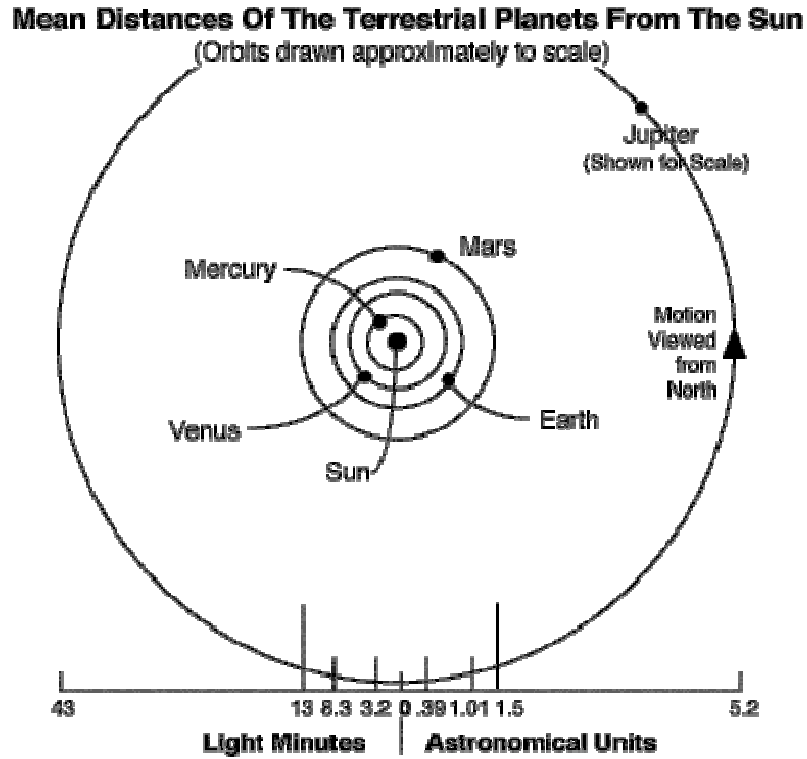


Figure 42. The arrow on the outer circle on the figure above is suggestive of the direction of the motion of the planets.

Among the **Bhaca**, there is what is known as *ibhodwe*, which is a rounded formation by the backers/clappers during the performance of their popular dance known as *ukhwaxa* or *ukhwapheni*. The dance is called *ukhwaxa* because of the sound that occurs when the knee of a dancer makes contact with the armpit, whence it is also referred to as *ukhwapheni* (armpit).



Figure 43. Young men from Umzimkhulu performing ukhwaxa

The dancers form a line in-front of the clapping and backing vocalists who form a circle behind the dancers. The backing vocalists and clappers are called **ibhodwe** (pot). **AmaBhaca** claim that at **ibhodwe**, the dance is cooked. It is where everything starts in terms of singing and clapping. The dance would not start until the **ibhodwe** is ready.



Figure 44. A formation of ibhodwe, behind the line of dancers.

3.2.7.2. Popular-recreational/sport

One good example of a popular-recreational/sport dance performance is the ball dance by the male San people cited by Stow, (1905; 114) as:

In this performance a flat stone was placed in the centre upon the ground, the players or dancers standing around.

The performance is like a game and sport as opposed to a much more aesthetical dance move. During the performance, the dancers sometimes imitate wild dogs by throwing themselves in all sorts of positions and making noise similar to those made by wild dogs. Stow, (1905; 114) further states that:

The play was sometimes varied by two players being matched against each other, each throwing and catching the ball alternately, until one of them missed it, when it was immediately caught by one of those in the outer ring, who at once took the place of the one who had made the slip, and thus the play continues.

3.3. Female dances

Female dances tend to be smooth, rounded and feminine. Female dances are central to celebrations of birth, fertility, death and resurrection. As women are always associated with the moon and the fertility of the earth, ceremonies such as **Umkhosi kaNomdede**, by the **Zulu** girls and mothers and rain-making ceremonies by Queen **Modjadji** of the **BaLobedu** are an illustration of the centrality of females in the fertility of the soil among the Bantu speaking societies.

3.3.1. Agrarian cult dance performances

Zulu people associated **Nomkhubulwana** with both the fertility of the soil and that of the women, especially that of the young girls. **Nomkhubulwana** was referred to as ***iNkosazana yeZulu*** (heavenly Princess). She was described as a virgin hence during her cult celebrations, virgins were at the forefront. **Nomkhubulwana** was regarded as the one who brings the rains in spring, so, at the first appearances of the mists in spring or when there was drought; **uMkhosi kaNomdede** was celebrated in honour of the Princess.

Although proceedings during these two situations, that is, drought or mist/rains were both meant to appease the heavenly Princess. The important aspect of the cult of **Nomkhubulwana** was the participation by **Zulu** virgins in song and dance. As it was the case during puberty, the songs used during the cult of the heavenly Princess were obscene (**umbhino**). Berglund, (1976; 67) states about girls' performance:

Now-and-again they would sing and dance around a small fire made of sticks found on the mountain, clapping their hands as they performed.

3.3.2. Talisman cult dance performances

Amongst the Bantu speaking people, women appear to be dominant on the divination as an institution. Men do become diviners, but it is always believed that he is possessed by the grandmothers' spirits (**ungenwe ingulo yogogo**). Like it is the case with the San, both males and females

do become shamans, but the profession is dominated by males as it is the case with the Bantu the divination profession is highly feminine.

Possession dances by the Bantu are often improvisational and individualistic. As, Curley, (1973; 182) describes the possession dancing by the **Lango** women of **Uganda**:

A small area in the centre of the floor is cleared for dancing, and only one woman dances at a time. At first, the dancer's style is relatively relaxed and sedate; it becomes less so as the spirit gains more control over her, and finally she begins to go into a trance.

Although **Lango** can be classified as one of the **Nilotic** people, not as **Bantu**, their possession dancing is said to have been adopted from the Bantu speaking people such the **Nyoro**. Curley, (1973; 152) quotes Driberg arguing that:

Belief in the spirit **Jok Nam** was not an indigenous **Lango** belief but "a modern manifestation of **Jok**, dating back to 1897, the year when **Kabarega** escaped from **Bunyoro**. As the name suggests, this **Jok** is a direct outcome of **Bantu** influence...he is said to speak **Paulo** and **Bunyoro**".

The term **Jok Nam** can be translated "lake spirit", denoting a spirit from the other side of the Lake Kioga, from **Nyoro**. And Curley, (1973; 153) further suggests that:

The **Lango** name for the **Nyoro** people is **Jo Nam**, "people from the Lake". **Nam** usually refers to Lake Kioga, and is frequently extended to refer to people or things from **Nyoro**.

Berglund, (1976; 164) gives a full account of the occasion of the coming-out of *ithwasa* (novice diviner), at **eThelezini-KwaZulu-Natal**:

Withdrawing from the enclosure, she met her tutor at the gate, the tutor taking her to the open space in front of the hut set aside for them. Suddenly, and apparently quite unexpectedly, the novice started running in circles hysterically, jumping up and down occasionally. Very soon a ring of clapping onlookers was formed around her and the tutor,...She stopped where she had been dancing previously and no sooner had she arrived at the place than a large number of visitors surrounded her and formed wide circle. Again the novice commenced a solo dance, consisting of running around and jumping up-and-down.



Figure 45. Izangoma (diviners), under possession-doing *Ndawe* dance.

It is often said that when someone is diagnosed to be possessed by the spirits, he/she is possessed by **Umndawe**, **Indiki**, **Umlozi** or **Izizwe**. The dancing on the buttocks is suggestive of the relationship between the **Ndawe** spirits and the **Ndau** people of the central-eastern Mozambique.

3.3.3. Life cycle dance performances

Amongst both the **San** and the **Bantu** speaking people, the first menstruation of a girl is a highly celebrated occasion of all ceremonies of the life cycles. The girl's first menstruation marks a very important stage to a girl and the entire community. Some societies equal the cycle of menstruation to that of the moon periodicities. Among the San, /**Xam**,!**Xu**, **G/wi** and **G//ana**, would not release a girl from seclusion until the appearance of the new moon. To both the **San** and the **Bantu** speaking people, the cycle of the moon is central to their lives since it determines the changes of the seasons. Menstruation also marks the beginning of fertility of the girl which is also crucial to procreation of humans.

Also consistent with the notion of a new beginning marked by the first menstruation of the girl is the seclusion of the girl from the rest of the community as a preparation to be re-introduced and accepted (as a new matured woman). The first blood is implication of the counterpoint (blood) of death and (blood) of life. Menstruation period is also a counterpoint of being isolated and accepted. The seclusion and the avoidance of women during the girl's first 'period' is a reflection of the male fear of the danger of the female as life-giver. As Sidomadoma Ndlovu, (1992; interview) once said to me:

“Umuntu wesifazane ubesatshwa ndodana, uma esesikhathini sakhe ngoba ubethathwa njengomuntu ofile, njengoba ubona inyanga- njalo iyazalwa, bese iyafa ekupheleni kwenyanga.”

The girl is always secluded from the rest of the family/community except from the girls' of her age or sometimes the older women/grandmothers. For instance, at the first menstruation of a **San** girl, she is secluded into a small hut specially built for the occasion. The men leave the camp except for very old man who will be asked to perform at the eland bull dance. Lewis-williams, (1990; 77) states about the eland bull dance at puberty (by the San of northern Kalahari):

The girl is isolated in a small hut, and the women dance around imitating the mating behaviour of eland cows. Then an old man, who has remained in the camp for this purpose, ties eland horns to his head and pretends to be an eland bull.

And Schapera, (1930; 119) gives a detailed description of the eland bull dance (among the north-western tribes such as **Naron, auen and Kung**):

The central feature of the girls' puberty ceremony is the eland bull dance, which is held in the girls' honour. As soon as she has her first period, neighbours and friends assemble to a big feast given by her parents. By day she is kept in a special hut, tended by women only, and no man may come near her; while every night until her period has passed the eland bull dance is performed. All the men and boys leave the camp, save two old men, who tie elands' horns or wooden imitations thereof to their heads, and wait in the bushes... The younger women then circle round before them, or make a figure of eight.

One or two old men will put a skull with two horns of an eland on his forehead or in the absence of the real skull with horns he will use piece of wood with two sticks protruding as horns. At this time,

women are swaying their hips imitating eland cows during the mating season.



Figure 46. An old San- man performing (a bull Eland) during puberty eland bull Dance



Figure 47.Cave painting at the Drakensberg Mountains, Natal. The central figure is a young enrobed woman undergoing her first menstruation ceremony in a special shelter.

Circling the menstruating girl (shown on the figure above) are clapping women, female dancers and (in outer ring) men with their hunting equipment. The women bend over and display 'tails' as they imitate the mating behaviour of elands. A similar situation can be found also among the **Sandawe** of **Tanzania**, whereby, the women, as the dance warms up, turn around and gather up their garments to expose their buttocks at the men.

The presence of men and their hunting equipments is evident of the link, by the San, between hunting and the blood of the first menstruation. The first menstruation of a girl is a reverent occasion. It is celebrated over for days and nights. It is equated as the same to the young warrior shooting his first big game animal; the **/Kung** refers to it as 'she shot an eland' and the **Hadzabe** say 'she has shot her first zebra', while the **Venda** say, she has 'seized a baboon'. The first menstruation is believed, by the **/Kung**, to give the girl supernatural potency (**nlum**), powerful enough to determine the fate of the village in a hunt, if a man sets eyes on the girl during her 'period'.

The **/nu //en** hold a similar dance on this occasion but the difference is a man with a bird's beak on his head takes the place of the eland bull.

Schapera, (1930; 120) further gives descriptions of corresponding ceremonies among the **Heikum**:

As young girls (*/kham-khoidi*) approach the age of puberty, they are placed in a special hut (*/kham-khoidi oms*), in which they sleep at night... At the onset of her first menstruation, a girl is isolated in a small round hut (*/hawa omi*, hut for waiting), which is completely closed in except for a small entrance, is situated close to the */kham-khoidi oms*. In this hut she remains as long as the flow lasts; ...When the flow has ceased the girl informs her mother or they all prepare for the */hawa-nab* (menstruation dance). This takes place during the day on the central space of the camp.

The **Sandawe (San of Tanzania)**, celebrate a series of fertility/puberty rites referred to as *phekumo*. The *phekumo* dances are also held after sunset, under the cool light of the moon. Although generally, the **Sandawe** associates the menstruation of a girl as the darkness of a new moon, the dances get underway only as the moon approaches fullness. The dance(s) is/are begun by women, who go round in circles, carrying their arms high representing the horns of the moon and those of the game animals.

But among the **Qoi Qoi**, the situation is slightly different in a way that there are no clear accounts (by any of the early authors on the subject) of dancing at the beginning of the menstrual period of the girl. The seclusion of the girl at the beginning of the period does take place and the dancing at the end of the seclusion or the ceasing of the flow does happen, but it is

not only a females' affair. Male youth do partake at the reed dance, as Schapera, (1930; 276) states;

Towards the evening the girl's friends enter the hut to fetch her out, and for the last time she must leave it by the special opening made for her at the back. Her friends surround her, and for a time try to keep her from the view of the youths, for she is very shy. The youths (boys) now start the reed dance, forming the inner ring, while the girls, with the **oaxais** in their mist, dance round them in an outer ring.

Amongst the **Abantu** too, the first menstruation/puberty is also marked by the seclusion of a girl. To some, the menstruation stage is immediately followed by the circumcision ceremony. For instance, the case of **Ichisungu** among the **Lambas** of **Zambia**, whereby, at the first signs of the first menstruation (**ukuseesa**), the girl disappears to hide/lie under the **umwenje** tree and the youth of the village, will set out to hunt for her.

On finding her, the women of the village set out for the nearby villages (**imitala**), to call their companions to come and help them with dancing. The girl should be covered completely with a piece of *calico*, for she must no be seen. Doke, (1931; 149) states:

The women stand in a circle, with the covered girl lying in the midst. Usually but one woman dances while the others sing and clap to give her the rhythm for the dance.

It appears as if the menstruating girl among the **Lambas** is already referred to as an initiate. She also had to stay in a secluded hut for the remainder of the period being instructed by a tutor on the ways of

becoming a woman. Doke, (1931; 156) makes mention of the dance (*Ichimbwasa*) performance towards the completion of seclusion of a

Lamba girl initiate:

While the girl is still within the hut, they hold the *ichimbwasa* dance. Sometimes they dance outside the father's house, sometimes outside that of the *nyinachimbela* (instructor). One woman-sometimes two or three-will dance, while the rest, men and women, sit round and sing. At times an old man of social standing will don the *insangwa* (rattles) and *uwuyombo* (dancing fringe) and dance a solo dance in a ring.

The role of the old man at the puberty/ initiation ceremony of the **Lamba** girl should be viewed as that of the old man at the puberty ceremony of a San girl. Although the participation of the **Lamba** old man is not clearly defined as that of the **San**, both men seem to partake in the midst of women and they both seem to bring that element of masculinity into the young girl's fertility.

Richards, (1943; 170) describes *chisungu* of the **Bemba**, of north-eastern **Zambia** as:

...a puberty rite for girls or as a female initiation ceremony. It consists of a long and rather elaborate succession of ritual acts which include miming, singing, dancing and handling of sacred emblems.

But *chisungu* is preceded by a short puberty ceremony which occurs when a girl realizes that her first menstrual period has come and she has to tell older women. She is then isolated indoors for a day or more where

she is put through all sorts of hardships like pulling the doctored seeds ,cooked in the fire and eat them burning.

Almost similar to the **Bemba** puberty rite for girls, would be **Tshikana** of the **Venda** people. Although the **Tshikana**, is a second phase of the initiation process of a Venda girl, after the **Vhusha** (which takes place at menarche), the girls are subjected to severe physical exercises to them to suffer and honour the elders. Part of Tshikana phase is marked by the **Ndayo** dance and activities such as **u kamisa** (soaking the novice in cold water).



Figure 48. **U kamisa**

Warmelo, (1932; 41) describes **Ndayo** dance as follows:

This night as well as the five ensuing ones the novice must dance the so-called **ndayo**-dance [in which now the one now the other of the girls, that squat naked in a circle, comes forward and dances in a peculiar hopping fashion... The **ndayo** is very seldom seen by men]

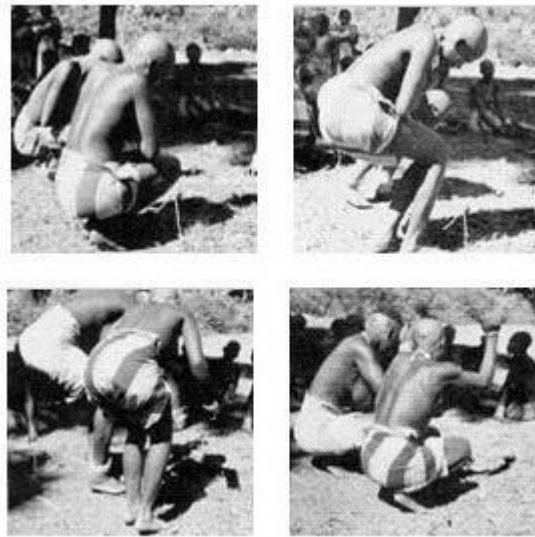


Figure 49. Ndayo dance by Venda girls

Some **Bantu** speaking societies emphasizes the separation of the ceremonies of puberty (first menstruation), initiation/circumcision, and nubility. The **Venda** holds **Vhusha** (menstruation ceremony) separately from the **Domba** (initiation ceremony). Some communities do not circumcise nor do they initiate their girls, but do celebrate both the menarche and nubility, for instance, the **Zulu**, **Umhlonyane** (first menstruation) and **Umemulo** (marriageable state).

One of the contributing factors towards the separate celebration of these ceremonies is that, at menarche and nubility the girl reaches these stages individually while at circumcision/initiation, girls are taken in (school/society) as groups and according to the age stage. Although **ukumula** ceremony among the Zulu is seen as a coming-out ritual after

the **uDwa** (menstrual state), it is also seen as an entrance into full-grown state. It is also an individual affair with all the elements found at menarche such as songs (*izithombiso*) and dances (*ingcekeza*).

Bryant, (1949; 650) makes reference to *ingcekeza* dance as follows:

Out in the courtyard, the girls formed themselves into a ring, into the centre of which two girls at a time advanced, **Phumephi** and her *iphini* leading, and performed an *ingcekaza* dance, the while the other girls sang and clapped with hollowed palms (*ukuNqukuza*).

The custom of female circumcision amongst the **Bantu** speaking Africans is fast disappearing, particularly that of clitoral-mutilation, which is now viewed as brutal to women. But most **Bantu** societies still maintain the custom of initiation of young girls as a way of acceptance to adulthood and preparation towards good citizenship. The most elaborate among the **Bantu** speaking of southern Africa is the **Domba** of the **Venda**.



Figure 50. Domba dance in a counter-clockwise direction.

When doing the **Domba** dance, the girls move forward and round the drum and the fire in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction, until they are told to stop moving. They then bend over towards the centre of the

circle and 'pump' their arms forwards and backwards until the song stops.

Motshekga, (2001; 8) states:

The Central Sun (Hara) manifested itself as the primal stone (**Domba** or **Demba**) or concentric circles or the Python (**Domba** or **Demba**) biting its tail. The Python God (**Domba** or **Demba**) became the prime mover or immovable mover....

Therefore **Domba** is not just a ritual ceremony about the initiation of Venda girls, it is the re-enacting of creation of the universe by the Python god; the evolution and devolution of creation through the never ending time.



Figure 51. Domba dance photographed by Barbara Tyrrell and Peter Jurgen

Although **Domba** dance might look simply and easy, it requires high level of concentration and discipline.

Consistent with all puberty rites, particularly those of women, is the notion of the paradox of living. The blood as a symbol of death is also a symbol of readiness to give life. Seclusion as a form of avoidance is a preparation towards acceptance as a full human being. Stripped naked, the novice is right on her way towards being fully dressed as an adult and respectable human being. Although, tabooed and denied certain foods and also sometimes viewed as bad luck to the rest of the community, the menstruating girl is also feared and respected as a carrier of the most powerful potency which if well revered/observed can bring about fertility of the soil and prosperity to the whole community.

This is the time when sex is avoided, yet in some communities, women are seen to be extremely provocative to men, as it is the case with, the **/Kung** and the **Sandawe**. Although girls are taught to stay away from sex but during the menarche of a **Zulu** girl, **Umbhino** (obscene songs) are sung.

