



Research Article



Check for updates

Section: Visual & Performing Arts



Published in Nairobi, Kenya
by Royallite Global.

Volume 3, Issue 4, 2022

Article Information

Submitted: 15th July 2022

Accepted: 8th September 2022

Published: 14th September 2022

Additional information is
available at the end of the
article

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

To read the paper online,
please scan this QR code

**How to Cite:**

Moloi, M., & Mapaya, G. (2022). Ushuni the method of sound production, performance practice, and categorisation: The philosophical and intellectual foundation of Umaskandi. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 3(4). Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/advanced-humanities/article/view/876>

Ushuni as a method of sound production, performance practice and categorisation in the philosophical and intellectual foundation of Umaskandi

Mbuti Moloi¹ & Geoff Mapaya²

¹ Music Department, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

² Department of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Venda, South Africa

Correspondence: mbuti.moloi@wits.ac.za

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6721-5044>

Abstract

The focus of this article is to demonstrate and explain how employing linguistic apparatus, the epistemological and metaphysical world of *umaskandi* can be explored and understood. It does so by focusing on *ushuni* as the method of sound production, performance practice and categorisation method. The focus on *ushuni* demonstrates that the indigenous African languages Isizulu in particular, which plays a significant role as it dominates the conceptual apparatus beyond its ordinary communicative function, ought to be fundamental in rationalising and theorising about *umaskandi*. Isizulu language, therefore, should accordingly enable and guarantee access to *umaskandi*'s profound conceptual levels. The study has assumed the qualitative research paradigm as it offers an in-depth analysis of reality. Primarily, the investigation into the nature of *umaskandi* was conducted through fieldwork, and equally important was the consideration of the known history of the genre through earlier documentation. This article, therefore, attempts to unpack Isizulu indigenous music-making principles, practices, and contexts in which *umaskandi* exists. It is envisaged that it will be more beneficial to *umaskandi* genre, *omaskandi* and formal music education hence contributing to knowledge production about this musical phenomenon.

Keywords: colonisation, ingoma, inkulumo, song-dance compound, ukusetha, *ushuni*, Western knowledge production



© 2022 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC-SA) license.

Public Interest Statement

Researching and studying *umculo wesintu* (indigenous African music) has always presented a problem because of the Western bias of the scholarship. Despite many studies on umaskandi, researchers have been unable to identify some of the critical indigenous musical concepts because they could not fully appreciate and comprehend the role played by Isizulu language. In our capacity as African music students and academics, it is our responsibility to rebuild, disseminate, and promote the African music repository of knowledge, which is almost entirely in African languages. From this background, the article demonstrates and explains how employing linguistic apparatus, the epistemological and metaphysical world of omaskandi can be explored and understood. The findings showed that the main causative reasons for the erroneous umaskandi phenomenon's misrepresentation came as a result of Eurocentric bias scholarship. In the end, appropriate recommendations have been forwarded in this paper.

Introduction

The philosophical conceptualisation of *umaskandi* phenomenon resides in the purview of omaskandi (the practitioners), who are the ultimate indigenous knowledge bearers of this genre. Several studies and investigations conducted by scholars on umaskandi have not presented authentic philosophical, spiritual and intellectual foundations and integrity (Mapaya, 2014c) the study aimed to highlight the inadequacies of canonised (ethno, which the practitioner has maintained for many decades of its existence. The inability to successfully present umaskandi has partly resulted from using inappropriate methods, technical words, and meanings foreign to the phenomenon under study to analyse and clarify its concepts. (Fasiku 2008, p. 87) argues that 'there are Western standards and criteria which are not favourable to Africans', yet in as far as the study of indigenous African music is concerned, Western meanings and concepts are used as models of rationality to assess and evaluate it. Consequently, what does not conform to these alien standards is relegated to illogicality and backwardness. In other words, for Africans to participate in the global exchange of knowledge, they must keep providing the material that others can use and develop their own interests (Titus, 2021).

However, it is paramount to find out the original theories underpinning indigenous African musical organisation, including umaskandi, since it is the continuation of Amazulu's indigenous music-making practice. There is a real threat that these theories could be wholly swept away from contemporary practice by the forces of change upon us, such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Concurring with Ekwueme (1975) 's assertion, studies on indigenous African music have been superficial, to say the least. On the study of indigenous African music (Ekwueme 1975, p. 5) writes that 'it should now embark on a musicological (theoretical) analysis to discover and explain the what the African does musically instead, merely of why he does it'. In other words, the anthropological approach that had placed more emphasis on social functions with which the indigenous African music is associated, though necessary, does not assist in unearthing the original musicological theories behind the phenomenon. Hence, the importance of fashioning theories that are indigenous music-friendly and can deal with the complexities inherent in studying indigenous African music.

In an era of the African renaissance, Africans need to take pride in studying their indigenous music practices. There is evidence, though, to the fact that the tide is turning toward pro-African writing to counter the Eurocentric mimicry that has corrupted us emotionally, psychologically, mentally and materially (Dei, 2012). As far as indigenous African music is concerned, pioneers such as Nketia, Amu, Mensah, Akpabot, Ekwueme, Euba, Nzewi, Agawu and Mapaya mention just a few

have and continue to contribute immensely to the study of indigenous African music.

African Musicology solidified as a discipline through the works of a distinguished African scholar, Kwabena Nketia, must claim authority in the study of indigenous African music. (Mapaya 2014b:619) only the material aspects of the music have become known with other pertinent dimensions remaining inaccessible to scholarship. From this situation, we could argue that the complete story of African music is yet to be told. However, deferring access to the full dimension of African music has dire consequences such as the inability to mount African music studies in schools. This article critically analysed the efficaciousness of vernacular languages in accessing cognitive aspects of the music. This approach should entice scholars to invest in the 'scientification' of African languages (Mazrui, 2004, argues for 'disciplinary maturity and independence' of African Musicology to 'privileging African thought into the 21st century'. Moving ahead with African Musicology as a discipline will mean progressively resetting some of our indigenous goals and standards as far as indigenous African music scholarship is concerned. Approaching umaskandi scholarship from a premise where practitioners are recognised on their terms and languages will promote a global understanding of the genre. From this premise, Africans can begin to use research and knowledge production to help us 'to recover and reclaim ourselves, our knowledges and our voices' (Dei, 2012, p. 105).

The article's focus is to demonstrate and explain how employing linguistic apparatus, epistemological and metaphysical, the world-views of omaskandi can be explored and understood. This development demonstrates that the indigenous African languages Isizulu in particular, which plays a significant role as it dominates the conceptual apparatus, beyond its ordinary communicative role ought to be fundamental in rationalising and theorising about umaskandi. Isizulu language, therefore, should accordingly enable and guarantee access to umaskandi's profound conceptual levels. The article demonstrates these developments from having conducted some extended interviews with omaskandi and consulting the available literature on the subject. From a plethora of umaskandi's philosophical conceptualisations, this article focuses on ushuni as the method of sound production, performance practice, and categorisation method.

Methodology

A qualitative research methodology has been used in the study. Over a period of time, qualitative data collection methods were used to collect an enormous dataset. Permission was sought for izingxoxo (interviews) with omaskandi to be conducted at their convenience. As part of this exercise, tapes and a research journal were used to record information. As new insights were uncovered, it sometimes became necessary to clarify concepts, follow up, or check data reliability. The same issues would be reviewed with various omaskandi to determine whether data was worthwhile investigating. Several other sources were used to collect data, including listening to radio programs on Ukhozi FM, the biggest and most popular radio station with a listenership exceeding 8 million people (Mlamla and Kemist 2021) and community radio stations that discuss and play umaskandi. In addition, SABC 1's Roots program has been a valuable resource for information. Finally, to conclude the entire data collection exercise, additional information was collected from existing documentation, newspaper articles, conference papers, CDs, videos, books, and literature of those already researching umaskandi.

Ushuni the method of sound production

Ushuni (umaskandi concept of sound organisation) is an intriguing concept that could be easily obscured by Western concepts such as 'style', which has led to many scholars concluding as such. This conclusion further demonstrates the appropriation of African epistemologies that have taken

place unabated. Ushuni is achieved by manipulating sounds in an instrument in a manner that befits a particular ushuni. Isiginci (guitar), inkostini (concertina) and ivayolini (violin) are the musical instruments that are usually transformed, and their sounds are manipulated to produce a particular ushuni desired by umaskandi. Furthermore, these are the musical instruments that umaskandi are identified with (Ndawonde, 2017). Omaskandi insists that only those who play the guitar, concertina and violin ngoshuni kamaskandi (according to ushuni of umaskandi) are omaskandi. Putting it differently, those who, in the context of umaskandi performance, observe a set of norms and fulfil expectations per umaskandi-making principles. Thus, ushuni, as a method of sound production, plays an essential part in authenticating and identifying umaskandi from other musicians.