3.3.4. Social bonding dance performances

Dance performances on social bonding whereby women play a dominant role are hard to establish since for any kind of bonding to hold, both sexes have to play the part. It is true that at some instances women might be seen as the initiators or instigators in a performances, as it is the case with

the dance of the chief by the San but the man or the chief plays a major role and central to the whole performance.

So it will be possible to distinguish social bonding dance performances according to who take the lead in issues such as seduction and marriage. For instance, in the performance of **Mugoyo** dance of the **Kikuyu**, male or **Anake** are the principal dancers while women are supporting. And in the performance of the '**Ko-ku-curra**, or the flute or the reed dance of the San, whereby women are the principals and male (spectators) only take part at the discretion of the women.

3.3.5. Spirits dance performances

Although masks are seen to be representative of both sexes, it is scares though to find a female dancing the mask or the mask being danced by a female. For instance, the **Mwana Pwevo** mask, known as, a young woman who appears at the **Ndembu** boys' initiation rites is danced by a man. The reason could be that the movements are very intricate and very acrobatic, requiring physical and masculine strength only found in male performers. Jordan, (200; 16) states:

Pwevo dances are characterized by short steps and sensuous hip movements, which are emphasized by a bustle, tied around the hips, consisting of a bundle of cloth, strings, and rattling objects. **Pwevo** may enact sexual behaviors by pretending to have intercourse with a mortar or with a figure that she may quickly form from earth in the performance space. These dances are a type of sexual education, presented openly to

stress the fertility of this female ancestor. **Pwevo** may also honor women as providers by dancing with a fishing basket or pretending to pound corn inside a mortar. To highlight her supernatural attributes as an ancestral spirit, **Pwevo** sometimes dances on stilts or performs acrobatic stunts.



Figure 52. Field photo from a 1920's post card featuring a Lwena Pwevo/Pwo performer holding a flywhisk and hand-rattle made from a tin can. The mask dances with the women who clap and sing to music accompanying the performer. (Originator unknown)

3.3.6. Animal-Human relationships dance performances

It is rare on both the **Bantu** and the **San** groups to find a dance about the episodes in animal lives since women were normally bared from activities such as hunting and herding. If ever they participated, it was in support of the men either by clapping and singing or mime, as it is the case with the Baboon dance of the **Drakensberg San**.

Although, in the hyena dance by the **Qoi Qoi**, women form part of the circle which represents the kraal in which the hyena seeks to catch the sheep; it is men who actively partake in pantomimic actions of the performance. Schapera, (1936; 404) describes the formation of the circle thus:

The men line up in a semicircle, as do also the women opposite them.

Totemism amongst both the **San** and the **Bantu** formed an integral part in forging solidarity among different clans and groups. Each group or clan would choose a particular animal as their totem, for instance, the **Pedi** regard the porcupine as their national totem. Different clans within the **Pedi** nation will also have their totems according to their ancestry heritage. Monnig (1967; 236), states that:

To establish the totem of a person (among the Pedi), the normal question asked between strangers is “*o binang?*”- what do you dance, to which the reply is “I dance such a totem”.

Monnig, (1967; 236) further gives a description of the totem dance as:

The functions of these dances appeared to be to represent solidarity, and were mainly performed by women dancing around a wooden effigy of the totem which was placed on a raised platform made of clay specially prepared for the occasion.

3.3.7. Popular dances

Popular dances whether male or female, have a common element to them such as popular among the people of the same nation, 'tribe', clan, age, gender, class and life-style. They are referred to as popular because anybody can participate in their performances unlike in those ritualistic-ceremonial dances whereby participants (particularly the principal participants) have to be a novice, initiate or the patron/matron of the ceremony. Popular dances are open to anyone who is willing and able to participate.

3.3.7.1. Popular-national/communal dancing

Tshigombela dance by the Venda is performed by almost every girl in every community. Although **Tshigombela** is not ritualistic-ceremonial dance, some people like **Mr Musevho** (a teacher from Venda I once interviewed in 2004 in **Durban**), claims that when **Tshigombela** is performed rain will come down.

When performing **Tshigombela**, girls move in a counter-clockwise direction with the drums placed at the centre of the circle formed by the dancers.



Venda girls practice the first part of the tshigombela dance.

Figure 53. Venda girls practicing the first part of tshigombela dance

3.3.7.2. Popular-recreational/sport

The San of the Kalahari children perform a melon-game dance. When doing this kind of recreational dance, the children mainly girls stand in a file cycling counter-clockwise. The girl with the melon will dance towards the centre and flip the melon behind herself for the next girl to catch it. The dance continues each girl getting a chance to catch and throw the melon.

The melon dance/game can be likened to the ball dance/game by San men except that the ball dance/game is played or danced by two men in the middle of the two rows formed by other men whereas in the melon dance/game the melon is danced by one girl at a time.



Figure 54. Melon/ball game by San girls

3.4. Combined dances (men and women dancing together)

Usually dances are either intended for males or females alone; but sometimes men and women danced together, though in most cases they will be in separate lines facing each other. Stow, (1905; 114) mentions a kind of country dance by the San:

Sometimes men and women dance together, but in separate lines facing each other...at others intermingled alternatively in a large circle.

In most of the San dances, males are seen to be the principal performers while women are clapping and singing. But there are a number of dances that depict women as principal dancers while the man provide supporting acts, such as, at the eland bull dance, and the **'ko-'ku-curra** (reed or flute) dance. In some dances, the difference will only be on the numbers, that is,

males are in the majority or the women are in the majority, for instance, the eland bull dance where only one man or two are employed to perform a bull eland, and the dance of the chief, where a chief is employed to perform where women appear to have offered themselves up to sexual congress.

But the “dance of the twins” by the **Vugusu** of the **North Kavirondo**, district of **Nyanza** province of **Kenya**, provides another scenario in terms of the participation in dancing by both the males and females. The dance is said to be performed to the rhythm of a small drum beaten by small boys and girls. Wagner, (1949; 326), describes the dance as a obscene and the indulgence in sexual liberties, indecent gestures, and the passing of obscene jokes between the sexes which ordinarily would be considered most serious breaches of the rules of social conduct. Although the dancing is mostly led by old women, the idea is to get everybody present to participate.

The purpose for ensuring the participation of everybody is to eradicate and overcome all barriers of shame so as to archive the goal and magical nature of the fertility ritual. On further description of the performance of the twin dance, Wagner, (1949; 326), assets that:

Most of the songs sung on this occasion are said to have their own tunes, but the texts are improvised by the song-leaders, who are mostly women. Standing in the middle of the dancers they sing the leading words, often

in a high-pitched and shrill voice, at the same time moving their limbs and bodies to the rhythm of the dance...Each song is repeated about a dozen times, and after a short interval, during which the dancers rest, another song-leader steps forward and rallies another group of people round him (or her) for a new song and dance.

The dance of the twins is performed after the birth of the twins, so it can be classified amongst the rites of passage performances. It can also, because of its obscenity and sexual indulgence can be categorized under social relationship/ courtship dance performances. To the **Vugusu**, the birth of twins is regarded as the emanation of an intense and a prolonged ritual danger and the blessing with the fertility which must be celebrated. Therefore the dance can be classified as the fertility dance while on the other hand is viewed as a reflection of life paradox of life and death common to all ritual observances among the Africans.

3.4.1. Males dancing-females supporting

Dancing amongst the **San** is always a male affair and women are always there to render support in the form of clapping and singing except on special ceremonies such as the girls' puberty. Dancing amongst the **Qoi** **Qoi** is also mainly a male dominated affair. Although women do partake at reed dances, they are at the periphery in the sense that they are found on the outer circle clapping and singing to the rhythm of the reed-music made by men in the inner circle.

3.4.2. Females dancing-males supporting

It appears as if every time women among the San take principal dancing roles, the theme of sexual intercourse or mating takes centre stage. The reason might be that what is suggested by Stow, (1905; 118) as:

This was one of the licentious group of dances, but which, nevertheless, may have also had its hidden meaning, in which the women appear to have offered themselves up to sexual congress; and which therefore may have had some reference to **'Kaang'** who they believe was the originator or creator of things.

There are three dance performances through-which that fact can be clearly illustrated, those are, the **eland bull** dance, **dance of the chief**, and the **'ko-'ku-curra** (flute) dance.

The eland bull dance as it has been cited above is a dance that might look or turn to be very indecent. It suggests the courting and mating between the eland bulls and eland cows. The only difference is that the men taking part are old which suggest that their potency is low and non existence any more. But the dance of the chief is different. The description given by Stow, (1905; 118) of the dance of the Chief is as:

In this the women formed themselves into a circle similar to the preceding one (dance of the acrobats), the chief took up his position in the centre, and frequently hopped and sprang round on all fours like some animal, the women in the meanwhile dancing and placing themselves in every possible lascivious position, until the great man in the centre pounced upon one of those who had most distinguished themselves and performed that in sight of all which in more civilized communities is reserved for the

strictest privacy, amid the applauding clatter of the excited dancers forming the enclosing circle.

The flute dance was also an exclusively for women and any man particularly from the visiting side ever try to follow the women was seen as a trespasser and an intruder to the women privacy. But during the performance, there were male spectators from the host group whom as the dance and feasting reach its peak, get seduced by the visiting women.

As Stow, (1905; 114) explains:

This (dance) was sometimes for hours. Feasting again followed, and the dance was renewed, the women ever and anon throwing themselves into a variety of positions intended to excite the feelings of the male spectators...during which time the lady visitors abandoned themselves to every species of license, and had no cause for missing the absence of their husbands.

Almost a similar situation, like that of the San men and women dancing together, can be found among the reed dances of the **Qoi Qoi**. Schapera, (1936; 402), describes the scene at the reed dances as:

In this dances the men normally form a ring, all facing inwards, each with the upper part of his body bent forward, and his lips on the pipe. The women, "trolling" or singing with loud voices and clapping their hands in front of the face to the rhythm of the music, dance round the men in a larger outer ring. They move forward in small often very small, steps, with buttocks prominently thrust out, and wagging their hips.

In the accounts given by Richards, (1934; 68) on the second day of the **Chisungu** (initiation rite) for the **Bemba** girls, the women play a prominent role while men play a supporting one. The dances seem to touch on

normal duties to be performed by the girls as future wives in a comic manner. Richards, (1934; 68) states:

Most of the dances were comic. For instance, two or three women did dances imitating the hop of a frog to an accompanying song by the whole company. One gave a rendering of a woman gathering potatoes, and another of a woman grinding maize. Then a young man suddenly leaped into the centre with a light springing step from side to side. He snatched up a maize cob from the floor and tied it on his back to represent a baby, amid roars of laughter from the clapping crowd. A woman got up to join him and they threw the baby from one to the other in a way that was evidently considered comic in the extreme.

This kind of dancing is described as **ukucindafye**, meaning, 'just dancing', as opposed to the special **Chisungu** dancing. And Richards, (1934; 68) further accounts:

Then came a special **chisungu** dance. A young man, who was not only the brother of the affianced bridegroom, but the son of a **nacimbusa**, sprang into the middle of the circle to do a typical dance of respect. He danced to each of the older women in order of seniority; calling them out to dance opposite him and singing one of the songs of respect that belong to such occasions.

3.5. Homosexuality in performance

Etymologically, homosexuality denotes behaviour, relationship and people of the same sex. In Africa particularly amongst the Bantu speaking people, homosexual relationships were considered a taboo although behavioural patterns denoting and suggesting homosexuality were sometimes common. For instance, it was common to find individuals who appeared to

reflect a scenario which could be described as a body of a boy with a girl trapped inside or vice versa.

Boys who played with girls and girls who preferred to spend time in the veld with boys were a common feature among the Bantu speaking people. During play, boys could be seen taking-up roles which suggested either feminine orientation or attraction towards other boys or vice versa.

Homosexual behaviour was prevalent to ritual performances, like puberty rites, which emphasized the sexual paradoxes. For, instance, during the circumcision ceremony of the **Ndembu** and the **Chokwe** boys, **Mwana Pwevo**, a woman **ikishi** is danced by a male. That simple means a male behaving like a woman.

Wagner, (1949; 326-7) makes mention of a behaviour which could be described as that of homosexuality during the dance of the twins by the **Vugusu** of north **Kavirondo** thus:

Occasionally a man and a woman dance together, acting the movement of copulation, or two women, the one acting as husband and the other as wife.

3.6. Conclusion

Africans have always viewed life as rooted on the belief that it is the result of the male and female genders complimenting each other. During ritual

observing and religious engagements, both genders had to be represented so as to invite spiritual presence from both sexes.

The representation of the two genders manifested in many forms. First it manifested in forms of male and female human beings. This could either be boys and girls complimenting each other in performance. Or they could be in forms of active and passive participation of either of the two sexes in performance.

Sometimes a manner in which the performance space is occupied will be a symbolic representation of male and female gender respectively. The upper point will always represent the male while the lower represents the female. Or it could be the centre complimenting the circumference where the centre represents either of the two sexes and the circumference represents the other.

In the rituals around the fertility of human beings particularly at puberty, the presence of the other is essential towards the fertilization of the other. But in the fertility of the soil the two sexes act equally and complimentary.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 ELEMENTS OF DANCE PERFORMANCES OF ABANTU AND ABATHWA

4.1. Introduction

Every dance is performed within a specific social context. The social context of every dance is vested on aspects such as theme, purpose, participants, timing, location, body position (when performing) and body movements. It is through these aspects that a meaning for each dance performance is viewed, derived and appreciated.

4.2. Themes

The dance themes in which circular orientation is observed are fertility, courting, spirit-possession and hunting. The theme of work is seldom observed unless it is aimed at ploughing and harvesting. During a dance performance, the thematic expression is found in movement and the formation in space. Certain body parts are associated with certain themes for instance, the hips with fertility; neck and head with spirit-possession dances. The movements of these body parts are rounded in their orientation and are repetitive.

4.2.1. Fertility (Puberty rites)

The seventh cosmic law which is Gender is manifest in every living entity. Gender is the basis for all reproductive processes among humans, animals, plants and all other living creatures such as insects and

microbes. Gender is the masculine and feminine principle for everything that lives. Gender manifests in reproductive glands of males and females in all living species.

The seven cosmic laws hold the magic key to the explanation of some of the phenomenal concepts found in certain religious, cultural and scientific promulgations. In the book of Genesis, Chapter 2, it is said that “on the seventh day God ended his work which he had been doing. He rested on the seventh day from all the works He had accomplished. God also blessed the seventh day and consecrated it”.

There could be many interpretations to the above quotation but one fundamental meaning could be that God decided to hand over his powers of creation to His creation to continue creating itself. The allegory of the seven days of creation is observed through the seven days of the week; the Judaic seven candle sticks of the menorah; the **Hindu** seven major Chakra systems; and the seventh letter “G” in the alphabet is the first letter in the name God.

Perhaps the innate understanding of the importance of the cosmic law of gender and its centrality on the essence of life explains the reason why ancient indigenous Africans observed the theme of fertility in both humans and the soil with awe. Both the first menstruation for girls and first

emulsion for boys were observed and celebrated with song and dance and regarded as the manifestation of the power to procreate by the young members of the society.

But human life was to a large extent supported by the soil which provided basic resources such as crops, fruits, water, live stock or game and also medicinal plants. All these basic needs highly depended on the fertility of the soil which relied on the climatic conditions and seasonal changes. Rituals to influence and celebrate these changes were observed and were regarded as key to humans' survival.

The emphasis on gender within the theme of fertility is that the two genders, which are masculine and feminine, must compliment one another so as to get the intended results. The participation by the women and an old man during the performance of the Eland bull dance at the San girl's menarche has already been cited in the previous chapter. Although the girls' first menstruation is seen as a female affair by the San hence men are sent away from the camp, the act of an old man is said to be the one who fertilizes the girl.

During the performance of the */gi* (sacred men's dance) among the **Naron** and the **Auen**, a supernatural being called **Hishe** or **Huwe** in **Kung**

language approaches the dancers, circle around them and is driven by the medicine men. Schapera, (1930; 123) states:

The old men had seen this being. One said that it was like a woman in appearance... Similarly among the **!O Kung** of Angola, the spirit **Huwe** occasionally appears and dances with them, sometimes as youth, sometimes in double form as man and woman.

Also among the San of the Basutoland a dance known as **Ko** is performed by boys initiates. **Ko** is a deity who according to Schapera, (1930; 125) comes up from the ground and dances a short time with them, she disappears, and is succeeded by her nymphs, who like wise dance a while with them.



Figure 55. The map illustrates the areas and the people where Mukanda is observed.

Also at the **Mukanda** of the **Chokwe** and other related peoples, the novices are considered not fertile until **Ikishi** appears towards the end of

initiation period. The **Ikishi** that appears/dances at the **Mukanda** is known as **Mwana Pwevo** which means a perfect woman.

Almost similar to the Eland bull dance by the San are **Sandawe** dances of fertility also known as **Phekumo**. Menstruation among the **Sandawe** is associated with the darkness of new moon but the dance performances take place at full moon. During the performance, both male and female participate. As it has been cited earlier, the dance is begun by women who dance in front of men making suggestive moves. Women are regarded as the moon while men are regarded as the sun. The act is regarded as the re-enacting the first celestial copulation and its purpose is to make the land fertile.

Ingungu which is played during the first menstruation of a **Zulu** girl is also symbolical of the male-female gender principle and the theme of fertility. **Ingungu** is made of a clay pot or hollowed stump of **Umsenge** tree covered with a skin. When played, the reed is placed on the skin/membrane and milked with wet hands. The reed represents the penis while the calabash/pot and the membrane represent the womb and untouched vagina respectively.

Besides acts of fertilization of the land such as the one by **Sandawe**, other fertility rites are observed during rain-making, during or before ploughing

or sowing and during or after harvest. Among the peoples who observe the rain-making rites, it is the San's rain making rite which is elaborately accompanied by shamanic and intense dancing by the medicine men. Men dance circling women who sit, sing and clap around the fire. The participation by both sexes is crucial although it might appear as if women are passive, their participation is complimentary to that of men.

Fire appears to be central or occupying a very important place in most fertility rites. But the most important thing about fire at any fertility ritual is the process of making it. Sanders, (2002; 2) while observing the rain-making ritual by **Ihanzu** of north-central Tanzania, his attention was drawn towards the two sticks used during the making of the fire. In his enquiry he was told by an old man that the long, slender stick was the male and the short, fat stick with a hole in it was the female. Another very important observation made by Sanders at the **Ihanzu** rain-making ritual was that the fire was made by the male and female twins. Fire therefore becomes a symbol of new life born out of the mating of the two genders.

Berglund, (1976; 54-55) also gives an account of almost a similar situation on the rain-making by the **Zulu**. Firstly he makes mention of the male and female medicine horns his informants/rain-makers each possessed. And secondly he mentions the two sticks for making fire similar to those at **Ihanzu** rain-making; one female and one male. The sky is regarded as the

male and the earth as the female hence rain is seen as the fertilization of the earth by the sky.

Hobley, (1922; 268) makes reference to the **Mugoyo** dance by the **Kikuyu** which is danced when the **Njahe** or **Cajanus** bean is planted. The dance is danced at night when there is no moon. But the important thing about the dance is the circle of fires at the centre of the performance arena and outside this circle of fires stand a circle of dancers. Male dancers stand with their backs to the fire each holding his female partner who faces the fire standing with her feet on his.

Fire was also found at the now defunct **uNomdede/uNomkhubulwana** ceremony by **Zulu** girls. **UNomdede** refers to the beer which was brewed by the girls as part of the offering to be made to **uNomkhubulwana** before people could begin to plough the fields. Berglund, (1976; 67) on describing the dance by girls, states:

Now-and-again they (girls) would sing and dance around a small fire made of sticks found on the mountain, clapping their hands as they performed.

Among the **Mbuti** of the **Congo** rain forest, fire is associated with life, regeneration and fertility during the **molimo** ceremonies. **Mbuti** are said to celebrate **molimo** when someone dies or when conditions of life are generally poor. **Molimo's** purpose is to awaken and rejuvenate the forces that give life. The focus of the festival is on the dance performance by the

Some ceremonial dance performances (associated with the crop) take place during the growth of certain crops. For example, **Kichikia** dance by the **Kikuyu** which is held when **mawele** is six to eight inches high. The dance is danced both at night when there is a moon, and in the daytime when there is a sun. It is also danced by both boys and girls.

Another important aspect common among the participants at the performances about the theme of fertility is nakedness. For example, the **Kivata** dance by the **Kikuyu**.