In describing ushuni, omaskandi are unambiguous that it is a spoken dialect; in this instance, Isizulu language dialect, which is peculiar to a specific region or social group. (Ntuli 2017) stated, 'ulimi lwakho ushuni wakho' (your speech dialect is your ushuni). In other words, musicological speaking, ushuni thus became the music dialect of umaskandi, and they are peculiar to a specific region. Presenting umaskandi practitioners an opportunity in their terms to define ushuni has brought about some insightful explanations such as what (Majola 2017) proffered, he states 'mina ngikhulele izindaweni ezintathu, Kwazulu, sasuka saya Emsinga, khona manje sengihlala Enyukhasela. Engingakusho ukuthi izinkulumo zakulezindawo azifani, yingakho noshuni behlukahlukene' (I grew up in three different areas, Kwazulu, we moved to Emsinga; currently, I am staying in Newcastle. I can say that the spoken dialect in all these places is not the same; that is why oshuni are also different). According to (Majola 2017), ushuni and speech dialect are intertwined. Hence where there is a different dialect, the same goes for ushuni. This assertion was supported by Ntuli (2017). He gave an example of how different regions within the province of KwaZulu Natal pronounce the word 'umama' (mother). He states,

Oshuni laba bahlukene, uyabona nje umuntu waKwanongoma ngimuzwa ngoshuni. Singa Mazulu nje asifani sihlukene singaMazulu kukhona uMzulu waseMkhomazi, waseMsinga, waKwanongoma. Uma ubheka kahle umuntu waseMsinga akakwazi ukuthi umama uthi umalo, uma ujula ungena phakathi neKwaZulu-Natali koMaphumulo uzothola umuntu othi uma, kuno mama kunomame koNongoma ukuyoshona oPhongolo. Ulimi lwakho ushuni wakho (Oshuni are different, you see someone from Kwanongoma. I can identify them by ushuni. As Amazulu society, we are different; there are people from uMkhomazi, Emsinga, and Kwanongoma. When paying attention, a person from Emsinga cannot say umama; they say umalo; when going deep in the middle of KwaZulu Natal in areas of kwaMaphumulo, you find a person who says uma. There is umame in areas from Kwanongoma toward oPhongolo. Your language is your ushuni). (Ntuli, 2017)

According to Majola (2017) and Ntuli (2017), ushuni is not different from the peculiarities in the language of a specific region within Amazulu societies that existed from time immemorial. It could be argued that their description implies that how the sounds of the instruments are organised in umaskandi is tantamount to the spoken language. (Bebe 1975:119) has observed that 'it is a fact that much African music is based on speech. The bond between language and music is so intimate that it is actually possible to tune an instrument so that the music it produces is linguistically comprehensible'. Conclusively, it could be said that ushuni is inkulumo (speech) since in Africa, music is life, and it permeates everyday activities(Bebe, 1975).

The preceding discussion attests that omaskandi domesticated foreign instruments (guitar, violin, and concertina), making it a point that they become integrated into the community's musical life and speak their language. Undoubtedly, the musical language taught to these instruments is also based on the indigenous Isizulu music-making principles and concepts. Hence there are different oshuni such as Isikhomazi, Isitafu, u C, Isimondolini, Ushameni, Isikhuze, Ubhaca, Isizulu, Afro, Umzansi, Isimanjemanje, Isipoyinandi, (oshuni found in umaskandi) to name a few.

As a method of sound production, ushuni is achieved through ukusetha (organising the sounds on an instrument to produce ushuni), an umaskandi concept meaning a process of adjusting the pitch of one or many tones from the musical instruments to establish a particular ushuni. In umaskandi, it could be said that ukusetha is the most critical vehicle in transforming the musical instrument to speak the language of omaskandi. In this particular case, ushuni acts as a fixed reference on which intervals between the notes are tuned into a particular temperament befitting to umaskandi. It needs to be pointed out that omaskandi basetha ushuni (umaskandi reorganises the sounds on their instrument according to a particular ushuni), and the process has nothing to do with tuning the strings on an instrument by modifying versions of the Western tuning system. In other words, where a particular string will be manipulated to another note from its original standard tuning system, an example being tuning the low E to D, string A to B, and the like.

The concept of Western standard tuning does not exist in umaskandi musical thought processes. Hence on picking up an instrument, bayayisetha (organise the sounds to produce ushuni) to achieve linguistically comprehensible sounds. The following discussion looks at ushuni as a performance practice in umaskandi.

Ushuni as umskandi performance practice

Looking at ushuni as a performance practice in umaskandi requires a more in-depth interrogation of Isizulu's music-making process, such as ingoma and amahubo, to name a few. The continuous expression of indigenous Isizulu music-making principles as they were in the pre-colonial era is what is expected from omaskandi. The following discussion focuses on how ushuni is continuously viewed and referred to as part and parcel of ingoma, which is evident in naming some oshuni after ingoma.

Commonly, music is not conceptualised in isolation within African communities; it is conjoined with several other art forms, including dance, visual art, drama, and poetry. In Isizulu, for instance, the word ingoma is a generic term that is used for song-dance compound (Mapaya, 2014a). It should be pointed out that there are no direct Isizulu equivalents of Western music, song and dance concepts. In other words, the use of the word music when defining indigenous African music is restrictive, as it focuses on one component of what is involved in indigenous African music processes. Here it could be pointed out that words such as Mmino, Mmino wa setšo, and ingoma are well placed to define this concept of song and dance compound.

The misconception that has impeded our understanding has been posed by practices of singling out one component of the indigenous African music phenomenon and generalising that it represents the entire indigenous African music performance. In describing the indigenous African music process, Mapaya (2014) write,

most African music genres are, in fact, song-dance compounds. Song is often accompanied by dance and vice-versa. A song may be vocalised or played on an instrument, while dance is a bodily execution. The rhythm of song, which is usually enhanced or complemented by the drum, is responsible for instigating bodily responses or gestures the most elaborate

and stylised of which being dance. Secondly, the dance, most often through its different stages of energy levels leads to some spiritual elevation. At the highest level of singing, instrument playing and dancing is a climax which manifests in numerous forms of incentives. Performers, at this level, often experience a sense of escaping all manner of physical and spiritual limitations.

(Mapaya, 2014c)

According to Mapaya (2014), indigenous African music performance in its holistic form demands that all other art forms are present for any successful execution. For example, good instrumental playing or singing induces bodily responses, and in return, the dance energises the music even more. This process spirals upwards until the climax is reached, which in Isizulu is referred to as ukuvukwa usinga/amadlingozi (entering the spiritual realm).

According to omaskandi, the utterance of izibongo (praise) during umaskandi performance takes place masekuvuke usinga/amadlingozi (when one is into the spiritual realm) as this is the proudest artistic possession amongst Amazulu societies. In other words, at the climax of the indigenous African music performance, the icing on the cake if one uses the metaphor is ukuzibonga (praising).

To discuss and present the concept of ingoma, there is a need to look at the following terms ingoma, ukuhlabelela, ukusina, and okuhambisana. These terms go a long way in elucidating the core of Isizulu's conceptualisation of ingoma processes.

Ingoma

Ingoma is defined by A Z Isichazimazwi Sanamuhla Nangomuso (Dictionary for Today and the Future) as ukuhlabelela okuhambisana nokusina (singing in harmony with dancing)(Nyembezi 2005). The direct translation of this concept could be singing, accompanied by dancing. However, this direct translation is problematic in this context, as it implies a dominance factor by ukuhlabelela (singing) and ukusina (dancing) playing a secondary role. Hence harmony is preferred, which therefore means that these occurrences are on an equal footing.

Ukuhlabelela

Describing the concept of ukuhlabelela (Mapaya 2013, p. 164) states that it is different from common singing, and he writes, 'Ukuhlabelela is a type of singing laden with an assortment of deep emotions – almost having an effect of piercing through the heart of both the listener and the performer'. In other words, ukuhlabelela goes beyond uttering musical sounds or words in succession with the musical modulation of the voice. Therefore, the term ukuhlabelela in a discourse about Amazulu singing amounts to the crux of the concept. This, as (Mapaya 2014b, p. 31) only the material aspects of the music have become known with other pertinent dimensions remaining inaccessible to scholarship. From this situation, we could argue that the complete story of African music is yet to be told. However, deferring access to the full dimension of African music has dire consequences such as the inability to mount African music studies in schools. This article critically analysed the efficaciousness of vernacular languages in accessing cognitive aspects of the music. This approach should entice scholars to invest in the 'scientification' of African languages (Mazrui, 2004 writes, 'by invoking the hlabelela mhlabeleli! (Sing! singer sing!) attitude, a completely new paradigm of singing is unleashed and thus activating a completely new mental and emotional awareness'.