Figure 57. *Kivata* dance at Kiyambu, Kikuyu

Hobley, (1922; 267) describes the performance of the **Kivata**:

The dancers march round in rows of from six to eight, the dancing consisting mainly in a continued jumping from one foot to the other. The women bring gourds of **uji**, or gruel, which they give to the dancers and thereby signifying their affections. The dance is said to be general occasion for choosing brides by old men as well as **anake**.

Kivata is danced when the **mawele** grain is reaped. The dancers wear no clothes whatsoever except for strings of beads and bells hung about the body. Nakedness is also related by Turner (1967; 108-110) on his description of the preparation by the **Swazi** king towards **Incwala** ceremony. **Incwala** is a national first fruit ritual, performed in the height of summer when the early crops ripen.

Turner, (1967; 109) states:

The king remains secluded; ...all day he sits naked on a lion skin in ritual hut of the harem or in the sacred enclosure in the royal cattle byre.

The **Khoisans** were also deeply inclined into the association of the theme of fertility with nakedness and the rain. Vinnicombe, (1976; 310) refers to Hahn's witnesses on **Khoisans'** rituals where:

Khoisans girls who had reached the age of puberty actually ran about naked in the first rain-storm of the year. This ceremony, enacted in dramatic setting of flashing lightning and roaring thunder, was believed to ensure fertility,...

Reed and grass also seem to be playing a major role in the theme of fertility among **Abantu**. For instance, at the **kOmula** of the **Zulu** girl, she would be covered or dressed in **Umvithi** from head to legs. Reed dances are also performed by the **Qoi Qoi** to invoke the moon and to pray for the rain at full moon and when the Pleiades first appear above eastern horizon.

Wet lands are home to a lot animal species and are closely associated with the fertility of the land and life seems to prosper around it. Vilakazi and Doke describe **UNomkhubulwana** as the river with the reed on the other side and the bush on the other.



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Figure 58. Zulu dress for puberty rites and umshophi ceremony

From the two illustrations above; two very important aspects of the theme of fertility can be seen, those are, the girl standing next to the river stream and the girl armed with a spear and the shield. The difference from the two attires above is that the one on the left is made out of **Umxhopho** grass and worn by the girls at the **uMshophi** rituals, while the attire on the right is made out of **isiKhonko** grass and it was worn at first menstruation ritual. **UMshophi** is said to be a disease-demon which use to come to the land as a result of summer rains.

At the **Xhosa** (***Bakhwetha***) dance during the initiation processes, the boys can be seen dressed in grass from head to waist.



Figure 59. Xhosa umkhwetha dressed for dancing

Although the attire for ***aBakhwetha*** might be different from the other similar attires since it is suggested that it is made of palm leaves as opposed to grass or reed; but the idea is still based on the same class of plants which are ***monocotyledonous***.

At the coming-out ceremony for the **Idaxo** boys, the novices wear grass aprons and dance around the arena.



Idaxo novices dancing in their grass aprons

Figure 60. Idaxo novices in their grass masks

Sometimes these aprons are referred to as masks. Masked dancers are common to most fertility rites among the Africans. Some masks take a form of full attire covering the whole body while others cover only the face or the upper part of the body.

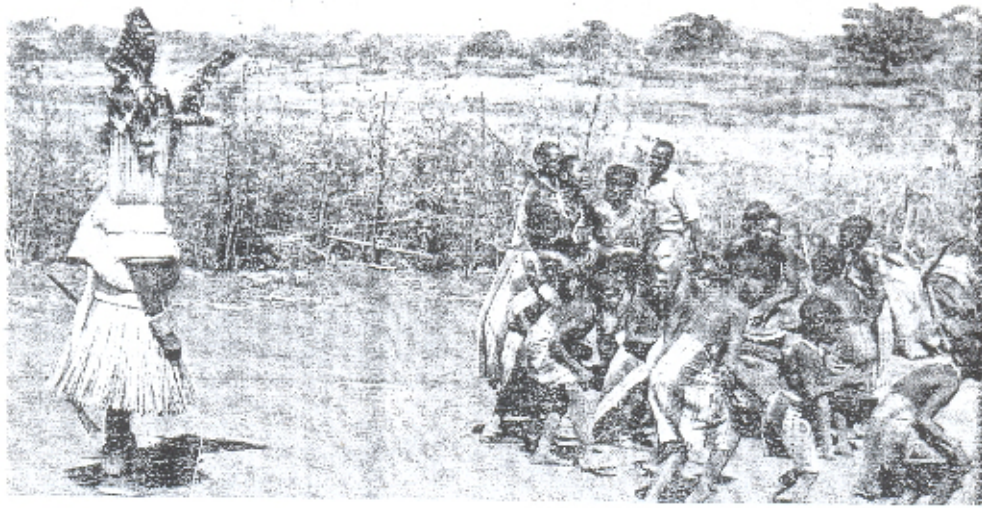


Figure 61. A masked dancer (*muhwira*) at the Venda girls' *sungwi* initiation

The **Venda** people call the mask dancer that appears at the girls' *sungwi* initiation *muhwira*. The **Lovedu** who together with the **Kgaga** are sister

nations to the **Venda**, refer to the mask dancer as ***bogwera*** and ***buhwira*** respectively.

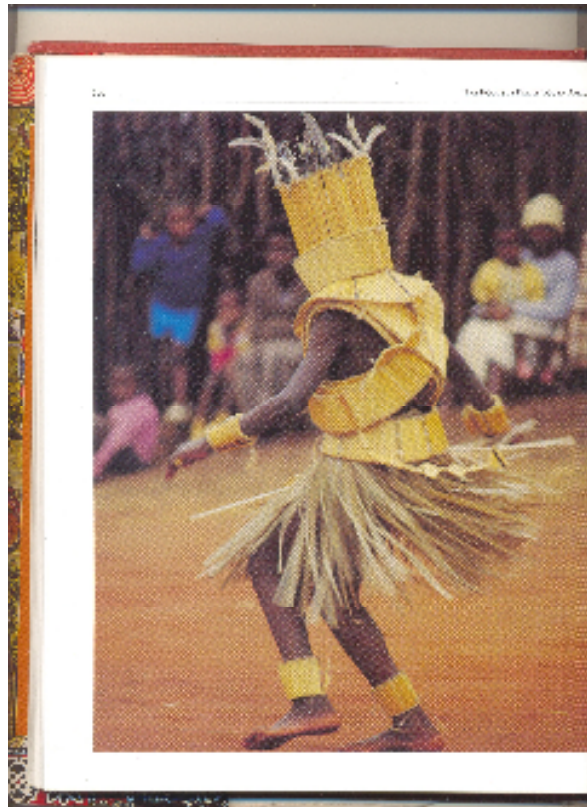


Figure 62. A Lovedu *bogwera* dancer dressed in grass regalia.

Although slightly similar, the **Kgaga** mask (***buhwira***) looks more elaborate compared to **Lovedu's *bogwera***. ***Buhwira*** looks heavier and it covers almost the whole body. Junod, (1929; 59) gives a detailed description of the ***buhwira*** mask as an elaborate dancing costume. He claims that the making of the bottom part of the mask is easy compared to the upper part, which encloses the head and chest, which descends almost to the hips.

The dance thought to **Thonga** boys at the **Ngoma** (initiation school) is called **mayiwayiwane**. It is named after the masks worn by the boys at the second aggregation rite. The **mayiwayiwane** mask covers the whole of the upper part of the body and is made of woven palm leaves. The head of the mask is like a helmet protruding in front like a beak.



Figure 63. A mayiwayiwane mask for Thonga initiates

The **mayiwayiwane** is a dance with high jumps done before the women summoned on a certain day to attend.



Figure 64. *Buhwira*, Kgaga initiate dancer

But for the South **Sotho** girls' initiates, costume consists of rolled grass hoops around the waist and a veil-like mask hanging on their face made of reed.



Figure 65. South Sotho girl initiates wearing their reed veils and rolled grass hoops.

The movement axis for the dance performances around the theme of fertility are the pelvis/hips and breast/shoulders. Pelvis and hips are

regarded as the sources of reproduction while the shoulders are a source of seduction and show-off.

The dance taught to the novices at the **Chokwe/Tshokwe mukanda** initiation school are said to be ‘movement of the hips and the twisting of the legs’. The round movements are always regarded as feminine and if done by males it should be seen as a reflection of the gender polarity at the initiation process. The hips and pelvis is the seat for reproductive organs and the area of the manifestation of the **gender cosmic law**. And during the production of food by the grinding stone and the rolling stone, both male and female are represented. Therefore the grinding movement is suggestive and the invocation of the **gender cosmic law**.



Figure 66. The boys are taught to move their hips, round and round, suggestive grinding, and rhythmic twirling.

The hips and pelvis are a central movement axis pertaining to the theme of fertility. The centrality of the hips and pelvis to the movements associated with the theme of fertility and reproduction is based on the location of the reproductive organs on both humans and animals. The pelvis is the symbolic representation of the fusion of the opposites which results in the production of a form of a new life/entity.



Figure 67. Chokwe novices showing how it is done-dancing at *Mukanda*

van Binsbergen, (2008; 4) gives account of the movement by **Nkoya** girls at the coming out ceremony or *kankanga*. He describes the movements as subdued shaking of the pelvis, causing the thick pack of cloth wraps to sway and strings of bottle tops to jingle. The girls' arms bent at some distance in front of her breast, is a further illustration of the centrality of both the pelvis/hips and breast/shoulders at the dance performance in the theme of fertility.

Jordan, (1998; 68) describes the movements of **Pwo** which is always danced by men, skillfully impersonating the movements of women as:

The dances with short steps with sensuous movements aimed at enacting sexual behaviour, stressing fertility.

Jordan's statement clearly explain the usage of sensuous movements, fire, grass, nakedness, red and white colours and the performances taking place under the moonlight as means to enact sexual behaviours, invoking the forces that gives life and stressing fertility.

Animal symbolism also plays an important part in the fertility rites such as the eland bull at the **San** puberty rite for girls; cattle at the celebration of **uNomdede** by the **Zulu** maidens; the ostrich (dance) at the **Naron** initiation. The **BaVenda** are well known for their python (**Domba**) dance and its symbolic expression of fertility. Among the **BaVenda**, the python does not only symbolize the fertility of the youth but it is also associated with the rain and the fertility of the soil.

Among the **Chewa** of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, the python is closely associated with the girls' initiation ceremony known as **cinamwali**.

Hackett, (1996; 110) on quoting (Yoshida 1991; 245) states:

In the past the girls initiation ceremony, or **cinamwali**, used to be held at the shrine of a medium of the python spirit called **makewana**.

The Zulus treat infertility of women with the spittle of a python. Informant diviners to Berglund all agreed that the python is the symbol of fertility (Berglund, 1976). Since fertility is seen as a prelude to procreation, it is viewed as the gift of the dead (ancestors) by the power given to them by the gods. Both the initiation of the youth into adulthood and that of the novice-diviners is regarded as a state between life and death hence some communities observe the initiation of youth during the **amalilo (Lambas** for the 'mourning for the departed')

The **Lambas** of Zambia perform two of their dances in honour of the initiates and the departed, which are, **akasela** and **umuchinko** or **ichipelu**. Both the **akasela** and **umuchinko** are characterized by what can be labeled as 'obscene' indulgence by both male and female participants. In the absence of the elders, young men and women, Doke, (1931; 360) states about the **umuchinko**:

If elders are present none will dare to catch hold of the women; they merely dance round and round one another. When alone the men at times catch the women by the breasts and lustful passions are aroused.

And about the **akasela**:

If the elders are present they merely dance round one another, but in the absence of the elders the dance may become immoral.

The reason for combining the initiation and mourning could be attributed to some community's belief that creation potency is released by the departed

during the mourning ceremony. African had long held the belief that from the fertility of the youth to sexual intercourse by the elderly is the work of the ancestors and the means of ensuring the continuity of their blood line.

4.2.2. Fertility (Social relationships)

The theme of social relationships encapsulates the processes where-by two human beings of the opposite sex bond together with the purpose of giving a new life. These processes range from pure courtship and sexual seduction to marriages.

Governing the theme of social relationships among humans are the two of the seven principles of the Universal Cosmic Law, which are polarity and correspondence. In the theme of social relationships, the principles of polarity and correspondence manifests on sexual differentiation and fertility. The principle of polarity deals with division of sexes (male and female) while the principle of correspondence deals with the harmonization of those sexes.

Some communities among the Bantu speakers find it appropriate to employ the actions of puberty rituals at the social relationship rituals. The actions could be in the form of songs, dances and dress. For instance, the **Bomvana** will employ the same dances and songs sang at *Intonjane* (girls' initiation) at the wedding ceremony. **Umdudo** is a generic term for

all the dances often performed at both *intonjane* and marriages. In some cases three to four days can be devoted to these dances.

According to Cook, (1931; 84), the married women (alone) perform a dance called *Umrhululu*. Cook describes this dance as a dance done in a circle, walking slowly round executing a number fancy steps sometimes facing inwards or moving forward along the circumference of the circle.



Women dancing at an Intonjane ceremony.

Figure 68. Women dancing at Intonjane ceremony

As days pass-by men will also join the dancing which will culminate into a performance of the dance called *Tyuluba*. *Tyuluba* is done by both men and women.



Men and women dancing the Tyuluba. Note the end of hair for the refreshment of performers.

Figure 69. Men and women dancing tyuluba dance

In describing the **tyuluba** dance, Cook, (1931; 87) states:

The men follow one another around in ring formation. They stand on the toes and bend the knees slightly, then all in time quickly bring the weight down on the heels, one heel coming down slightly before the other, straightening the knees vigorously and causing the muscles of the body to quiver in a wonderful way.

But in the performance of the **Zulu- Umphendu**, at a wedding, two lines start at the same point and move in opposite directions but curving towards the point where both will cross each other back to the starting point. The music, which is recitational, is provided by both the dancers and the old women who stand on the side and clap to the rhythm of the movement. Movements are more of a march rather than stamping as it is common among the **Zulu**.

The two lines at the performance of **Umphendu** should be viewed as the representation of the two genders at the wedding whereby the left and the right represent the male and the female. During the performance of **Umphendu**, both males and females participate.

The dance performance that could be used as an elaborate depiction of the theme of fertility within the principle of gender is the **mbende jerusalema** dance popular among the **ZeZuru Shona** people of Zimbabwe. **Mbende** is a highly sexual explicit dance which under the Christian influence was disapproved. The **Shona** then decided to endow

the dance with a religious connotation hence the name ***Jerusalema*** was added to “***mbende***”.

In the article, Thoughts from Botswana, Kubuitsile, (2008; 1) describes ***mbende jerusalema*** as:

The dance represents human creation. It is danced by a man and a woman who are eventually synchronized in their movements. At one point, they come together and push their hips at each other. When the missionaries went to Zimbabwe they looked at the dance and immediately banned it thinking it was too sexual. The dancers didn't want to leave this important dance behind. To them it meant the synchrony and union of man and woman to create a family, a very important part of their culture. So they thought and decided to give it a Christian sounding name, that this might appease the missionaries. So they called the dance Jerusalema.



Figure 70. A man and a woman performing the *mbende jerusalema* dance

4.2.3. Spirits'-possession (Curing)

Common among the dance performances associated with the spiritual curing are; dancers dancing around or singing and clapping while standing around the sick person(s), repetitive and vigorous movements going on for a long time. Sometimes a fire at the centre of the performance space is used to provide the heat needed to boil the potency necessary for the dancers to get into a trance state, the sick person is always found at the centre surrounded by the dancers or the singers, drummers and clappers; women form a larger percentage of afflicted patients while men form a larger part of the dancers/healers.

Mo'koma (dance of blood), as it is known to the San of the Basutoland, is sometimes referred to as the trance dance done by the San shamans. Although ***mo'koma*** is sometimes done for rain and hunting rituals, its main purpose is for the healing of the sick. During the performance of the ***mo'koma*** the shamans (usually men) dance around women who sing and clap the rhythm of the medicine songs. The repetitive movements by the shamans create potency through-which the sickness could be drawn out of the sick person.

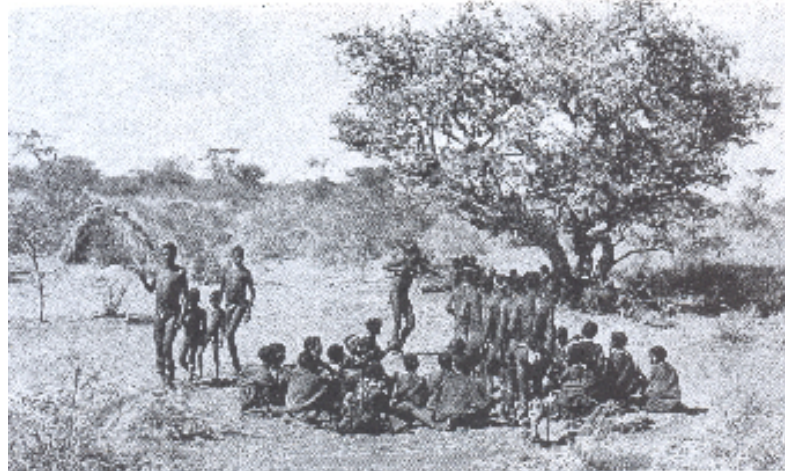


Figure 71. Trance dance by the Kalahari San

Figure 71. Trance dance by the Kalahari San

Common to almost all medicine dance-songs, for each and every band, is the gemsbok. Vinnicombe, (1976; 310) states:

The dances are accompanied by special songs which the Bushmen believe are sent to them by messengers from their god, usually when they are asleep. Each band has its own medicine song, named after things that are vital and strong: the giraffe, rain and gemsbok medicine, the ratel, fire and gemsbok medicine, or sun, dove and gemsbok medicine...for magically, the gemsbok are very important animals.

The purpose of dancing particularly around the fire is to warm the medicine within the bodies of the medicine men. During the dance, medicine men are able to draw the sickness out of the sick person into their own bodies. Stow, (1905; 120) refers to the explanation given to Mr. J. Orpen by 'Qing, who informed him that:

when a man was sick the *mo'koma* was danced round him, and the dancers put both hands under armpits and press their hands upon him, and when he coughs the

initiated put out their hands and receive what has injured him, secret things.

This is the dangerous state for the medicine men therefore the women must ardently sing and clap to protect those who are in deep trance.

The **Gwi** of the central Kalahari refers to their medicine dances as the **gemsbok** and the **iron** dances. The gemsbok and the iron dances are performed in a similar manner to the **Kung** medicine dances. The medicine men dance around the women who are thought to be susceptible to evil containing all sorts of ailments and that enables the medicine men to absorb the evil into their own bodies.

Also among the **!Kung** of **Nyae Nyae** as described by Marshall, (1976; 179), during the performance of the curing dance, men are curers and women are there as music makers or as sick people to be cured.

Marshall, (1976; 179) states:

In the great rite that overshadows all others, the curing dance, men are the curers, the **n/um k"xausi**, owners of the magical medicine, **n/um**, who go into the trance and protect and cure the people. Women participate in the curing rite, in synchronization with the men, but in the secondary role of music makers who help the **n/um k"xausi**, but who themselves do not have the role of curers in this rite.

Also among the **!Kung** of **Nyae Nyae** the potency to cure the sick is derived from the vigorous and continuous dancing, singing, clapping and the fire at the centre of the dancing circle.

Caution should be taken not to conclude that the role of women during the performance of the curing dance was less than that of men. Stow, (1905; 120) on his accounts of the **mo'koma** dances, states;

The women were the great upholders of these dances, and always prepared for them by putting on their gala costumes.

Among the Bantu speaking Africans, **ng'oma**, a healing tradition is observed. Words such as **isangoma** (diviner) and **ingoma** (dance or medicine) are derived from this tradition of healing. The common term for drums and dances (used for ritual purposes) found almost throughout the Bantu-speaking is **ng'oma**. When played and danced, these drums and dances produce certain potency which helps the healers draw or expel the sickness out of the patient.

A typical example for the manifestation of the **ng'oma** healing tradition among the Bantu-speaking Africans would be **Vimbuza** healing dance popular among the **Tumbuka** people living in northern Malawi. During **Vimbuza**, women and children of the village form a circle around the patient, who slowly enters into a trance, and sing songs to call helping spirits.



Figure 72. A spiritually- afflicted patient dancing her sickness

The combination of singing and drumming create a powerful experience which provides a space for the patient to ‘dance her disease’. As at the *mo’koma*, women are regular patients. Ashton, (1952; 284) also re-iterate the notion that women are regular patients of the spiritual affliction among the **Basuto**. But his attempts in justifying the reasons behind the affliction of women by spirits are, somehow baseless and it contains an outdated view towards women which is derogative. Ashton states that women are afflicted because of the feeling of neglect and boredom; which implies that they are not chosen by spirits as it is a common belief by Africans. He claims that, the information is based on what the **Basuto** believe as well. This is contradictory to the study based on his observations of the processes of healing a *motheketheke* (afflicted patient).

As soon as the sickness has been diagnosed and it has been decided that the patient has to undergo full treatment, friends and other **bakoma** (diviners) gather to take part in the proceedings; mainly dancing, singing and drumming. Ashton, (1952; 284) states:

In the evening dancing begins. It is accompanied by drumming on a dry, rolled ox skin (**sekupu**) and endless **bokoma** songs. The dance is a special one with a quick jerky step whose tempo gradually gets faster and faster until one of the dancers suddenly stops with a cry and chants of a **bokoma** song, or rushes hysterically into the night.

After the first night proceedings, dancing will continue every evening for several months until the patient have dreams whereby ancestors reveal themselves. The patient will also be put through various tests to see if really his claims are spiritually driven.

Also among the **BaVenda** it is generally women who become the victims of the **zwilombo** (spirits;-sing. **tshilombo**). But among the **BaVenda** spirits possession can bring about a noble outcome in relation to the status of the person provided the spirits have been treated well and also if it was a good ancestral spirit. People who were once possessed by the **zwilombo** enjoy some prestige among **BaVenda**. Almost every chief wants to have a **molombo** dancer in his/her home or compound.

Dancing, singing and drumming features prominently during the treatment of the **zwilombo** possessed patient. The main participants would be a

maine vha tshela (diviner of the rattles), the drummer who knows the **malombo** beat and all the women and men who have ever been possessed. In describing the scene at the treatment of the **zwilombo** possessed patient, Stayt, (1931; 303) states:

Each **molombo** dancer takes her part, sidling up to the drums, gradually quickening the pace until she is whirling wildly round, waving her axe and sometimes stamping on the floor and leaping in air. All the company sings and shakes their rattles and the noise and dust and general excitement increase.

The similarities between **vimbuza** and **zwilombo** are that patients are made to dance endlessly so as to cast the spirits out of the patient. The beat is also provided by a male participant on both instances. Unlike at the **mo'koma** where men are the principal healers, at **vimbuza (ng'oma)** women are the principal healers the only men who take part are those who beat spirit-specific drum rhythms.

Also among the **Bapedi**, healers responsible for helping people afflicted by spirits are usually elderly women. The dance held for this purpose is called **malopo** (possession dance). **Malopo** is normally held on a moonlight evening just after harvest when there is plenty of beer and crop is ripe. It is a gathering open to all women and their presence enhance and validates the ritual. Levine, (2005; 149) describes the **malopo** as:

Dizziness and exhaustion help the afflicted person to enter a trance. She stands in the middle of the circle of dancers, who take turns to spin her around until she collapses.

Even after dizziness and collapse, the dancer/patient is made to stand up and she is encouraged to dance her sickness off till the healer is satisfied that the bad spirit has left for good or the good spirit has entered. The séances are carried right through till the sickness is gone or the good spirit has entered the patient. Levine (2005; 95) also affirms (about the **Xhosa** divination) that the patients are always female when she states:

The dancer shakes so that the whole body convulses in sharp, sudden spasms. Eventually she falls to the ground when every last ounce of energy has been spent. It is essential that the dancer is surrounded by people who clap and sing while she performs, and the spectators are often given beer to encourage them to participate.

Some spiritual possession among the Bantu speaking nations take a form which its meaning can be derived from a south **Nguni** expression '*amathongo ahamba naye*' (walking with the dead). In such a situation ancestral spirits possession is seen as companions. It is a two way situation, the person is not only possessed by the ancestral spirits; he/she possesses them as well. He/she can summon them at will when ever there is a need to do so. Song and dance are essential part of both the initiation of the diviners and the profession/life thereafter.

Dancing is mainly characterized by quick shuffles which go on for a long time with some short stamping sequences.



Figure 73. Diviners at Mtubatuba doing their dance

Those possessed by what is referred to as '**Indawe**' could be seen doing a shuffle with their buttocks. **Ndau** people are known for their tumbling and shuffling movements. When diviners perform the buttocks shuffling movement, they whisper a language which my informants at **Mtubatuba** claimed to be **Ndau**. The **Ndau** are also known as great medicine man among the **Thonga** people.



Figure 74. Diviners' ndawe dance

As it has been cited earlier that the state in which someone finds oneself afflicted by some sort of spirit is likened to a stage between life and death which is a realm believed to be ruled by the ancestors; therefore the theme of birth and death is invoked whenever someone is treated for spiritual affliction.

Hammond-Tooke, (1962; 245) also affirms the notion that the majority of diviners (among the **Bhaca**) are women. But in his postulation he cites the reasons being due to:

The fact that the profession necessitates a highly emotional, semi-hysterical state in the practitioner when attempting to contact **amathongo**, and as...the **ukuthwasa** illness itself is a highly subjective, emotionally disturbing experience... The fact that most diviners are women tempts one to postulate a correlation between **ukuthwasa** and the emotional disturbances brought about by such purely feminine functions as menstruation, pregnancy and menopause.

Women are always seen as the seat for ancestral functions and presence within each family structure. Through women ancestors are able to carry recurrence through new born babies; through the old ladies and dreams ancestors are able to send messages. The red colour common around the theme of spiritual possession is symbolic to the state between life and death which is a state which everyone afflicted finds him/herself in.

Menstruation is closely associated with the moon which is the symbol of light in the dark since it appears at night. Most communities celebrate

menstruation at full moon since the cycle of the moon is synonymous with the cycles of women. Therefore women are associated with enlightenment and ancient wisdom obtained through ancestral spirit.

Whether it is the trance dance of the **San**, the **Vimbuza** of the **Tumbuka** or the **Mqhuqhumbelo** of the **Zulu** diviners; the movements are all repetitive and vigorous and are hallucinatory. When the state of hallucination is reached, heads and necks are shaken continuously.

4.3. Purpose

Every thematic performance has got its purpose or function for which it is performed. The purpose determines who participate in the performance. The purpose also dictates on the nature of space to be occupied during performance; the time and period are essential to the fulfillment of the function of each thematic performance. Body movements are also important so as to invoke the right potency required for the functionality of the performance.

Participation is often categorized according to gender, age and social status. For instance at puberty rites such as the first menses of a girl, only the girl at menarche or sometimes with other girls' companions and older women. The inclusion of an old man at a **San** girl's first menses is for the purpose of symbolic fertilization of the girl as it is the case at the **Chokwe-**

Mukhanda whereby a **mwana pwevo** appears to symbolize the fertility of the boys.

Most **San** and **Bantu** speaking communities celebrate their girls' first menses at full moon as a symbolic association of the menses and the cycles of the moon and fertility. The **Sandawe** associate menstruation with the darkness of the new moon but the dances get under way as the moon approaches fullness at around the beginning of the moon's second quarter.

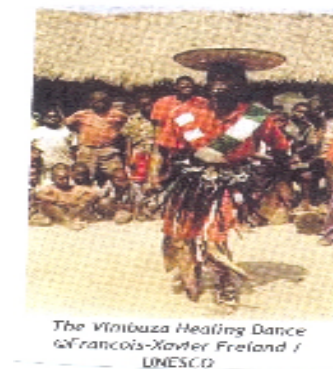


Figure 75. Vimbuza spirits' afflicted patient

The space or location in which a thematic performance takes place could either be formed by the way participants arrange themselves like at **vimbuza** healing dance where women and children form a circle around the afflicted patient or by the occupation (inside and outside) of the existing/ constructed hut like in the case of the performance of the **eland bull** dance of the **!Kung** whereby the girls sits inside a thatched hut while women dance around on the outside.



Figure 76. Eland bull dance

The purpose of the investigation on the themes cited above is not to see what the dances found under each of these themes are, but is to understand their effects. Each performance around each theme is a cause on its own; it is therefore done in order to effect a particular reaction.

Sometimes what could be regarded as the effect is actually the cause. For instance, during the performance of the **San** trance dance, the repetitive movements, music and clapping are the cause of the potency through which the shamans heal the sick. But the movements, music and clapping done at the **Vimbuza** healing dance are an effect of the affliction of the patient by the spirits.

4.4. Formations

Mention has been made in earlier paragraphs that the structural formations in African ritual performances are circular in orientation which is rooted in social organization and architecture. But the most important

thing about circular formations in ritual performances by Africans is the symbolic and metaphoric representation African thought patterns.

But all symbolic anthropologists such as Victor Turner, Barbara Meyerhoff and others agree that every symbolic system is used to create and convey meaning. Therefore meanings created and conveyed through symbolism are end products. African culture is particularly and fundamentally symbolic. So, if one were to understand African symbolic system contained in ritual performances, one should understand the culture of the creators and users of that symbolic system.

Using Max Weber's theory, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, Geertz, (1973; 5) states:

I take cultures to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

Therefore the study of symbolism contained in ritual processes among Africans should go beyond the analysis of structure and form, it should seek to understand the meanings created and conveyed by each symbolic system. Although meanings can be regarded as end products, they should also be understood as causes which create effects. For example, the symbolic cycling by men around women and the central fire during the 'dance of blood' by the San is the cause a trance state which could be

viewed as end product, hence the performance is referred as trance dance; the effect is the effective curing of ailments.

The performance of **Domba** by the **BaVenda** girls is commonly likened to the movement of the womb. But by virtue of it been referred to as the python dance, it is symbolically associated with rain and fertility. The rain is metaphorically seen as the water from the sky (male) to fertilize the earth (female). Therefore rain is likened to the sperm of a man produced during sexual intercourse. The hands movements during the performance of the **Domba** are synonymous with the movement of the penis during the act of sexual intercourse.

To the Zulu, as Berglund, (1976; 60) puts it, the python represents strength, patience and coolness. And at the heart of the teachings of young **BaVenda** girls during initiation rites such as *vusha* and *sungwi* is patience, resilience and calm which are the virtue for good womanhood among the **BaVenda**.

The python is regarded by Africans as the predator that kills its prey without spilling any blood. It is known for its strength and the ability to wait for the right moment to catch its prey. But the most important part (during pursue of prey) is the cycling around (similar to the movement of the line at **Domba**) and after catching the prey it coils around to squeeze to death.

To Africans every sexual intercourse either, between the male-sky and female-earth or between a man and a woman was regarded sacred. It was the essence of the theme of fertility which is the giver of life.

The performance of **Domba** should be seen as the cause for the fertilization of living species and the land. It is also the cause for strengthening of the social bonds and structures. It is the cause of strong moral values and enlightenment. It is at **Domba** that secrets to good citizenship are revealed.

Understanding cultural patterns and social organizations such as where men occupying the right side of the house and women occupying the left helps one to understand why in most cases ritual performances cycle anti-clockwise which is moving from right to left. Men are symbolically regarded as the beginning while women the end. But in the cycle of living, there is no perpetual beginning and perpetual ending; everything precedes the other. It is like the sunrise and the sunset.

In the sacred realm, both male and female are the two points of the same circle only placed on opposite sides. They are a representation of the duality of life which its completion is rooted in the cosmic principle of gender.

4.5. Conclusion

A short overview on the subject of the *Universal Cosmic Law* and its *seven principles* can throw some light on the theme of fertility and **African** learned understanding of cosmic laws contained in ritual symbolism.

Seydel, (1996) espouses the seven principles as viewed from the **Hermitic** tradition as they also correspond with **Hindu** Chakra system and human body:

1. Mentalism

The ALL is mind; the universe is Mental.

By correspondence: The Crown Chakra and the Pituitary Gland.

The pituitary gland is the first gland to appear in the Human embryo.

2. Correspondence

As above, so below; as below, so above.

By correspondence: The Brow Chakra and the Pineal Gland

The pineal gland produces 'melatonin' that controls the waking and sleeping cycles.

3. Vibration

Nothing rests; everything moves; everything vibrates.

By correspondence: The throat Chakra and the Thyroid Gland

The Thyroid gland produces 'thyroxin' to convert oxygen and food into usable energy.

4. Polarity

Everything is dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites like and unlike are the same; opposites are identical in nature, but different in degree; extremes meet; all truths are but half truths; all paradoxes may be reconciled.

By correspondence: The Heart Chakra and the Thymus gland

The Thymus gland produces 'T' cells for the immune system of the body.

5. Rhythm (The Cycles)

Everything flows, out and in; everything has its tides; all things rise and fall; the pendulum-swing manifests in everything; the measure of the swing to the right is the measure of the swing to the left; rhythm compensates.

By correspondence: The Naval Chakra and the Adrenal Gland

The adrenal gland produces 'Hydrocortisone' that regulates the use of food and helps the body adjust to stress.

6. Cause and Effect

Every Cause has its Effect; every Effect has its Cause; everything happens according to Law; Chance is but a name for Law not recognized; there are many planes of causation, but nothing escapes the Law.

By correspondence: The spleen charka and the Lyden or Spleen

The spleen produces 'macrophages' to cleanse the blood and is vital to the immune system of the body and a person's health

7. Gender

Gender is in everything; everything has its Masculine and feminine principles; Gender manifests on all planes.

By correspondence: The Root Chakra and the Sacral or Reproductive Glands of Male and Female in all species.

The reproductive organs of 'male and female' in all life forms that exist.

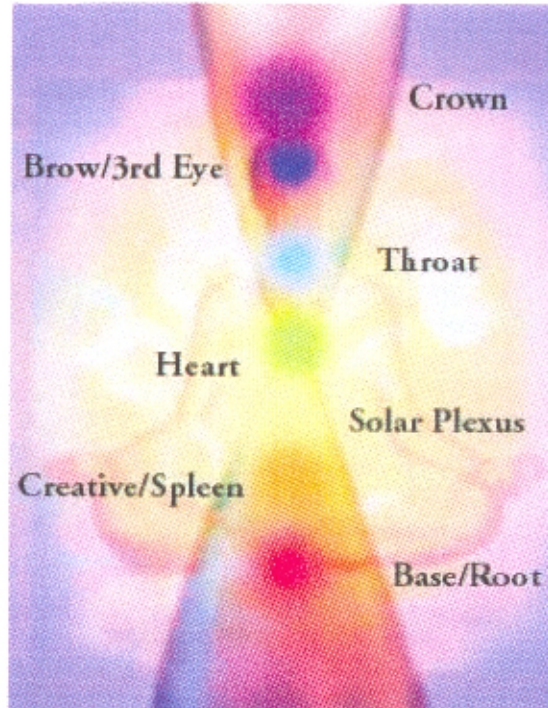


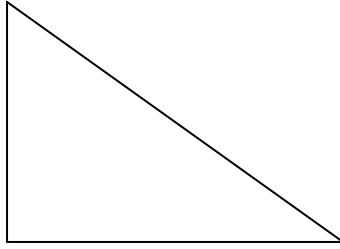
Figure 77. An hour-glass superimposed on the body chakra points

The illustration above depicts the hour glass on top of the **chakra** points on the body in a meditation position. The **Crown** is situated above the head which corresponds with the mentalism principle; The **Brow** is situated between the eye-brows and is referred to as the third eye; at the base is the gender principle which is also referred to as the **Root**. This is the principle which on its own is incomplete unless it acts upon its opposite.

A closer look at the root **chakra** as it is depicted on the illustration above reveals a red colour. It is the colour of fire and blood; the givers of life. The root/base **chakra** is the beginning of a physical life for all living species on earth. It is at the root **chakra** where living species are endowed with power to create and multiply themselves by giving birth to their kind.

In biblical terms the seven principles can explain the story of creation whereby the **Crown** represents God and the first day and the **Root** represents the creation of man and the seventh day where God rested. The seven days in a week are an idea espoused in the Bible when God was busy creating the world and deciding to take a rest on the seventh day. The manifestation of God as the **cosmic law** (the **ALL**) had started at the **crown** and came to the end at the **root**.

The idea that a human being is the combination of the mind, soul, spirit, fire, air, water and earth also corresponds to the seven principles of the cosmic law. This is the idea believed by many scholars of African theosophy as the root of the Pythagoras theorem which is represented by a mathematical formula as: The Square on the hypotenuse of the right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other sides, (Motshekga, 1998; 19).



$$\begin{aligned} a^2 + b^2 &= c^2 \\ 3^2 + 4^2 &= 5^2 \\ 9 + 16 &= 25 \\ 25 &= 25 \\ 5 &= 5 \end{aligned}$$

The element of gender or sexual paradox is prevalent to both the themes of fertility and curing. Both the theme of fertility and curing are rooted to the concept of life giving or creation. Fertility is about creating a new life while curing is about resuscitating a life that is threatened by ailments.

It has been cited earlier that the theme of fertility (whether in puberty or social bonding) is deeply rooted on the correspondence of both sexes. The one sex might be regarded as the 'above' while the other is regarded as the 'below'; the one might be the 'left' while the other is the 'right'; the one might be the 'dark' while the other is the 'light'. The fact is 'each explains the other' because one by itself is meaningless and unidentifiable. It is incomplete and meaningless, dysfunctional and null and void. The duality of life is rooted in both the sexes. Males and females are the same but at different degrees.

The contrast rooted in the elements of fire and water at the fertility rites suggests the dipolar nature/composition of the theme of fertility. Plants depend on both the sunshine and the rain for them to grow; too much of one is a problem. From a Hegelian view, life is rooted in contradictions and conflicts. But to Hegel (1770-1831) these contradictions are a necessity for progress. Hegel's 'Dialectical Argument' suggests that a 'thesis' conflicts with an 'antithesis' to produce a result, the 'synthesis'.

In the themes of fertility and curing, the conflicts and contradiction contained in aspects such as gender, time, elements (water and fire), should be viewed as compliments. As far as the principle of compliments is concerned, elements in opposition to each are in fact giving definition to one another. The seclusion defines the inclusion as death defines living; sun rise defines sun set. The one by itself is indefinable, unconceivable and no-existent.

The periodic menses of a woman among the **Bantu** and the **San** is associated with the cycles of the moon which is a cosmologic complement to the sun. The sun is regarded as masculine while the moon is regarded as feminine. But the blood of the menses is likened to the two twilights of the sun which are also likened to birth and death.

As it is the case with the fertilization of the soil whereby the cycles of the moon are key to the changes of the seasons the sun determines the weather which is key to the fertility of the soil. Some peoples among the **Bantu** speaking and the **KhoiSans** put more emphasis on the male deity around the theme of fertility while others put emphasis on a female deity. This is due to whether the society is arranged according to patriarchal or matriarchal kinship systems.

But the **Zulu** although view **UMvelingqangi** as the supreme deity and masculine, he is only portrayed as the first of generational progression than the creator. 'He is the one who came-out first from the reed', (*UMvelingqangi owavela ohlangeni*). The myth of creation among the **Zulu** is centered on **UNomkhubulwane**, the feminine deity. She is the one responsible for the fertility of women and the soil. Even boys at their first emulsion are said to have been visited by their grandmothers in a form of a dream which further emphasizes the feminine role around the theme of fertility among the Zulu.

The feminine gender is prevalent in the themes of fertility for both the females and soil, and that of curing and possession. The element of water in a form of 'pools and rivers' is closely associated with the feminine gender. At girls' initiation of the Venda, the novices are soaked in water/river for a certain number of hours (*U kamisa*). Although such an

act is widely viewed as a way of teaching the Venda novices perseverance, the association of water (river and pool) with the feminine deity responsible for fertility suggests that *kamisa* is actually a submission of the novice to the god of fertility.

According to the **Karanga** mythology, cited by Aschwanden, 'a pool of water symbolizes the fountain and origin of life, like the woman's womb'. The **Shona** deity for fertility is called **Mwari** who according to Daneel had a popular praise, *Dzivakuru* (the Great Pool). Mukonyora, (1999; 282) states:

At **Matonjeni**, located in **Matebeleland** (western **Zimbabwe**) and at other shrines in southern and central Africa, a pool found in a cave marks the ideal place for the worship of *Mwari*. Besides, rivers and pools were places for women to train each other about their sexuality and carry out initiation rites.

When the Zulu refers to *UMvelinqangi owavela Ohlangeni*, they symbolize the origin of life by the river/pool since the reed grows around the rivers. And *Umkhosi kaNomdede* is never complete until the girls go to the river where they bath while beating one another with the leaves of *Umsenge* tree which itself is the symbol of fertility.

The pools and rivers also play the pivotal role around the practice of divination among the Bantu speaking Africans. Those called by ancestor into this profession are believed to be instructed to fetch a snake from the

deep pools or sometimes get submerged under water for months and on their return they are dressed in full regalia of a healer, a symbolic snake wrapped all around him/her and equipped with powerful medicine and its knowledge.