Ukusina

On the other hand, ukusina is defined by (Nyembezi, 2005, p. 476) as 'izinhlobo ngezinhlobo zokudlalisa ngomzimba ezinamagama ahlukahlukene (types of physical/bodily movements and expressions that are referred to by different names). Accordingly, ukusina is a type of physical/bodily movement and expression loaded with physical, spiritual, physiological, social and cultural dimensions. In African communities, Amazulu, in particular, ukusina is framed by structured rationalisation and consistent creative formulae that resides in the memories of the practitioners and audiences.

Okuhambisana

The most important term in this definition of ingoma is okuhambisana, simply translated into English as accompanied. However, (Kunene 1981, p. xxxiii) reminded us of some difficulties that can be caused by translation from Isizulu to English when he wrote, 'translation from Zulu to English has required enormous orientation. Many concepts in Zulu are either untranslatable or they require reinterpretation. Many words in English do not mean exactly the same things in Zulu'. The term okuhambisana in this context refers to more than just accompaniment, preferably something that cannot do without the other. Putting it differently, it suggests that there is harmony between these entities, and they exist for each other. In the case of ukuhlabelela and ukusina, the two are intertwined; hence, the insertion of okuhambisana in their definition. Borrowing from (Nzewi, 2007, p. 51), it could be argued that ukuhlabelela provides the mood and social setting for ukusina to happen. On the other hand, ukusina is 'structured extensions in the visual dimension of the various levels and computations' of ukuhlabelela.

In Isizulu, the concept ingoma denotes various music-making processes, including other art forms such as dance, costume, and fine art (Ngema, 2007, p. 19) explains the original ingoma term as referring to Isizulu anthem 'which referred to the royal dance song that was performed at the first fruit festival (umkhosi) every year'. Scholars such as (Levine, 2005, p. 49) have incorrectly argued that the 'term Ngoma is now used to classify the broad category of Zulu recreational dance'. In other words, this argument concerns itself with dance, as if Amazulu recreation dance takes place without the accompaniment of music. It has been argued in the foregone discussion that in Isizulu music-making process, there is harmony between music and dance. Therefore it will be incorrect to single out one component as classifying the broad category of Isizulu music-making process.

Ingoma, as it is found in different regions of KwaZulu Natal province, is known by various names such as Umzansi, Ushameni, Ubhaca, and Isikhuze, just to mention a few. The origins of these song-dance compounds can be traced to the province's different communities. For instance, Umzansi originated in areas of kwaMaphumulo and Endwewdwe, Isikhuze originated in the areas of Emkhuze, Ubhaca originated in the areas of Umzimkhulu, Isishameni originated in the areas of Umsinga (Ngema, 2007). With the forced migration of most Amazulu men to the cities and towns brought about by colonialisation to seek economic opportunities, their rich, expressive culture came along with them. Hence, ingoma practice can be found in both rural and urban communities.

Ushuni, as a performance practice, also includes song and dance compound as it is so with most indigenous African music. From omaskandi perspective, Isizulu's pre-colonial culture of music-making informs all the developments presently found in umaskandi, hence the reference to ushuni as ingoma. They perceive their music the same as pre-colonial indigenous music, as evidenced by (Ntuli, 2017)'s reference to indigenous instruments as umaskandi ojule kakhulu (deep-rooted umaskandi).

Concerning a performance practice, umaskandi is performed in several oshuni (plural for ushuni), such as Isikhomazi, Isitafu, u C, Isimondolini, Ushameni, Isikhuze, Ubhaca, Isizulu, Afro,

Umzansi, Isimanjemanje, Isipoyinandi, to mention just a few. Some oshuni bakamaskandi, including Isishameni, Isikhuze, Umazansi, Isikhomazi, and Ubhaca, identify with ingoma as it is found in different Amazulu communities, both in urban and rural areas. Oshuni, such as Isizulu, which is associated with areas of kwaNongoma, Isimondolini, Isipoyinadi, Isitafu, and u C, are not named after ingoma. (Nketia, 1975, p. 25) has observed that 'when there is a specific name for the dance for which a musical genre is performed, this may also be used as a label for the music'. Conclusively, concerning umaskandi, who bears the same name as oshuni, all the musical practices originating from that particular community are referred to in the same way.