During the observance of *umshophi* ritual, which is a healing ritual against the diseases-demon associated with the coming of rains by the Zulu, girls dresses in *umxhopho*-grass costume spend some time next to a river stream



Figure 78. Zulu dress for umshophi ceremony

Like water, snakes too are widely associated with creation, fertility and healing. Mention has been made earlier about the association by the **Venda** of the python with fertility of women and the earth during **Domba**. **Ithwasa** emerging from the pool of the river or sea with a snake wrapped around her symbolizes and validate the calling by the ancestors.

Berglund's, (1976; 148) informants describe:

'the python as ***Inkosi yamadlozi*** (the lord of the shades or the one above) who resides in the pool'.

The Zulus affectionately refer to the rainbow as '***uthingo lwenkosazana***' which literally translate into the 'rod of the princess'. Using biblical interpretation of the rod of God (which Moses carried for the rest of his mission to free the Israelites from Egypt) which refers to the snake, the rod of the princess will mean the snake of ***UNomkhubulwane***. The rainbow is always seen as if it is drinking from the river and as young children we were told that where the rainbow drinks, there is a snake.

Generally among the **Africans**, '***induku***' is the symbol of manhood. A man without a stick is regarded as '***umfazi***' by the Zulus. ***Induku*** is a symbol of power, prestige and authority associated with the head of a homestead or the state. But the term '***induku***' is often used to refer to the penis.

During the observance of ***uNomdede-'inkosazana'*** ceremony by the **Zulu** maidens, there is a part whereby the maidens dress in their brothers or suitors attire and herd the cattle. Prominent among the maidens herding the cattle at ***Nomdede*** is the carrying of the sticks.

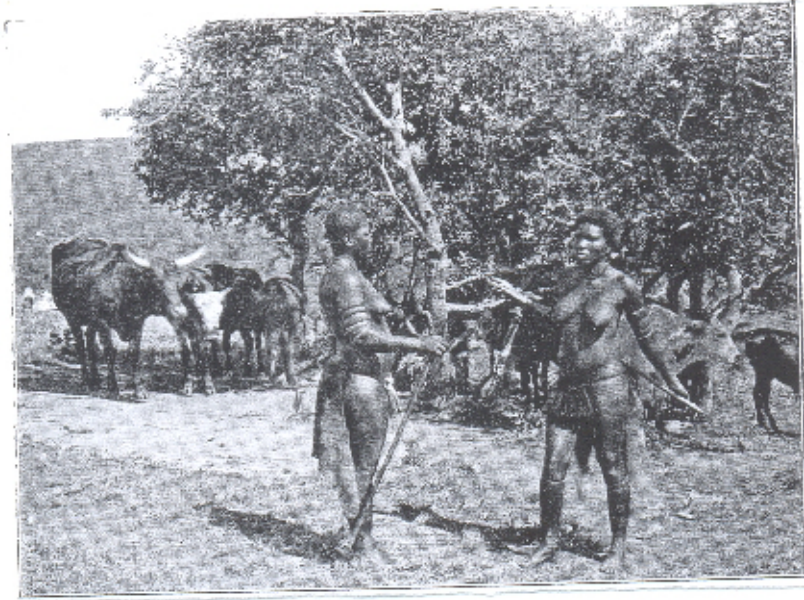


Figure 79. Zulu girls herding cattle during uNomdede

A sexual paradox occurs when the 'rod of the princess' is said to drinking into the pool which is likened to the womb of a woman. The rod can be likened to the 'penises of the man. ***Uthingo lweNkosazana*** suggests an ownership of the penis by the princess; it does not suggest a possession of the penis by the princess. The rainbow and the river is a symbolic sexual intercourse between the sky and earth. The presence of a snake in the pool where the rainbow drinks can be explained in modern sciences as the formation of a DNA.

Further associations of the pools/ivers and the snake manifests itself in the legends around the serpent referred to as '***Inkanyamba***'. ***Inkanyamba*** is believed to be dwelling in great pools and every time it changes its dwellings or locations, a cyclone accompanied by heavy

thunderstorms occurs. Like the black ***Mamba***, ***Inkanyamba*** combines the sky (male) with the earth (female).

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 AFRICANS' AESTHETICS IN RITUAL DANCE PERFORMANCES

5.1. Introduction

The dictionary explanation for the word 'aesthetics' is; that which is concerned with the beauty or sensitive to beauty. It is through the aesthetical awareness that people are able to appreciate the work of art. But African performances which are highly ritualistic, aesthetics are not the guiding principles of form for beauty; they are there to give meaning and also causal for intended effects of a ritual engagement.

Therefore it is important to understand the purpose for each performance, the people who are involved (active or passive), the location of the performance and time in which such performance is done. Whether the purpose for the performance is for entertainment, children's games or ritual, the timing and place should be adhered to otherwise the performance will bear no meaning and it will have no effect at all.

The purpose of the dance is the important determinant for the place where it should be performed. Both, the purpose and the space/venue for performance determine the structure of the dance performance. The purpose for the performance always contains the conceptual theme for the performance while the space defines the shape, size and the length of the performance.

Purpose and space therefore provide the performance with aesthetical framework. Aesthetics give meaning to the performance by providing a criterion for interpretation by both the source (performer) and the recipient (spectators). Sometimes the recipients are not ordinary human beings they could be deities, ancestors, spirits and nature.

Sometimes, aesthetics help transform the performance, performers and the recipients. In the case of fertility rites, death or trance state (either for healing or rainmaking), aesthetics are used to transform the performer or the represented into the other level or stage/ state. Aesthetics can also be employed as antidote to help bond humans to nature, other humans or animals, or help disband humans with evil such as witchcraft and sorcery. But not all performances are open for comprehension by anyone and everybody; instead some are designed in such a way that only the initiated or trained can access and interpret; therefore, the aesthetics used are not a revelation but concealment.

Many of performances either dance, music/song or drama were accompanied by the use of costume, make-up and iconographic objects. These items were also affected and governed by the same aesthetic principles and forms.

Apart from the general aesthetical principle of form such as unity, contrast, transition, sequence, proportion, diversity, and climax; African arts should evoke and crystallize historical memory through symbols, metaphors and paradoxes; have social connotations through mass participation, observation and clearly defined purposes; and reflect thematic formations and structures, time and locations.

Aesthetics are there to give shape to the meaning contained in every performance. For instance a ritual performance can never be effective if it was to be done by one person without the participation and the observation by the other. Certain rituals like the first menses of the **Hadza** girl should be celebrated at full moon. It is therefore the right timing, placing and the right participation and observation by the community that guarantees the intended effectiveness of each and every performance.

Every movement in space should adhere to specific spatial elements such as direction, focus, plane, range, design and density. Some spaces are chosen for performance because they automatically provide the participants with necessary spatial elements suitable for the purpose of the performance. But some are chosen because they allow the participants to manipulate and provide an opportunity for participants to be creative in bringing about spatial elements.

Man is both the creator of the meaning of culture and the creation of the meaning of culture. Therefore some performances are there to give meaning to life while others are there as responses to the meaning that life provides.

5.2. Spatial elements

5.2.1. Direction

The direction in most of puberty ritualistic dances such as **Domba** and the eland- bull dance is counter clockwise. There has never been a clear explanation to the reason of this direction which seems to be common in most of Indigenous dances of Africa.

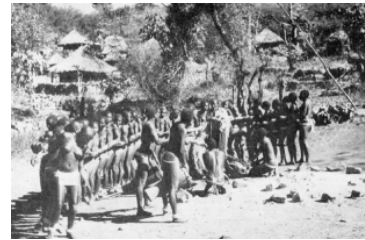


Figure 80. Eland bull dance (San)

and

Domba dance (Venda)

Dance by the **Idaxo** novices on their grass/reed aprons at the **vuxulu-**coming out ceremony, is said to be counter-clockwise while the rest of the community participants dance clock-wise on the outer circle.



Idaxo novices dancing in their grass masks

Figure 81. Idaxo novices in their grass masks

Other dances with a counter-clockwise direction, particularly among the Venda are **Tshigombela** (by girls) and **Tshikona** (by men). Blacking, (1973; 40) refers to one of the songs at the **sungwi** initiation school as:

Nyimbo dza u sevhetha (songs for dancing round) are sung by the girls as they dance counter-clockwise in a circle round the drums

The trance-dance though it is not restricted into a counter-clockwise direction during performance, it is commonly depicted in many pictures and rock painting as such. Sometimes it is said to be danced in a form of an eight figure; that means it assumes both the clockwise and counter-clockwise respectively. As Vinnicombe, (1976; 310) asserts towards the trance dances:

These special curing or protective dances have their own special style, the men dancing in a circular rut, stamping around and around, hour after hour, now clockwise and

now anti-clockwise. Within the circumference of the circle sit the women, shoulder to shoulder, facing inwards towards the central dance fire.

But in the case of **Umphendu** by the **Zulu**, both clockwise and counter-clockwise directions are used during the performance whereby two files start at a given point, going towards different directions to meet at a particular point.



Figure 82.The painting in the drakensberg. The figure in the circle represents the girl in her hut, while the women dance around her.

The **Ju'hoansi** (San) of Namibia (although the pictures show them as modernized people) still practice some form of trance dance at night around the fire. The picture on the right shows a counter-clockwise direction of the dance while picture on the left shows clockwise direction.



Figure 83. Picture (right) (Trance dance by the Ju/ansi) Picture (left)

Most of the dances among the Pedi females, that is, both grown-up women and young girls tend to follow a counter clockwise direction. Sometimes use forwards and backwards directions while at certain times take sideways directions. The generic term for the dance among the **Pedi** is '*kiba*' which literally translate into 'to beat time or to stamp'. The difference between the male and female *kiba* is that the males use *naka* pipes while females use *meropa* drums when performing. The directions and the structure are the same, that is, cycling the centre clockwise and counter clockwise.



Umsindiso of jumping the rope dance in the KwaZulu-Natal region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Figure 84. Pedi women at kiba dance

Some dances such as **Pada** (frog) by the San young girls though not having a locomotive mode such as the examples cited above do have a clear direction which is more towards the centre of the circle or the semi-arc formation by the rest of the performers. When the **Pada** (frog) dance is performed, the rest of the performers form a circle or a semi-arc and they take turns in two at the centre doing frog-like movements towards one another.

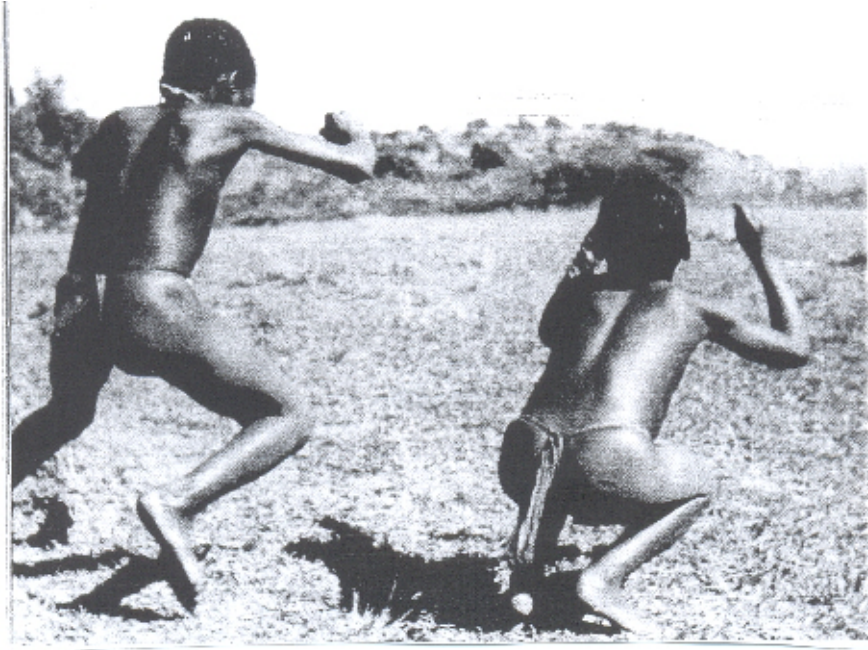


Figure 85. Venda children leap-frogging

Almost identical to the **Pada** dance by the **San** young girls (in terms of movement) is the frog leap dance by the young **Wakamba** boys from Kenya. The difference is that the **Wakamba** boys dance is in linear formation and it sometimes follows a counter-clockwise direction.



Figure 86. Wakamba boys in Mukinda, Kenya playing leapfrog to a dance rhythm.

The same pattern is also found in the performances of dances such as **Inkankelana** and **Umhlonyane** by the **Zulu** young girls whereby girls dance either circling one another or approaching (towards) and retreating (away from) the centre.

5.2.2. Focus

The focus element in the use of space is often determined by the direction of the eyes/ face during a performance. For instance, the body could be moving forward while the eyes are looking at the back or vice versa. At puberty rites where neophytes are expected to show respect for the elders and the world, the focus is generally downwards except at the coming out ceremony where they are supposed to focus on the horizon as a symbol of maturity, far-sightedness, strength and wisdom.

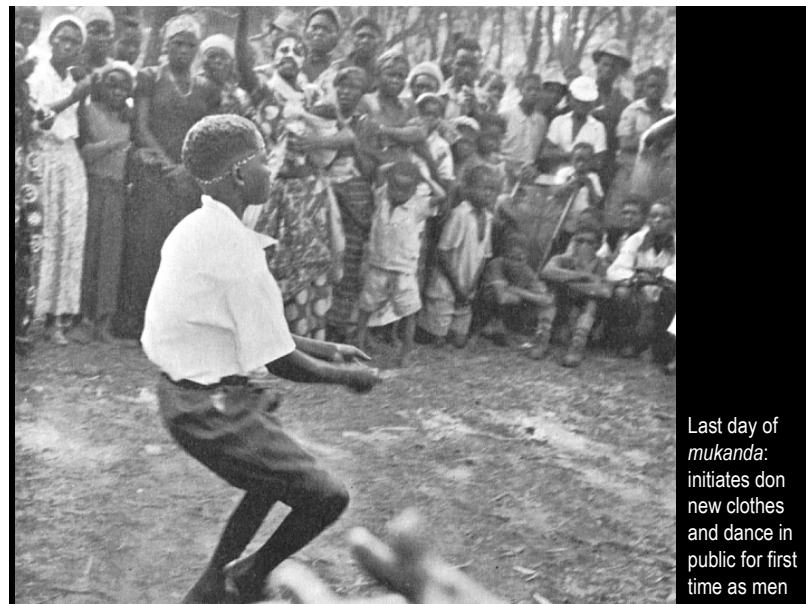


Figure 87. Last day of Ndembu initiates

Where the performance is at a circular formation, the focus is always either towards the centre or away from the centre. The only variation could be when the performers are expected to look down as sign of respect or maybe the sign of seeking wisdom from the ancestors.



Figure 88. Chokwe initiates dancing

In a situation whereby the performers are cycling around either in a clockwise or anti-clockwise, the focus could be towards the front, sides or down. For instance, during the performance of trance dance by the San, the focus range from simple forward direction into downward as the medicine men approach the trance state. Rock paintings about San trance dances always portray dancers crouching towards the ground as the potency boils up towards the attainment of the trance state.

But during the performance of the *python* dance at *Domba*, the initiates look over the shoulder while shuffling their feet forward.



Figure 89. Venda girls doing the Domba

Some performances like the *tshikombela* by the **Venda** girls, though taking the cycling direction, maintains the centre-direction focus.



Venda girls practice the first part of the tshigombela dance.

Figure 90. Venda girls dancing the tshigombela dance

When the *chizaluki* (mask representing the ancestral authority) appears at the *mukanda* for **Chokwe** and other related peoples' neophytes, he

should be seen looking up or straight towards the horizon as the sign of far-sightedness associated with the wisdom of the ancestors.



Figure 91. Chizaluki at the Ndembu initiation lodge

The ***chizaluki*** is the guardian of the ***mukanda*** lodge and is danced by the initiated male. The features on his face like the white beard and the fly whisk in his hand are the symbols of the ancestral authority and wisdom.

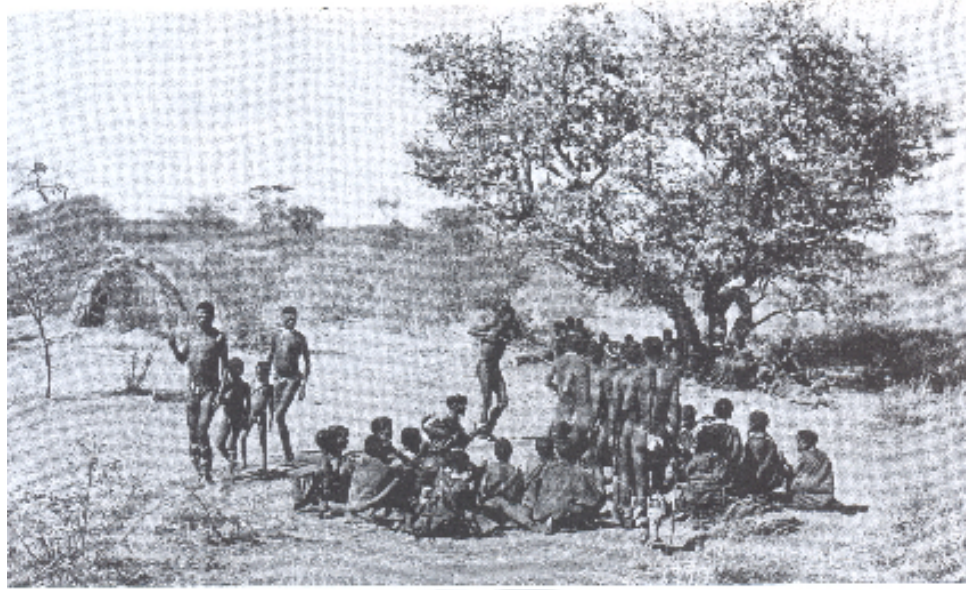
When the performance is ecstatic or possession related like those of affliction, the focus is not usually clear because of the hallucination state of the performer.



Figure 92. Healed patient at Vimbuza

5.2.3. Design

As an aesthetical aspect, design is that that pertains to the general arrangement or layout of a performance. It has been cited earlier that, the purpose (for every performance) is an important determinant for its aesthetical layout. The design determines the material in terms of the movements, songs, music, costumes and make-ups to be used at a performance. The efficiency of each of those materials mentioned above towards the intended effect is the justification for their usage. For instance the trance dance of the San's purpose is to heal the sick; therefore it requires the usage of medicine songs, shuffling movements which are repeated over and over, women rhythmic clapping, the central fire and the figure of eight.



The Kalahari San, of the Kalahari Desert, are the most primitive of the African peoples. They are the only people in the world who are still in the primitive stage of culture. They are the only people in the world who are still in the primitive stage of culture. They are the only people in the world who are still in the primitive stage of culture.

Figure 93. The figure of eight is clearly shown at this performance of the trance dance by the Kalahari San

The figure of eight in this regard should not be viewed from a numerical point of view; instead it should be viewed as a symbolic shape and the layout of the performance. In actual facts the medicine or trance dance is a circular dance the figure of eight occurs when the medicine men cut through the circle track formed on the sand when circulating around clapping women.

5.2.4. Planes

The plane element of space in dance performance by Africans is normally reflected by the posture and the position of the body of the dancer(s). The upright posture of the dancer suggests the vertical plane as in most social

and ceremonial dance performances such as *Ushameni* by the Zulu and *M'goiyu* dance by the Kikuyu.



Figure 94. M'goiyu dance by the Kikuyu men

Clegg, (1982; 66) in an article discussing *Umzansi* dance by the Zulus, claims that , *umzansi* is a horizontal dance, the aim being to use much space as possible, up and down, turning and wheeling as opposed to *shameni* and *ukhwapheni/khwaxa* of amaBhaca. He (Clegg) further states:

When you have a dance that uses a lot of space sideways or forwards, you place it on the horizontal grid.

But Clegg's example is still loaded with vertical posturing of the body, only focusing on the movement while keeping a vertical and upright position.

Even the **sangoma-ndawe** dancing can be viewed as reflecting a horizontal plane because of its buttocks shuffles, but the body is kept upright though in a sitting position.



Figure 95. Ndawe dance by the diviners from Mtubatuba

But the best dance performance that illustrates the horizontal plane in the form of a horizontal posture is the trance dance by the San. Although the dance at the beginning reflects an upright posturing, it is when the potency has reached a boiling point where the dancers are depicted bending forward.