It is important to note that some oshuni are named after individuals who invented them, such as Isiphuzushukela Isinkindlane and Isipaninshi, to name a few. In this instance, ushuni acts not only as a concept of a sound organisation but as a standard that umaskandi should and must adhere to. It is said that omaskandi badlala ushuni (umaskandi perform according to a particular ushuni). Hence the statement (Ntuli, 2017) 'oshuni laba bahlukene, uyabona nje umuntu wakwa Nongoma ngimuzwa ngoshuni awudlalayo' (oshuni are different; you see I can hear or identify a person from kwaNogoma from ushuni that they play). According to Ntuli (2017) 's statement, as a performance practice, ushuni is also essential in the identification of individual umaskandi practitioner within umaskandi genre.

Discussing ushuni that he plays (Mbatha, 2017) points out that it came from him learning ukusetha isiginci (tuning the guitar), and he states that 'ngizenzela mina ngazisethela wona ngase ngiyakudlala kwacishe kwahlangana. Ngaqala ukwazi ukuthi mina umaskandi ngiwudlala ngeyami indlela, ushuni lowo ngiwubiza ngokuthi ispanishi' (I was tuning by myself, and I started playing, and it nearly came together. I started knowing that I play umaskandi my way, I call that ushuni ispanishi).

It could be argued that within oshuni (plural of ushuni), the music produced is socially, conceptually and philosophically comprehensible. It demonstrates the practitioner's ability to continue practising music-making in the most authentic way possible instead of becoming musical imposters of the music of the West. The following discussion will elucidate the most critical role that is played by ushuni in categorising umaskandi.

Ushuni the categorisation of umaskandi

During the pre-colonial era Isizulu like all other local South African languages, was an oral language until it came in contact with the missionaries from Europe. Ulwimi Lwesizulu (Isizulu language) has played an essential role in the categorisation of umaskandi. Such that inkulumo (speech/dialect) in a particular area differs from one region to another. (Mapaya, 2014c:1)the study aimed to highlight the inadequacies of canonised (ethno has observed that 'the concept, indigenous African music, interchangeable with traditional African music, refers to an aggregation of regionally, customary, culturally and ethnically constituted musical practice'. Umaskandi musical practices are found in many regions of the province of KwaZulu/ Natal, some parts of the Eastern Cape and Gauteng. Inkulumo (speech/dialect) in these regions tends to differ, as Maho (2009) has observed when suggesting four dialects in IsiZulu, namely central KwaZulu Natal, Northern Kwazulu/ Natal, Eastern Coastal and Western Coastal.

Davies, 1994 writes that 'most of maskanda styles are named after ingoma dance forms, for example, Umzansi, Isikhuze and Isishameni. These dance rhythms form an important and integral part of the music and must be present for a successful performance'. In other words, Davies (1994) suggests that umaskandi is categorised according to styles and goes further to impose alien concepts

such as 'dance rhythms', perpetuating the approach of viewing indigenous African music as a domain for scholarly indulgence. The problem with this argument is that it is restrictive and directly compares Western concepts with umaskandi ones, and by so doing, it 'facilitates the dwarfing of African epistemes by imposing, and in some instances, clamouring on exogenous languages biased explications, while ignoring African rationality; this in favour of scholarly inventions' (Mapaya 2014a:6). Arguing about the use of Western Knowledge production to further the objectives of colonialism, Thesee (2006) reminds us that,

After religious subjugation and military deployment by the West, Western Knowledge production and application was a second phase, more subtle and sophisticated, used to maintain the system of domination. Arguments used to frame the campaign worked at several levels, including philosophical, epistemological, methodological and cognitive. These were necessary in order to legitimate and justify the political and socioeconomic domination over peoples and nations in the name of colonisation. Western culture gained power and identity by creating knowledge about nations Europeans have colonised'.

(Thesee 2006, p. 33)

Indeed it is helpful to know and always be aware of the socio-political context of knowledge production. However, departing from what Thesee (2006) has warned us about, it is glaring that there are still profound social and political contexts and consequences for the construction of knowledge as far as Africa is concerned. Africa seems to have accepted and, to some extent, continuously conform to a norm where knowledge, including philosophical, epistemological, methodological and cognitive, imposed on us by the colonisers, is promoted. Sadly in our research practices, we have not always been conscious of the socio-environmental and political contexts of data gathering, knowledge production and the implications of doing so. According to (Dei 2011, p. 3), 'In Africa, and in most parts of our world people's freedoms, have been taken away as they teach critically and politically'.