Figure 96. A rock painting depicting the San trance dance

5.2.5. Density

Mention has been made earlier of the aesthetical value of the mass participation in the performance of African dance which automatically create density in the performance. But some dance performances have more density than the others.

The number of **Zulu** maidens at the reed dance ceremony makes it the most densely populated performance among the **Zulu** nation. Besides the maidens who are singing and dancing; are the matrons or elderly women who actively move about giving direction to the maidens. Sometimes the queens also get up and go about in front of the maidens waiving and swaying their bodies in relation the songs and dances by the maidens.



Figure 97. Some of the Zulu Queens at the reed dance ceremony

At some stage the **King** and his **Chief- Induna** get up and run about the dancing maidens amidst the roar of ululating women and men shouting '**bayede uyizulu**'.



Figure 98. The King and his traditional Prime Minister examining the maidens at the reed dance ceremony

Density in a performance can be the results of participants alone or participants together with the spectators. For instance at wedding ceremonies, participants and spectators inter-act in such a way that it is

sometimes hard to find a total passive spectator during the singing and dancing performances.

But sometimes the general layout of the performance can make it look like is densely populated even if the number of performers and other participants is small. This could be a result of distorted patterned design of the performance like the acrobatic dances of the San or when the ***Domba*** initiates are being carried on their mothers' backs at the day of graduation.



Figure 99. Novices being carried by their mothers at the Domba ceremony

The distorted patterns in design can be a result of ecstatic state of or consciousness of the performers which could be caused by spiritual affliction or a joyous mood of triumph as in wedding and coming out ceremony of the initiation process.

5.3. Symbolism

In an African ritualistic performance symbolism can be divided into two categories. The first category is when symbolism represents a deeper meaning of an idea contained in a performance. The second category is when symbolism creates a meaning or creates a sphere of thought through which new ideas could be sought.



Figure 100. Ndembu novices at the mukanda lodge

When **Ndembu** neophytes are daubed in white clay (*ubumba*), they symbolize fertility and life each novice is uniquely bringing into the rest of the community. There are three things to be closely analyzed from the above illustration about the **Ndembu** novices at **Mukanda**, those are, the clay, the colour of the clay and the geometric designs.

It is somehow pointless to try and determine what each design on the body of each novice represents except that they all more or less either in a form of a dot or a circle. But one thing certain about those designs is that they make each novice look different from the rest. The clay is always used to mould or create valuable things such as pots which always represent the (pro) creative powers of man and man's ability to turn nothing into something. The maturity stage of the novices is the announcement that the youth is at a stage whereby they can procreate and make a living as adults.

The white colour is a symbolic representation of life itself as the black colour would represent death. It also represents purity and wisdom or enlightenment. At the initiation school youth is exposed to the mysteries of life and secrets of living.

In **IsiZulu** and other related languages, the stage of maturity, is called **thomba** and the **Venda** hold a ceremony known as **domba**. But Motshekga (2000) regards the root **mbe/mba** and **mbo** as the same; representing both the beginning and the end. The **Zulu** legend refers to **eMbo** as a place of origin but the root '**mbo**' is also used to denote darkness or sealing- '**mboza**' or '**thani mbo**'.

The river is known as *umlambo* in **Xhosa** while the **Zulu** refer to a well as *umthombo*. *Umthombo* is a place where people obtain water for drinking and it is the kind of water that does not go dry. The commencement of menses of a girl is in resemblance to the fountain that never goes dry. It is like the river (*umlambo*) that flows all the time. Mentioned has been made earlier that the menses of the girl is symbolically representative of the two twilights, birth and death.

The flu that threatens to wipe the population out of the surface of the earth is normally called *iMbo*. Therefore if *eMbo* is the place of origin/beginning, *iMbo* is the means to the place of ending. A seedling is called *isithombo*; it always marks the beginning of a life of a plant.

The black *mamba* among the **Zulus** is a symbol of the presence of the ancestors and wisdom. Powerful diviners are often referred to as '*izindlondlo*' - very old mamba with a feather on its head. The association of the black and the root *mba/mbo* and wisdom is a further illustration of the total darkness, dreams, ancestors, the origins of mankind and wisdom.

A portion in King **Shaka**'s praises goes thus:

Ulusiba gojela ngalaphaya kweNkadla,
Lugojela njalo ludl'amadoda.
Indlondlo yakithi kwaNobamba,
Indlondl'ehamb,ibang'amacala

The feather representing the black mamba on the forehead is in fact pointed at the area between the lashes which is the place of the third eye; a symbol of the sacred wisdom. And the feather represents flight and heights. *Ima-mba* is known for its up right stance when moving or threatened and *Inkanya-mba* is also known to be flying amid the clouds and storms. The number of heads (seven) attributed to *inkanyamba* symbolizes the wisdom multiplied by seven in line with the seven principles of the *Cosmic Law*.



Figure 101. A portrait of King Shaka

The feather on King **Shaka's** forehead transforms him into a status of an old mamba equivalent to the ancestors' wisdom, power and prestige.

The cobra which has similar characteristics to the black mamba was used in a similar fashion by the Egyptian kings and princes as a symbol of wisdom, power and prestige.

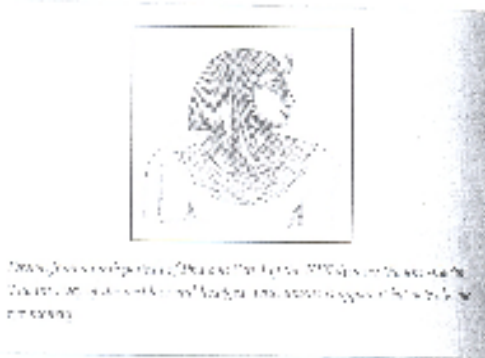


Figure 102. A portrait depicting a typical Egyptian prince wearing a royal crown

The positioning of the symbol of the serpent on the forehead between the two eye lashes represented a wisdom derived from the principle of correspondences. The biblical story of King Solomon's wisdom suggests a person who mastered or rather gifted by God to understand the principle of correspondences; to understand and rule over 'good' and 'bad'-'as above, so below'.

Amathambo are used by some diviners and **izinyanga** to seek for a divine intervention. Through **amathambo** diviners are able to see the unseen and are also able to connect with the ancestral world. **BaVenda** refer to the ancestral spirits as **malombo**.

The sound or the name can also be used to derive a meaning to a symbolic representation of a ritualistic process.

5.4. Craft

There has always been a thin line between art and craft in Africa. The reason being that, in most cases Africans do not separate between the two. Amongst many Africans art is what individuals use as an expressive tool towards their world view, whereas craft is symbolic representation of the general public's world view.

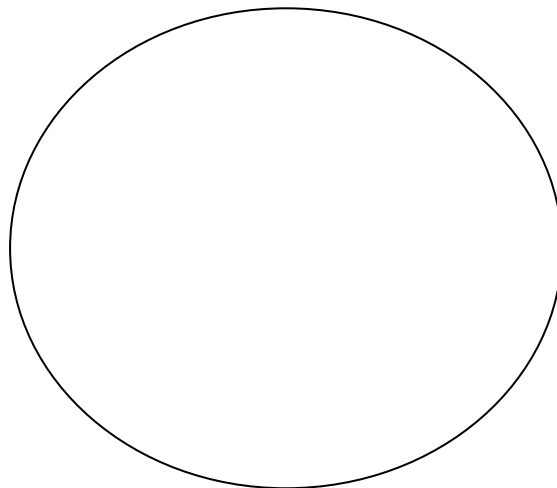
Craft can be divided into two, which is, craft for daily use like furniture and utensils, and craft for ritualistic purposes. Craft for daily use puts more emphasis on form while craft for ritual purposes puts more emphasis on content. The ritualistic craft is done and understood by the initiated although sometimes it can invoke something that affects the general public. For an example, the rock painting among the San is done by the initiated medicine men yet its effects are for the general public during healing.

More important is the symbolic representation of the people's world view embedded in ritualistic craft. Gemsbok among the **Gwi** represents medicine therefore a song, dance and painting of the gemsbok invokes the potency for healing.

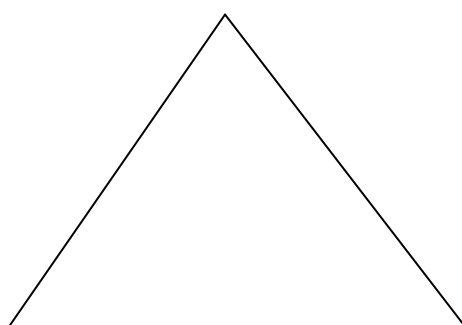
Every myth of creation among the Africans, especially the Bantu speaking (Africans) features fertility of the gods. Central to the theme of fertility is

the complimentary nature of the genders. Africans always see their gods as the manifestation of the two sexes. As it has been mentioned earlier, the theme of fertility plays a pivotal role in both the rites of passage and the rites of agrarian cults. Among Africans, nature is a product of two sexes so as human beings. Therefore it was/is logical to regard everything supernatural and superhuman as the primordial union of the two sexes.

The symbolic representation of male and female principles is often found in simple designs (which are sometimes taking geometric forms), pictorial drawings/paintings and carvings, sounds and sizes and spatial zones. Mention have been made earlier on describing the basic dance movements in African dances that feminine dances are rounded and smooth while masculine are angular and sharp. The common representation of this phenomenon is the circle and a triangle.



The circle is the beginning and the end; the alpha and omega. It is indefinable and indeterminable. It consists of two points which are the centre and the circumference or when the diameter is drawn in the middle, it touches the diameter at two points opposite to one another and also creating two halves of the same circle. But the triangle is made out of three points at equal angles.

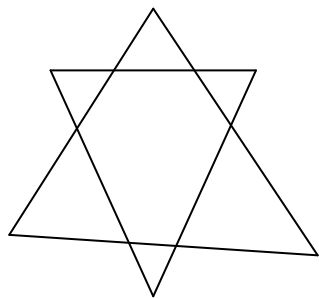


The combination of the two designs suggests the symbolic presence of the two (male and female) sexes. As it has been stated earlier that the form of these symbolic representations is not important than the content in a sense that in some areas these designs could be more refined than in some areas but what they represent and invoke is vital.

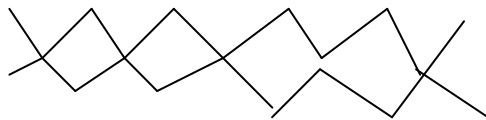
But what is significant about the two designs is that within each there is a content of both. For an example, within the circle, the point at the centre is representative of the male principle while the circumference is feminine. When cut in the middle by the diameter, it represents both the male and

female. The point on the left is female while the point on the right is male or if it cuts from top to bottom, the top point is male and the bottom point is female.

The triangle on the other side is a triune representation of the resultant form from the combination of male and female. This triune can be interpreted in many ways but the important thing is that it always points to the supreme union of the two sexes producing the third element as a manifestation of the two. Sometimes the triangle can be observed in form of two interlocking up down structure,



Or, in a form of a chevron:



When the triangle is pointed up it represents the male principle and when it is pointed down it represents the female.

The study by Marion Arnold (1981) of the meaning of sculptures of the **Shona** revealed some fascinating facts about the Bantu beliefs and their representation of the theme of fertility. One of the soap stone sculptures Arnold observed is in a form of an eagle perched on the monolith with the circular designs and a chevron and below those designs is an engraving in a form of a crocodile. The pictorial, geometrical designs and the spatial zones are represented in this sculpture.



Figure 103. Soap stone sculpture depicting an eagle perched on a monolith

Arnold claims that such sculptures were found on the eastern side of the Zimbabwe ruins' enclosure which was a place of worship. But the most important aspect of this sculpture is the representation of the theme of fertility. Since the representation by the geometric designs in forms of

circles and triangles/chevrons has been discussed, the focus should now be on the eagle and the crocodile. There is a strong speculation that the picture represents a fish eagle. The fish eagle is associated with both the skies and the waters. Water particularly the pools are regarded as representing the womb. The combination of the fish eagle and the pool during fishing is representative of the male (sky) and the female (earth/pool).

The crocodile is a reptile which dwells in deep pools and is associated with masculinity. Therefore the crocodile could be a representation of the earth or pool (female) while at the same time representing the male and female in sexual union. The crocodile is one of the most important iconography at the **Venda** girls' initiation schools. In fact all the iconographic objects used as didactic symbols are referred as pieces of a crocodile.

It is the association of the pool as female and the reptile as male in most African myths of creation and the theme of fertility that explain the nature of a god that presides on human regeneration and agriculture. The **BaVenda** myth of creation states that 'when the python within the primordial pool created animals and people by vomiting them from his stomach'. The similarities between the python and the crocodile are the muscle power, steady movement, patience and water. The Venda regards

the pool as the place where the python 'writhes' while lying in wait for his prey (Nettleton, 1984: 222-226).

Chief staffs constitute a most remarkable category within the **Kongo** art. The staff is a symbol of authority and power therefore it holds a very high profile among the crafts of the **BaKongo**. The shaft is normally decorated with geometric motifs and usually topped with a small figure in wood or in ivory.



Figure 104. Chief's staff from the BaKongo topped with male and female figures

The figure above is a chief staff reflecting strong features of fertility. First it is the two human figures at the top of the staff with both male and female principles. The female is holding one of her breasts alluding to fertility.

Second is a snake entwined beneath their feet, also alluding to the theme of fertility.

A double figure-topped staff is also a symbol of authority carried by the master of **Domba** at the **BaVenda** initiation ceremony for the girls. Although the two figures are not distinctively male and female, but below the two figures is, a clear image with strong feminine features. And when perched on top of the shaft of the staff; it suggests a combination of male and female principle.

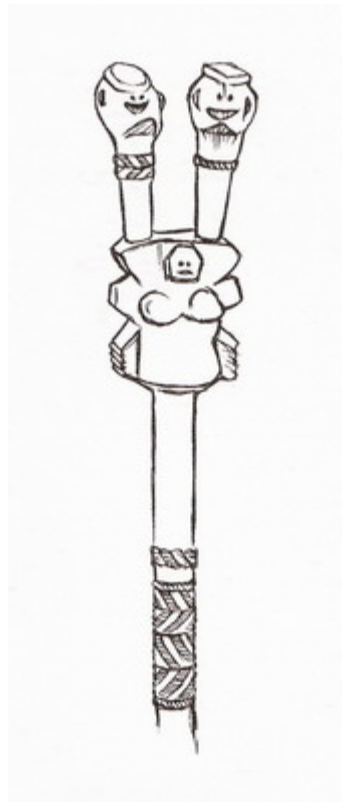


Figure 105. A staff for the master of Domba by the Venda

The top of the shaft has engraved decorations in forms of the circles and chevrons and similar images appear engraved on the heads of the two figures at the top of the staff.



Figure 106. A staff for the Zulu kings

The wooden staffs for Zulu kings and some regional authorities also reflected on the theme of fertility, religion and politics. These aspects were reflected in motifs in forms of the curved horns. According to Lugg, (Paper, KCM, 1405):

The horns at the top of these staffs represent the ruling bull, and the lower one his opponents, with a space for the hand in between and the third the cow as a symbol of fertility.

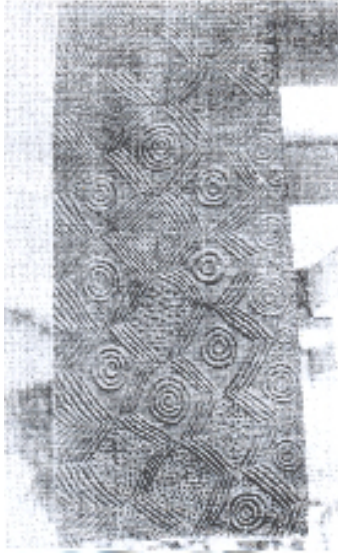


Figure 107. A Venda wooden door with geometric designs

The geometric designs found in both the Venda wooden-doors used by chiefs, who were referred to as *ngwena* (crocodile), and the wooden **Shona** head-rest which resembles a rain bird. This association between the bird and the crocodile is a further illustration of the importance of the sky and earth in the cult of fertility centered in the element of water.

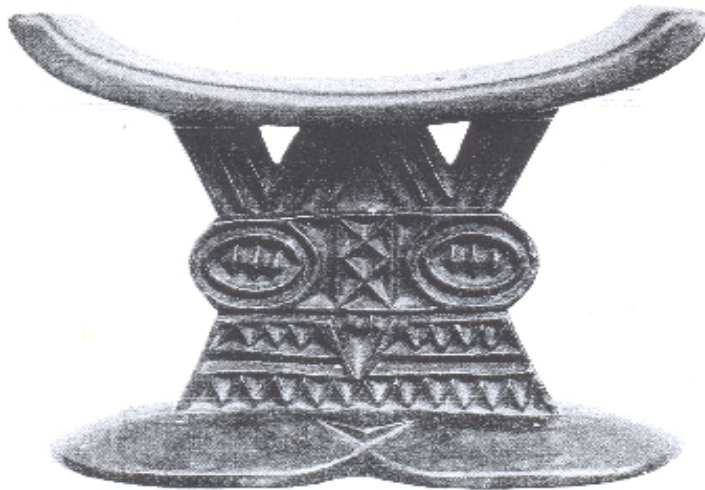


FIGURE 11. Wooden Shona head rest featuring geometric designs.

Figure 108. A wooden Shona headrest with geometric designs

It has already been mentioned earlier that the element of water in the form of a pool or the river have a special place in divination of the Bantu speaking Africans. And certain animals are closely associated with water and divination. As the **Zulus** associate the black *mamba* or *python* with calling to divination; the **Shona** associate the crocodile with divination. One of the bones used by **Shona** diviners has an image of a crocodile.

Amongst some of the artifacts found around the ruins of Zimbabwe was a 'zodiac bowl' with an image of a crocodile engraved at the centre of the bowl. Although the signs around the edges of the bowl appear to be more of Shona sacred language than astrological images, the bowl is believed to have been used for divination. Maybe it was used for astrological kind of divination as opposed to divination associated with sickness.



FIGURE 109. The wooden 'Zodiac Bowl' found by Eliot in 1890 in a cave about 25 kilometers from Great Zimbabwe.

Figure 109. A wooden bowl of the Shona depicting zodiacal motifs

The important aspect of this bowl is that it combines the male and female principle in a form of the round form of the bowl itself with its lowered central part symbolizing the pool and the womb while the crocodile itself represents the male, masculinity and the ancestral wisdom.

5.5. Conclusion

Generally aesthetics are there to enhance form, but in African ritualistic arts they are employed to enhance the content. In Africa rituals are crafts practiced by the initiated but they are subjected to individual/societal interpretation. Aesthetics are more symbolic than artistic.

The suggestion that aesthetics are more symbolic than artistic means, that, they require a different approach in interpretation. First the geometric motifs represent the altered state of mind accessed only through trance like state. This is the realm for the enlightened such as the shamans, priests and diviners. They are generic since they are a result of an altered nervous system induced through hallucinogens such as rhythmic movements, sensory deprivation and hyperventilation. In trying to interpret them one need to take into consideration that they are a reflection of an altered state of mind and therefore they can not represent a simplified idea.

Secondly the metaphorical use of animals and elements such as water, fire, air and earth requires an understanding of the people's world view and beliefs. For example the dying eland is a metaphor for the release of potency needed by San medicine men. The eagle/rain bird to the **Shona** is the metaphorical-periodic visitation of the rain god.

Thirdly the use of cultural objects and material, such as the sculptures made out of soap stone by the **Shona** or the wooden staff for the kings made out of *umsimbithi* (iron tree) among the **Zulus**.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CIRCULAR ORIENTATION IN MODERN PERFORMANCES

6.1. Introduction

Foreign encroachment to Africa's cultural and social life due to colonization and globalization has either resulted into the extinction of most of ritualistic practices or the preservation as a way of resistance and defiance. At certain instances Africans had to ask themselves whether they want to adapt or to perish. That scenario led into a situation where having a bit of both was the solution. For example when Christianity was in a mission to destroy all African ritualistic practices, people had to resolve into accepting it yet incorporating some of their own spiritual elements.

When orthodox churches were on a mission to ban African mode of performance during worship, some forms of worship that allowed dancing, divination and healing emerged. For instance when Christianity was made an official religion for the Roman empire, the Sun (Mithraism) god and his modes of worship had to be incorporated so as lure the people Rome. Mithraism is derived from the *'myths of Ra'*. Ra was the sun god of Egypt which was adopted by Romans at the time when Egypt was still the centre of learning and civilization during the reigns of Alexandra the Great.