The Eurocentric model of theorising has resulted in a gross misrepresentation of Indigenous African music, including umaskandi phenomenon. Firstly, the word 'style', which is translated to Isizulu as isitayela (Isizulu Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017), is inconsistent with umaskandi concepts. Therefore, it is incorrect to suggest that there are styles in umaskandi. Omaskandi, when conversing about their music, refers to ushuni or oshuni in the plural as (Majola, 2017) confirms it, 'mina ushuni engiwudlalayo Isizulu' (ushuni that I play is Isizulu). Undoubtedly, omaskandi have systems that deal with the theory of knowledge, and words such as 'style' reside outside the practice and the purview of umaskandi.

In the same vein, the argument suggesting that 'style' in umaskandi is named after 'ingoma dance' is problematic. This is because it does not begin to account for other oshuni that have nothing to do with dance, such as oshuni, named after omaskandi, who invented them, such as isi'Nkindlane and isi'Phuz'ushukela (Xulu, 1992), to name but a few. Moreover, some oshuni are neither named after ingoma nor personalised, such as Isikhomazi, Isitafu, u C, Isimondolini, Isizulu, Afro, Isimanjemanje, and Isipoyinandi. Although Davies (1994)'s study on 'guitar styles' presented the general understanding of the naming of oshuni after ingoma, it still falls short of elucidating that oshuni are a continuation of ingoma practice. In other words, the two are intertwined. This is because umaskandi is an indigenous Isizulu culture of music-making.

In umaskandi, ushuni is conceptualised as ukusetha, performance practice and a didactic tool. It is said that when omaskandi besetha their instruments, it is not just an exercise of standard tuning.

This is not even standard in umaskandi, but basetha ushuni (tuning an instrument into a particular ushuni). Concerning a performance practice badlala ushuni (they perform ushuni), and as a didactic tool (Ntuli, 2017), points out that 'isiginci ukusifunda uqala ngoshuni. Uma usukwazi ukusetha ufunda ushuni owodwa, abanye oshuni sebezokuthola ngendlela' (When learning umaskandi guitar, you start with ushuni when you have learned ukusetha, you proceed a learn one ushuni and other oshuni will find you along the way)

Thus, the concept of ushuni in umaskandi demonstrates the ability of omaskandi to have maintained ubuciko Besizulu (artistic ability/ knowledge) as a philosophical and intellectual foundation that guided umaskandi's development. The categories of umaskandi are referred to as oshuni (plural) or ushuni (singular), which omaskandi describes as inkulumo (speech/dialect). In other words, umaskandi is conceptualised as inkulumo (speech). Hence the foregone statements of referring to the music as inkulumo form omaskandi. This view is supported by (Bebe 1975, p. 142) when writing that 'African music goes far beyond the realm of art'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the main aim of this article is to demonstrate and explain how the world-views of omaskandi can be explored and understood by employing linguistic apparatus epistemological and metaphysical. Amazulu, like all other indigenous communities in South Africa and the continent of Africa, have rich and dynamic indigenous music, cultural, and heritage practices; music-making is a part of the institutional life of a community. To the music practitioner, music-making is a way of life. It has been pointed out in the arguments brought forward that the main causative reasons for the erroneous umaskandi phenomenon's misrepresentation came as a result of Eurocentric bias scholarship. This article proposes that the perspectives and worldwide of the indigenous African music practitioners, umaskandi included, should be central in theorising about their music. This is because how others have viewed indigenous African music is fundamentally different from the practitioners' perspectives. Put differently, how knowledge has been constructed and understood by others is drastically different from how reality presents itself. Therefore, of utmost importance is to appreciate that indigenous African music practitioners' knowledge, comments, and opinions of their music and events can proceed to offer their insights from a centredness of their culture.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgements:

There was no administrative technical support, or donations in kind to be acknowledged

Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study, in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data, in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

Disclaimer Statement:

This work is part of the thesis submitted for the Master of Arts in African Studies award. The thesis title is 'Exploring ubuciko Besizulu in the Development of Umaskandi music genre'. The amount of work extracted is a few sub-topics in the thesis. The department and institution are the School of Human and Social Sciences, University of Venda. The name of the supervisors are Professor M.G. Mapaya and Doctor. P. E. A Ramaite-Mafadza.

Author Bionote

Mbuti Moloi holds a Master of arts degree in African Studies, and currently, he is a PhD candidate at the University of Venda. Moloi is a musician and music educator with more than eighteen years of experience working alongside professionals and beginners in the music fraternity. He specialises in performance, music education, research and writing and believes in the music education approach that centres and enthrones indigenous African music and African music in general. He is a lecturer in African music at the Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Professor Madimabe Geoff Mapaya (NRF C3 rated) holds a PhD in African Studies, specialising in the study of mmimo wa setšo (indigenous African music). He served as the Head of the Music Department for fifteen years. He was also a founding member of the erstwhile Indigenous Music and Oral History Project (IMOHP) at the University of Venda. Professor Mapaya is also a performing musician with several albums to his name. He is the author of two books, *The Music of Bahananwa* and *Mmino wa setšo (indigenous Music of Bahananwa)*. Moreover, Mapaya has authored numerous academic articles as well as opinion pieces. He has, to date, edited three books.

Authorship and Level of Contribution:

According to the COPE's guideline on authorship, Mbuti Moloi contributed as follows: He has contributed substantially to the conception, interpretation of data, analysis, and design of the work. In addition, he was drafting the work for important intellectual content and final approval of the version to be published. He is accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Professor Mapaya had final approval of the version to be published and an agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

References

- Bebe, F. (1975). *African Music A People's Art*. London: Harrap.
- Davies, N. (1994). The Guitar in Zulu Maskanda Tradition. *The World of Music*, 36(2), 118–37.
- Dei, G. J. S. (2012). Indigenous Anti-Colonial Knowledge as 'Heritage Knowledge' for Promoting Black/ African Education in Diasporic Contexts. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 102–19.
- Dei, G. J. S. (2011). Studying, researching and teaching African indigenous knowledges: Challenges, possibilities and methodological cautions. *Graduate Students Seminar*, 1-16. Pretoria, UNISA.
- Ekwueme, L. E. N. (1975). Guest Editorial. *African Music*, 5(04), 4–5.
- Fasiku, G. (2008). African Philosophy and the Method of Ordinary Language Philosophy. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 2(4), 085–090.
- OUP. (2017). *IsiZulu Oxford Living Dictionaries*. Retrieved from <https://zu.oxforddictionaries.com>
- Kunene, M. (1981). *Anthem of the Decades - a Zulu Epic Dedicated to the Women of Africa*. London: Heinemann.
- Levine, L. (2005). *The Drumcafe's Traditional Music of South Africa*. South Africa: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd.
- Mapaya, M. G. (2013). Investigating Mmino Wa Setšo (Indigenous Music) as Practiced by Bahanwana in Limpopo Province, South Africa: Afrocentric and New Musicological Approaches. University of Venda, *Unpublished PhD Thesis*, Thohoyandou.
- Mapaya, M. G. (2014). African Musicology: Towards Defining and Setting Parameters of the Study of the Indigenous African Music. *Anthropologist*, 18(2), 619–27.
- Mapaya, M. G. (2014b). Indigenous Language as a Tool in African Musicology: The Road to Self-Assertiveness. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 34, 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2014.896530>.
- Mapaya, M. G. (2014c). The Study of Indigenous African Music and Lessons from Ordinary Language Philosophy1. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(20), 2007–2014. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n20p2007>
- Mlamla, N. E., & Shumba, K. (2021). A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Voice of Maskandi on Hostel Killings in KwaMashu, Durban: Implications for Community Safety, Health and Well-Being. *African Journal of Development Studies (AJDS)*, 11(3), 271–92.
- Ngema, V. (2007). *Symbolism and Implications in the Zulu Dance Forms: Notions of Composition, Performance and Appreciation of Dance among the Zulu*. KwaDlangezwa: University of Zululand.
- Nketia, K. (1975). *The Music of Africa*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- Nyembezi, S. (2005). *A - Z Isichazimazwi Sanamuhla Nangomuso* (Dictionary for Today and the Future). Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.
- Nzewi, M. (2007). *A Contemporary Study of Musical Arts: Informed by African Indigenous Knowledge Systems*. Pretoria: Centre for Indigenous Instrumental African Music and Dance (Ciimda).
- Thesee, G. (2006). Anti-Colonialism and Education: The Politics of Resistance, 52–42 in G. J. Dei (Ed.). AW Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Titus, B. (2021). Hearing the Given and the Made in South African Maskanda Music. *The World of Music*, 10(2), 79–106.
- Xulu, M. K. (1992). *The Re-Emergence of Amahubo Song Styles and Ideas in Some Modern Zulu Musical Styles*. Durban: University of Natal, Ethnomusicology Thesis.