The Christianity that was finally brought to Africa was a bit of Judaism, Egyptian and Roman cults. Significant within the Christian practice was the use of water during baptism and the depiction of male angel with wings. Although baptism was explained as a form of cleansing from the original sin committed by a woman in the Garden of Eden, it was somehow a confirmation of the association of the female principle and water/womb. The story of the birth of Jesus from Christianity was established, was a result of the holy sexual communion between the Angel and the virgin.

Therefore virginity, fertility, spirituality and authority of the gods through angels made Christianity acceptable to Africans. The white colour of the Nazareth resembled the colour of virginity. The idea of being born again through baptism re-affirmed fertility in a form of water element. Pentecostal, Zionists and Nazarites forms of worship became popular among Africans.

6.2. Liturgical performances

The Zionists churches as different as they might be, all have one thing in common; that of combining Christian worship with, African spiritualism in a form of divination and healing, circular dancing (*Isikhalanga*) and stamping (*Umkhukhu*), and the use of water during baptism, healing and divination.



Figure 110. Umkhukhu dance by the Zionist men

The Zionist use of the white dress during worship is an emphasis on the colour of purity associated with fertility and life. Besides the white colour, they also use the blue colour. Ngubane, (1977) describes the blue colour as '*uluhlaza cwe*'. *Cwe* or '*cweba*' is related to the colour of water but it also refers to the colour of the sky.

The Zionists worship in song is highly associated with drumming and dancing. Famous among the Zionist worship dancing is the dance known as '*idilesi* and *isikhalanga*'. It is not clear whether the name is derived from the ancient **Khalanga** language and people; the association of *isikhalanga* dance and spirituality resembles the spirituality obtained by the Shona and Venda diviners during divination exercise. Ndlovu, (1996; 236) claims that:

The term **isikhalanga** is believed to have originated from a tribe called 'amakhalanga' of **Botswana** near **Francis town**, who speak **isikhalanga**, a language similar to **Shona**.

Both male and female participate during the performance of **idilesi**. Ndlovu's, (1996) informants describe **idilesi** as a dance performed in both clockwise and counter clockwise directions. The movements are sideways, sometimes facing the centre and sometimes the away from the centre. As **idilesi** dance get into a boil, it becomes faster and faster to become **isikhalanga**.

Isikhalanga is only suitable for men since it involves running and turning in circles. But both **idilesi** and **isikhalanga** are performed in a whirlwind formation.

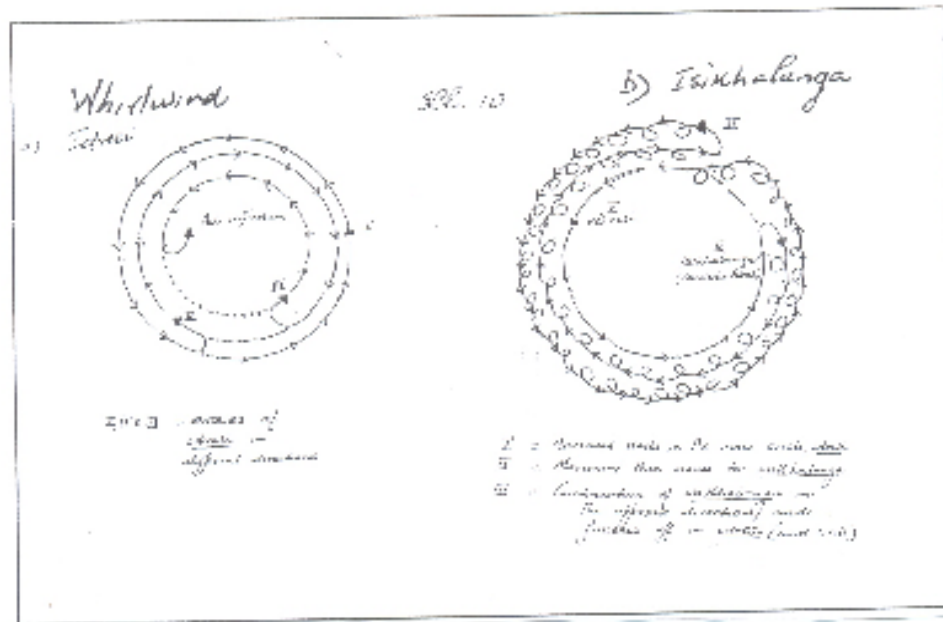


Figure 111. Figure depicting Idilesi and Isikhalanga

The direction during the performance of *isikhalanga* is normally counter-clockwise. And as the dance heats up the participants get into a trance like state. During this time some speak in tongues similar to the diviners who speak **Karanga** or **Khalanga** language or the **ndawe** diviners who speak **Ndau** language. During healing through prayer, the sick are placed and sometimes danced at the centre of *idilesi* resemblance to the *vimbuza* and *milombo*.

The staff normally carried by those in authority is usually topped with designs in forms of cross or circular or curved bending of the top of the staff. The cross is the ancient symbol of the combination of male and female sexes. The vertical sphere represents the male sex while the horizontal one represents the female sex. And when the staff is topped with a circular bending; the circle represents the female and the shaft represents the male.

Famous among the members of the Zionist Catholic Church under the leadership of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane, is the dance called '*umkhukhu*' done by men. The dance consists of jumps which symbolize stampings of the devil. During the performance of *umkhukhu*, men form a circle facing the centre while singing and jumping in unison to the rhythm of the song.

6.3. Nice-Time and night club performances

The formation of *ibhodwe* during the performance of *khwaxa* by the **Bhaca** young men has been discussed earlier. *Ukhwaxa* is a form of a recreational or sport dance. The circular formation of *ibhodwe* is aimed at harmonization of voices and as the name *ibhodwe* (pot) suggests, to cook and boil the spirit for the performance.



Figure 112. The first circular formation before the commencement of *Isicathamiya* performance

Vocal harmonization is a key factor to the performance of *isicathamiya* music. Although *isicathamiya* is normally performed in a linear formation, the beginning especially before going on stage, the group will start by

forming a circle. The singing at this time is aimed at balancing the voices and to 'cook up' the spirit and unity for the performance.

Circular formations are common among the night club goers in South Africa. Although the dancing is often in pairs or in groups formed according to friendship and kinship ties; there are moments whereby almost the entire 'club' forms a circle and individuals in turns jump into the centre of the circle and improvise dance movements to amuse and entice the onlookers.

6.4. Children's games and educational exercises

Children dance games are both recreational and educational. There is a common belief that children learn better when playing. But dance games are more than just recreation and education; they are an exercise to help children to gain strength either physically or psychologically. For example the melon ball game helps the children to develop concentration, focus and co-operation.



Figure 113. Melon ball dance-game by the San children

The description of the melon ball game by the san children has been given earlier. The games involve singing, clapping, dancing and throwing/catching the melon. It is structured in a 'one dancer one ball' at a time and it is in a cyclical formation.

But the *na#a na#a hau* game dance by the children of the !Kung of Nyae Nyae is more physical since when played; the children hook one leg to the leg of another child and hop on one leg while circulating either clock wise or counter clock wise.



Figure 114. Game dance by the Nyae Nyae children

Such games (where the emphasis is on one leg hop) among the Bantu especially the **Nguni**, are an indirect reflection of the 'One legged God' (***Umlenze Munye***) concept through children's game. **Umlenze Munye** is the God associated with the sound of thunder which happens as He hops. **Zulu** children call the game '***khele-khele khova***'. Another form of a reflection of the innate awareness of a deity among the Bantu speaking people is when the **Zulu** children play naked in the rain (***ugcabhayiyane***). This is in emulation of the nature of the heavenly princess who is perceived naked.

Besides playing/dancing normal children's dance games, the **San** kids are often seen imitating the elders in doing dances similar to trance dance. Sometimes

they do dances which imitate the behaviour of animals such as ostrich, spiders and baboons.

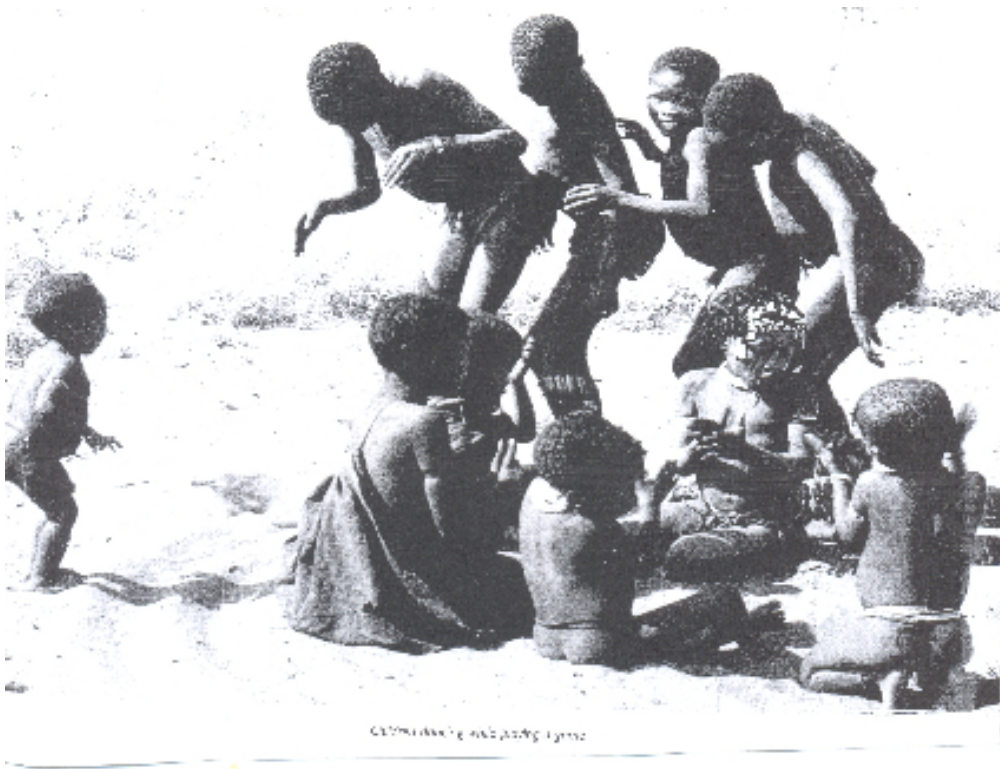


Figure 115. Kalahari children dance game

In the ostrich game dance, played boys while girls or grown up women clapping the rhythm, two boys dance towards each other. At the point where they meet, one boy bends his body while the other one swings his leg over the bent dancer. The movements are said to be in resemblance to the two mating ostriches. The rhythm produced by the women clapping is in a '3 3 2 2 2' pattern and the dancers vocalize a sound such as '**he he hi, he he he hi**'.

6.6. Conclusion

Although most of ritualistic expressions by Africans have disappeared or changed form due to the foreign encroachment; circular orientation in performance has been kept alive through religious worship-performances, children's dance games and night time recreational performances. The effects are still the same even if the purpose is different.

When the Zionists spin the sick person at the centre of the circle formed by the singing and dancing members of the congregation during the performance of *idilesi*; it has a similar effect as at the *vimbuza*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1. Findings

The study reveals that the circle represents both the esoteric and exoteric world views. To the uninitiated, the circular formation of a hut's design was a matter of spatial occupation and function. For example, there is a strong yet untested belief that a circular design of a Zulu hut was done for the purpose of air circulation. The belief is that the air would enter the hut through the door and circle around the hut either clockwise or counter clockwise to exit through the same door. The circulation of the air this way has both the cooling effect and the prevention of odor in the hut.

Such an idea has been applied in projects such as the one found near Hillcrest under the 'Valley Trust' initiative. They have constructed the pit toilets in a circular formation so as to prevent the stench. Another untested belief about the circular design of a Zulu hut is that it was useful for the control of snakes from finding a refuge in the hut. It is believed that whenever a snake enters the hut, it looks for a corner to hide, but in a circular designed hut it can not find a corner so it continue moving until it comes out through the same door it came in.

But to the initiated, circular formations and designs were both functional and symbolic. For instance the fire place at the centre of the hut was for both the functional purpose and symbolical representation. For functional purposes it was a place for cooking and the provider of warmth in the house. But it was also a symbolic representation and the association of the centre and the fire as the source of life. As the centre gets repeated in all other structures in a homestead, it became a symbolic representation of the notion of oneness in everything and everything in one. Motshekga, (1998; 1) when quoting Plotinus, states:

Plotinus compared the **one** to a point at the centre of a circle which contained the possibility of all the future circles that could derive from it.

Therefore the fire at the centre of the hut's circumference should be viewed as the geometric representation of principle of **One** in **All** and **All** in **One**.

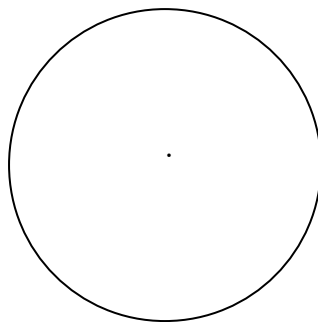


Figure 116. The circle with the (dot) centre

The study also reveals that everything that forms the bases for ancient traditions such as Hermetic, Cabbala and Gnostic on the duality of life and

the trinity of God were well represented in the lives and rituals of the Bantu and **QoiSan** speaking people. For example, the duality of life in the form of right and left; active and passive; male and female; microcosm and macrocosm was well represented in a **Zulu** hut and it found a geometric representation in the following:

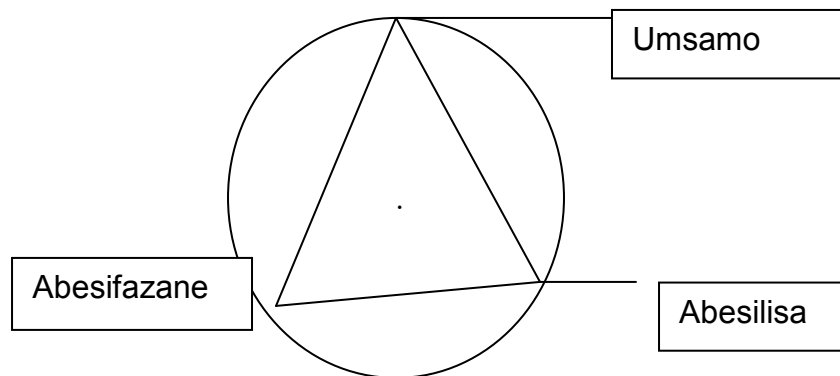


Figure 117. The triad of Umsamo, Male and female sides inside a Zulu hut

Male occupied the right hand side of the hut while women occupied the left hand side of the hut. This was reflection of the awareness of the notion of the active and the passive nature of the gender principle. The macrocosmic and microcosmic representation contained in the fireplace and the entire hut also reveals the innate awareness of the law of correspondences.

The triune/triad of God (**Keter**), Male (**Chokmah**) and Female (**Binah**) always expressed in the **Cabbalist** tradition is also represented in the **Zulu** hut in the form of the right side (male), left side (female) and

Umsamo (a place for communication with the ancestors). **Umsamo** is like the inner sanctum (**Holy of Holies**) in the Jewish temple. This does not suggest that **Umsamo** was used as a place of worship but it was/is used as a place to reflect and communicate with the dead who are always regarded as those who are asleep when we are awake and awake when we are asleep. That is another dualism contained in life and death.

From the centre or the point at the centre of a circle, we can deduce that the **One** splits into **Two** and together they form a Triad represented in a form of **Umsamo, Isibebe sabelilisa neSibebe sabelifazane**.

$$| + || = |||$$

This Triad is divine since there could be no home without it. The divine triad got repeated in three most prominent spheres of a homestead. Those were; the homestead itself, the main hut and the cattle byre. Mention has been made earlier that, the layout of **Inxuluma** consisted of **Indlunkulu** at the top, **ikhohlo** on the left and **lqadi** on the right. And a closer look at king Dingane's cattle byre, one is confronted by a similar layout with the top end allocated to the exclusive brand of cattle demarcated for the king's milk and meat.

Therefore the existence of **Indlunkulu, Ikhohlo** and **lqadi** was not just being polygamous by **Zulu** men instead it was a manifestation of the divine Triad ever present in all three spheres of human existence.

Circular orientation in performance and other arts such as painting, drawing, curving and engraving is the reflection of Africans' basic social structures. African social structures were/are rooted on relationships in forms of family, home and cosmological awareness. Through the arts, Africans were able to reflect on the world whereby both male and female principles act equally.

It is clear that between **Abathwa** and **Abantu** there are no common origins but there are strong commonalities in the ways they observe their rituals. Although not all the rituals observed by the other group were observed by the other (due to pastoral, agrarian and nomadic life styles) but those that were observed by both had common characteristics. For instance, the first menses of a girl was marked by the seclusion of a girl as long as the flow could last.

The first menses were followed by the teachings about adulthood and good citizenship, responsibility and resilience. The blood that flows from the girl viewed as a symbolical to life and death. As Ngubane, (1977) affirms the association of the red colour of blood with the two twilights of the day, which are, before sunrise and before sunset.

Circular orientation in performance during rituals is symbolic to the cyclical conception of time. As it has been mentioned earlier that rituals were the

means of imposing a cycle upon society aimed at preventing any kind of deviation from what should be done during any given period; rituals were both imposed upon society by nature and by society upon nature. In other words certain natural occurrences were said to be brought about by ritual performances (rain making) while on the other hand certain rituals were a response to natural occurrences (eland bull dance).

The periods of seclusion and *liminal* are marked by nakedness and red ochre or white clay make-ups. Dancing costumes during these two stages are always made out of grass, reed or palm leaves. And both stages are characterized by activities designed to humble and ground novices and instill in them a sense of respect for the aged.

Every ritual process was another manifestation of the divine triad of the shades, males and females principles. The themes of gender and sexuality were central to the attainment of the intended outcomes from ritual processes. Among the Zulus, as Berglund, (1976) also accounts, the association between the shades and gender is very complex yet simple. It is complex in a way that it is prevalent to every aspect of life of a Zulu, from the birth of the child, growing up, sexual intercourse, divination and marriages. It is simplified as it is expressed in architect and homestead layouts, fire making and rain making and (engraved) on staffs and iconographies for authorities.

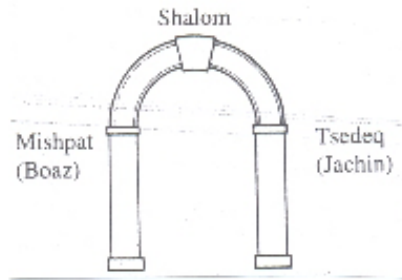


Figure 119. Two pillars of the Jewish temple with the shalom on top

According to the Jewish tradition, **shalom** represents the unity (God) of the corresponding pillars and the **Zulu ikhothamo** (thatched arched doorway) is associated with the shades and is given the same respect attributed to the hearth (*iziko*) and **umsamo**.

Ikhothamo is a unifying figure of the two posts at the doorway which as they stand (right and left) represent the male and female principle. **Ufindo** and **Ikhothamo** assume a vertical plane over-arching the male female principle while **umsamo** assumes the horizontal plane over-arching the male and female sides in the hut. Using the cabbalists' formula, the above citation can find its geometric representation in the following:

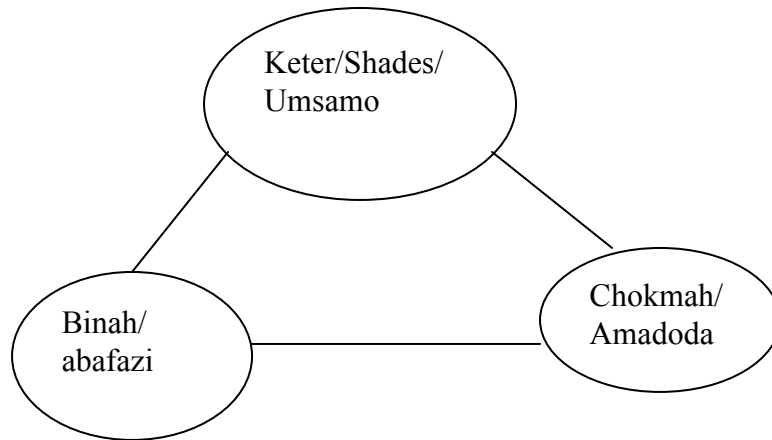


Figure 120. A comparison of the cabbalist and the Zulu hut's triad
 And get converted in a corresponding form in the following:

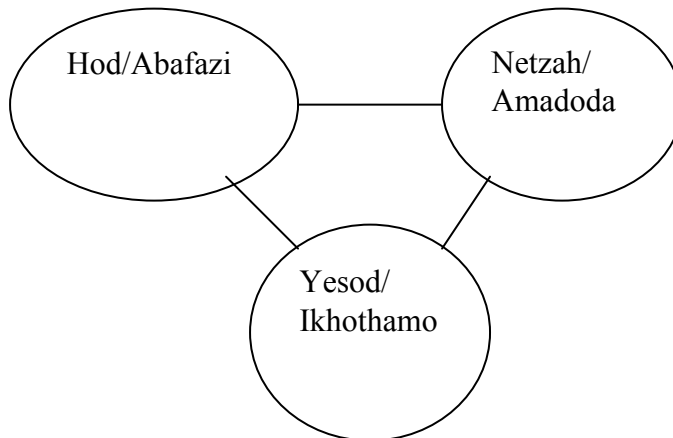


Figure 121. The convex of the above figure (cabbalist/Zulu-hut triad)
 But if all this was to be placed inside a Zulu hut and made to represent a divine sexual union between a male and female, it will reflect the following:

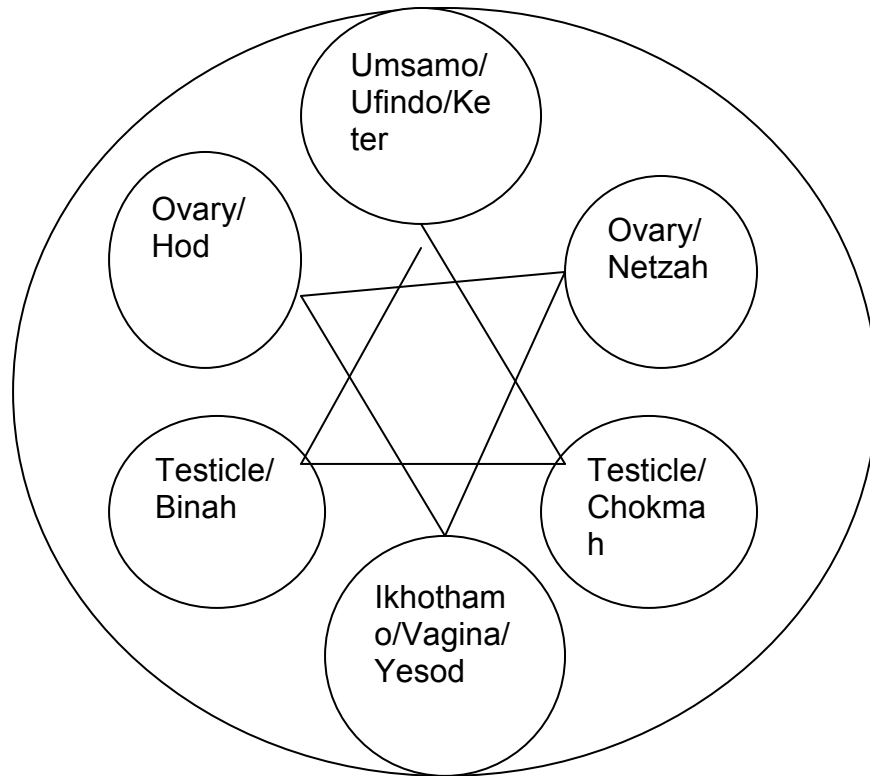


Figure 122. A Tau-Tau Harama symbol as reflected inside the Zulu hut layout

This is the manifestation of the principle of correspondences which states; 'as above so as below'. **Umsamo** is like **ikhothamo** and **ikhothamo** is like **umsamo**. When entering the hut, men are on the right but when exiting the hut women are on the right. During the rites of puberty, males (symbolically) fertilize females and females (symbolically) fertilize males.

At the trance dance by the San, women are passive participants and regarded as the sick yet they are the providers of stimulant music which turns the active shamans (males) into sickness and partial death.

Seclusion of the novice is a **preliminal** act towards inclusion of the novice into the society.

Therefore if **ikhothamo** can be aligned with the **Yesod** in the cabbalist tradition and be aligned with shalom in the Jewish tradition that means it represents everything that the archangel Gabriel represents and also everything that the Patriarch Joseph represents. The cabbalists view Gabriel as the female who personifies childbirth and spiritual knowledge. And on the other hand Joseph personifies ego and self control on sexual urges.

Yesod is the last **Sefirah** before the **Malkhut** which is the earth. It is therefore the exit point to mother earth while on the other had it is the entry point to the divine realm. Cohen, (2005; 63) states:

Yesod correlates with the sexual organs and, therefore, the procreative or regenerative, creative aspect of life. It represents the channeling of sexual/creative energy. This energy emerges when we unite with God.

When the fire is made, two sticks are used. The thin and slender stick is referred to as male while the flat and fat stick is referred to as female. The female stick has a hole in which the male stick is inserted. This insertion is synonymous to the male/female sexual intercourse. But the significance of this scenario is in the positions assumed by each of the sticks. The male stick is held vertical while the female stick is kept flat at a horizontal plane. This could be a good explanation of the perception that 'men are vertical thinkers while women are perceived lateral/horizontal thinkers'.

From the Rosicrucian tradition we learn that the ancient cross represented the (vertical) male principle and the (horizontal) female principle (†). But the important part of the ancient cross is the point where the two principles intersect. A red rose was placed on this point as a symbol of fertility and source of life. The red colour and fire are synonymous and the flower is synonymous with a life ready to begin.

But there is another connotation that emerges when one takes a closer look at the cross that is formed by the layout and the occupation of the **Zulu** hut. The cross is formed when a (longitudinal) line is drawn from **umsamo** to **ikhothamo** and a (lateral) line from **isilili sabesilisa** to **isilili sabesifazane**

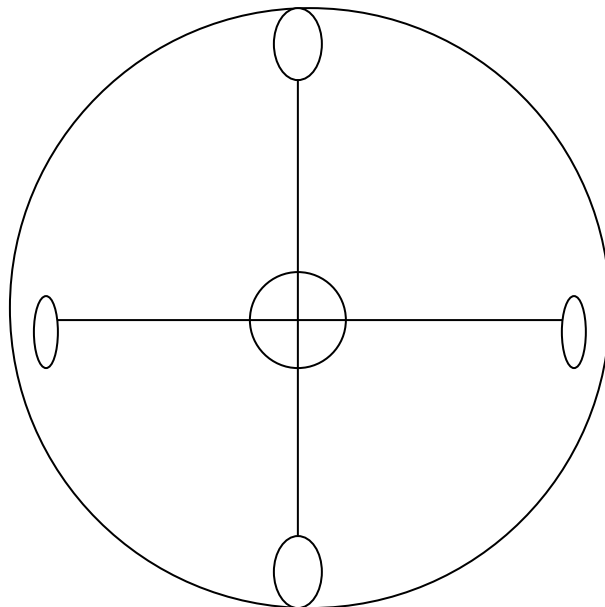


Figure 123. A cross formation reflecting male and female principles inside a Zulu hut layout

If a human form were to be used to analyze the cross above, it will reveal that if the body is lying facing down, it is a male since the right hand will be on the male/right side; and if the body is lying facing up, it is female since right hand will be on the female/left side.

It has already been established earlier that the point at the centre of the circle is the principle of principles (**Eziko**); where everything is formed/cooked. It represents nothingness where life or movement emanates. It also referred to as the total darkness or an absolute silence. **Iziko** represents both life/spark and death in the form of fire and the ash. Like the sun at the centre of the solar system, this point is unmovable and non-moving yet causing everything around it to move.

The fire at the centre of the performance of **m'okoma** dance by the San medicine men is together with the sitting, singing and clapping women, sustainer of the dance throughout the night. It is this unmovable fire and repetitive (non-moving) music that transform the medicine men into a realm of the unseen and the unknown.

Dance performances that cycle around the fire or the drum at the centre illustrate the perception around Africans' conception of time. Whether time is perceived cyclical or linear; the notion of time with no beginning or ending prevails. Therefore if time does not begin and end, it is safe to

conclude that, time does not move but it causes everything around it to move. Time is the cause for coming and passing of seasons; it is the cause for the birth, aging and death for all living creatures.

When a performance assumes a circular formation, with a clear defined centre either in a form of a fire, drums, the afflicted patients or a pole, it suggests a notion of origin, unity/oneness and diversity of form. But it also suggests the earthly element contained in a feminine principle of gender and elements such as soil and water.

And when the performance assumes the cyclical formation it suggests the evolving and devolving consciousness of life. It is a suggestion that nothing stays the same. An upward spiral requires a downward spiral to complement it and vice versa. Both the circular and cyclical formations in performance contain the principle of polarity which suggests duality in everything that **is**, **was** and **will** be. Within the principle of polarity, things are coupled either in forms of opposites or compliments.

Whether depicting the origins of their existence from nothingness, cyclical conception of time and life and the triad relationship between humans and God; Africans have always engraved their world view in performances, architectural designs, motifs found on clay pots and wooden staffs, rock art and sculptures. In costumes, iconographies, make-ups, songs and

dances, Africans have managed to highlight their inner spheres of thoughts about the life they are living.

The continued foreign encroachment of African traditions and heritages coupled with systematic extinction of Africa's customary life has resulted in some of cultural traditions and practices disappearing, others changing form and some going underground and have to remain a secret for secret societies.

But with the United Nations' declaration of 2001 on heritage which stipulates the protection of some world cultural heritages and practices by world ancient societies, have allowed some of the practices once dubbed as evil to re-surface. **Vimbuza** by the **Tumbuka** of Malawi is one such practice.

Mbende Jerusalema of Zimbabwe is one example of cultural practices which were forced to change form in order to embrace Christianity while at the same time camouflaging customary content for fertility as seen by the **Shona** people. But close observations on cultural and religious practices such as the Zionist churches of Southern Africa, **Mbube** music and some children's games; we can see that not everything was lost. Much of the essence of Africa's world view in performance was transposed to modern cultural aspects like worship, recreation and celebrations.

Although it is very rare today to witness a true trance dance by the **San** communities because what is normally shown to tourists in camps where most **San** are allocated today is a watered down imitation of the ancient medicine men dance which is due to the numerous acts of genocide against the San and systematic dispossession of their land by Europeans.

But there is a glimpse of hope as communities of the world try to reclaim their lost heritages. Bantu speaking people also work towards resuscitating the philosophy of **Ubuntu**, places or institutions where young people are formally instructed in the ways of their forefathers are being established. These are places and practices where young people are taught things such as respect, responsibility, confidence, perseverance and wisdom that have sustained their fore bearers. The **Kara** heritage institutes in Pretoria and **Icamagu** in the Eastern Cape are few of the many institutions which are beginning to emerge as key places to re-educate Africans about the importance of their heritages in addressing the challenges of our modern times.

7.2. Recommendations

School curriculum should be underscored by values and norms contained in initiation schools and all other activities in the rites of passage. Part of the content taught at initiation schools should incorporate information on

drug and alcohol abuse by youth; it should also touch on violence and sexually transmitted diseases.

Major museums in countries such as Belgium, France, Britain, USA and Germany are the custodians of Africa's crafts and artifacts while the majority of African youth is bombarded with foreign idealisms through media and cultural exchanges. African youths are kept in the dark about the meanings and symbolic effects of these artifacts. Efforts towards returning these artifacts and histories to their rightful locations must be encouraged. If returning these items is found costly, at least information in the form of documentations and manuscripts must be afforded.

Arts, crafts and all other cultural observations by Africans are not just simple activities about everyday lives instead they are a reflection of a well thought and co-ordinate revelation of Africans' insight and understanding into relationships between man and his/her environment including the universe. Therefore the Arts and Culture subject must be part of every curriculum in all the formal and non-formal learning institutions in South Africa.

Arts and Culture subjects must be given the same status afforded to sciences. This must culminate in the establishment of a subject called 'Arts Sciences'. The subject under the 'arts sciences' will focus on issues

of mathematical expressions in arts, physics and cosmological depictions contained in arts, body anatomy and health care involved during artistic engagement, architectural influences on arts and agricultural sciences associated with the arts.

7.3. Conclusion

The European Renaissance was characterized by the discovery of the effects of the symbolic use of the circle. The circle became a secret code and seal for the enlightened. Master builders made the circle their signature of masterpiece. Most churches and Cathedrals built around the renaissance period had feature of circular formations. Circular formations and designs were portrayed on windows, domes and on foundations/layouts of buildings.

There is no doubt that the European renaissance was inspired by the clash between two schools of thought. The Church of Rome had always favoured Aristotle's doctrine over Plato's. But among the people of Florence who were partially independent from both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, Plato was more favourable and close to humanistic studies than Aristotle. Students of Platonic text got exposed to Hermetic text which was attributed to an Egyptian sage called Hermes Trismegistus.

The Hermetic text exposed the young scholars of the renaissance to the concept of microcosm and macrocosm. It was through the Hermetic tradition that Europeans got to comprehend the concept of Oneness in Everything and Everything in One. To many church authorities this was regarded as heretical to the teaching of the church which proves that for many centuries what Africans practiced and lived in their everyday life was unknown to Europeans.

When the Europeans were ostracizing one another for believing on the centrality of the sun to the solar system, Africans were portraying that in their huts in the form of a fire place and people sitting around it. And when the European master builders were fascinated by new architectural discoveries of the circle, the Bantu speaking people were already dwelling in beehive hut with designs clearly revealing the formations of the universe and layouts which were to be the foundations of future churches. Palladio one of the leading architects of the renaissance era was known to be an advocate for churches based on a circular pattern (Leigh et al, 1997)¹.

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¹ . In the shape of a circle, the church is enclosed by one circumference only, in which is to be found neither beginning nor end...every part being equally distant from the centre such a building demonstrates extremely well the unity, the infinite essence, the uniformity and the justice of God

The hut was a reflection of the bigger home and the bigger home was the reflection of the hut. To Palladio (1508-1580), “beauty result from the beautiful form and from the correspondence of the whole to the parts, of the parts amongst themselves, and of these again to the whole” (Leigh et al, 1997). The beauty that Palladio is referring to here is the one that comes from harmonious relationship between the parts and the bigger whole.

A home was an entity comprising of many smaller huts in relation to one another. At the centre of the home was a cattle byre with a layout similar to that of each and every hut. But each homestead was a microcosm of the clan and the clans constituted a bigger nation. At the centre of all this interlocking relations was a King with his own inner core within his family. This interlocking and interdependency among different parts had a harmonizing effect.

Almost all the aesthetical principles of form like unity, diversity, contrast, proportion and others rely heavily on harmony. During the renaissance era, harmony was the organizing principle for artists, architects, magicians/alchemyists and environmentalists. Music as an art form which puts emphasis on harmony became the most popular among other art forms. Africans are well known for parts harmonies in song.

But the European experience is not the only thing to be used to explain Africa's world view. Europe is only mentioned as a way and means to determine the extent of the influence Africa's ancient knowledge had to other parts of the world. Europe was a major player towards the distortion of Africa's past and achievements. Therefore it is always necessary to hint on Europe when attempting to correct the negative perceptions by the world towards Africa.

But dwelling too much on trying to prove Europe wrong does not help Africans and the world go beyond regarding Africa as victims. Different scholars have done a lot to redefine Africa's philosophy and wealth to the world yet Africans have not been able to take advantage of that by taking the lead role in education, science, technology, the arts and politics. What seems to be lacking is a clear cut direction and steps to be taken to reposition Africa as a leader in world civilization and progress.

First and foremost, African arts should not be seen as just items of entertainment and recreation. Most of our artists are famous in Europe and America whereas European and American arts are famous in Africa. The difference is that Europeans and Americans pick and choose who they want in their shores while Africans just have to receive what this countries dish out to them.

Revenues derived from the tourism industry must not be used to perpetuate the conditions which end up threatening the authenticity of our heritages and ceremonial celebrations. For example, ceremonies such as **Umhlanga** are slowly becoming a tourists' attraction at the expense of the young maidens who parade in their ceremonial regalia which some evil people want to use as material for pornographic items.

Music, dance and craftwork are taught at schools as subjects for a carrier rather a way of life. Africa can no longer afford to let simple things such as making mats, necklaces, bangles and other simple yet useful things to be work of specialists. There must be no lawyer or doctor who must have not been taught to dance or carve **ukhezo** or mould **ukhamba** because it is during the processes of learning doing such things that issues of **Ubuntu** are instilled in young people.

Arts and craft among Africans go beyond human sciences; precedes modern sciences and philosophies. Every symbolism found in African arts and livelihood is found in all the major religions of the world. **Iqhugwane** became the dome of St Paul's cathedral in London and Dome of the rock in Jerusalem. The thatched arch door way (**ikhothamo**) became shalom in Jewish temples and masonry chapels like Roslyn in Scotland.

The triune relationship of *Umsamo*, *Indoda* and *Umfazi* became the trinity of God. *Umsamo* became the holy of holies and the place only approached by the most senior citizens of the temple as it is done in a homestead. Virginity is central to Christianity (particularly Catholicism) as it was the case with the Bantu speaking Africans.

It has already been established that the King or Queen was not only a symbol of power and authority but a naval for the nation. The monarch was always a reminder of the origins of a people. Through the institution of the monarch, people were able to trace their ancient past and also be able to connect with that past through rituals and ceremonies presided by the monarch. As the centre, the monarch was a symbol of oneness and unity of the people.

A good monarch was the one who emulates power, compassionate, beauty, wealth and most of all wisdom. Wisdom is the virtue closet to God and the monarch had to be the true representative of such a godly element. In ancient Egypt Kings and princes were identified by mostly leopards' skin and a crown with a cobra on its fore head, and people who were enlightened and learned on mysteries of life were referred to as Panthers. Further South among the Bantu speaking as well, the leopard skin and a feather symbolizing the snake was a symbol of wisdom derived

from the third eye concept. Bushby, (2003; 33-8) gives extensive description of the ancient Egyptians usage of the Leo-panthers skins.

Further on (Bushby; 2003; 305), gives a detailed breakdown of the word 'paradise'; its meaning and origins. Cohen, (2005; 67) as well gives a similar breakdown of the same word from the Jewish cabbalist tradition. Both the authors claim that the word is a product and the pronunciation of the four letters found in the word Leopards. The four letter word is '**prds**' and each of these letters represents a stage and a level of understanding of the mysteries of life.

To Jews, it will represent the stages of understanding and interpreting the Torah; To Egyptians, it will represent the understanding and interpretation of the Hermitic texts and Hieroglyphs; and for Abantu it will mean the understanding and interpretation of the mysteries of **Ubuntu/Botho** as contained in aspects such as mythology, astrology, science and medicine, architect, arts and craft and religion.

According to the information supplied by the two authors quoted above:

- Psht** - is the plain and literal surface interpretation
- Rmz** - a hint for persons who are developing their intellects
- Dsh** - an inferential method of reading, the eye of intuition is opened
- Sod** - the secret taught only to a choosen few disciples

Caution must be made towards those individuals or groups who might begin to think that the above citations and all other scholarly works before it suggest that Africans have a claim on a once superior race with a superior intellect. There is no doubt that the people studied in this research pride themselves of a once sophisticated culture from their ancient past. But the culture was a product of their humanity that took into cognizance that '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'.

In most cases people regard *ubuntu* as literally meaning 'humanity' which suggests that 'being good to other human beings'. **Ubuntu** as was lived by **Abantu** of the ancient times referred to that which every man and women possessed and being aware of a complex whole which include not just knowledge about other fellow human beings, but capabilities each member of society acquires as a member of society, (Blacking, 1970)².

The concept of **ubuntu** requires recognition of a fact that any person or thing is given its perfection by its opposite. But the opposites/companions/affinities must meet in a divine proportionate form so as to produce harmony. Therefore **ubuntu** is the divine proportional union of all things in the universe as opposites rather than thing of the same form and character coming together.

² . Blacking quotes Tylor, classic definition of culture as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society'.

In **ubuntu** tradition, One and One (of the same character) does not make a Two, but a One, and another (different) One properly and proportionately united make a Two (2); not two ones (1 and 1 =11).

The future is perfected by the past as the living gets their true perfection from the dead. The circle is perfected and defined by the triangle. There are two divine triangles that form the bases for living on earth. The first is the triune which is formed through the relationship between male and female principles of the living entities. The second is formed by the divine intercourse between the two principles which results in a formation of a new offspring/baby. Number three therefore becomes a symbolic number for completion and divinity.

What defines a shaman is the sick as men get their perfection from women. Everything is perfected by nothing or everything comes from nothing and nothing is everything. Zero is a numerical symbol of nothing yet a circle is a physical symbol of everything.

Therefore a circular orientation in performance by Africans is a symbolical representation of the perfection of life balanced between everything and nothing.

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