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SHANGANA-TSONGA DANCE: ITS ROLE IN EXORCISM, INITIATION, AND THE SOCIAL BEER-DRINK

ABSTRACT — This study results from two years of field work in the Northern Transvaal and Mozambique funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. It examines the diverse functions of traditional dance in Shangana-Tsonga social institutions, and its use as a means of organizing the ritual activities of participants. Traditional dance serves to reinforce beliefs and values; it reflects the division of labor and hierarchical levels of authority. Movement in Shangana-Tsonga dance is often symbolic of subsistence roles; dance performance may reflect the relative wealth and power of local chiefs.

KEY WORDS: Shangana-Tsonga dance — Ritual — Northern Transvaal — Mozambique.

The Tsonga are a dispersed, immigrant, Bantu-speaking people numbering about two million in Mozambique and one million in the Northern Transvaal. They are patrilocal, practice virilocal residence, and to a large extent still worship ancestors — spirits. They are primarily maize-growers, but also keep some cattle.

The Tsonga are split into two large groups, one on each side of the Mozambique-Transvaal border. These groups are not separate cultural and linguistic units, as might occur where an international border is drawn between two peaceful asside populations whose affinal and consanguinal relations and language dialects are territorially defined. There was a nineteenth-century westward migration bearing the characteristics of a panic evacuation, as Zulu marauders under Shangane (he gave his name to the Tsonga) pillaged Tsonga villages. Hence clans were divided haphazardly and became further separated as other waves of refugees crossed the Lebombo Hills. Colonial governments later froze them into their chance locations.

This has important bearing on Tsonga dance: two years of field work among the Tsonga revealed that unusual emphasis is placed upon maintaining ancient dance traditions, which are a historical and cultural repository. Alan Lomax (1968: 5) has written that "In the end, a person's emotional stability is a function of his command of a communication style that binds him to a human community with a history." Dance serves as a cohesive, integrative mechanism to reinforce Tsonga cultural stability at a time when the letter is threatened in the political environment by an alien polyglot: "The standard Venda opinion is that the Tsonga are rude, ill-mannered, and eat atrociously" (Blacking 1967: 31).

In order further to illustrate the psychological importance of Tsonga dance as a badge of ethnic identity, it is necessary to present a brief history of Tsonga migration. The destruction of the Ndwandwe kingdom by the Zulu king Shaka in 1818 had extensive repercussions. Many surrounding chiefs who had either opposed or broken away from Shaka were caught in centrifugal forces. Unzuliliske fled into the Transvaal whence, after defeat by the Voortrekkers at Vechtkop in 1838, he fled with his considerable following into Rhodésia, founding the M-
table kingdom. Sohanganse, a cousin of Shaka’s opponent in 1819, ranged eastward among the Chopi, Tsonga, and Ndan in southern Mozambique. The Tsonga, he forced Tsonga males into his army, where they learned the Zulu language and many Zulu customs. Tsonga women were carried off and became part of the Zulu kraals, but remained culturally Tsonga and did not learn Zulu. Those who could, fled westward. Tsonga society was in a state of flux and of shifting residence. Sohanganse-iied these Sohanganse-o, or Shanganse, as they were now called, and imitating upon Ndan-and produced a group along the coast near the Sibi River known as the Shanganse-Ndan. Ngunghunyane, warlords. He ascended to the chieftain of Ga in 1890, established a despotic reign over the Tsonga from his capital at Mandlakazi, and was defeated by the Portuguese at Magal in 1895. The Tsonga are thus a dissected people on ‘foreign’ soil, somewhat fearful of surrounding tribes who in the past pretended their presence.

On October 15, 1901, twenty Yenda were killed during a clash between the forces of Tsonga chief Muhlabu and Venda chief Sifohoro, at Shiphane in the Northern Transvaal. On November 7, 1901, during a hub-burning attack by 700 Yenda against the Tsonga, Tsonga killed forty Yenda. Climactic points in this intertribal strife are reflected in Tsonga dance, particularly in the Shanganse excursion dances, which are largely accompanied by historical songs such as “We were pushed by the Yendas over the Xikarile River.”

MANNOMANE EXCURSION DANCING

In mannomane, undesirable possessing spirits are consistently identified as being of foreign origin, emanating from the aforementioned neighboring tribes, and mannomane dancing frequently involves three time levels: the duration of the performance, dance motor time, and the historical interval portrayed in the particular mannomane dance.

Regular outdoor display of and participation in, Tsonga dance events assists in the reduction of social stress. As Nketa has noted, among the Yoruba in Aresa “music brings a retrieval of tribal solidarity” (1968: 43). Tsonga dance today serves as an expressive but peaceful outlet for any aggression and hostility felt toward those neighboring tribes perceived as threatening, thus serving as a release for politically unacceptable emotions, and fostering stability in the heterogeneous region in which different groups are perceived. Certain southern African populations developed the technique of freezing motor-gesture patterns via pictorialization in lithics, and some of these pictorializations suggest that the perceived threat to the group was another human group, rather than nature.

The Tsonga today are not lithe aristocrats, but there are strong indications that Tsonga uniformity of symbolic movement is thought to ensure community stability. Precision is demanded in the symbolic fertility mimes of the girls’ Momba initiation rites (which ensure procreation and continuity), and in the boys’ maphumula circumcision rites, where the “little chameleons” must all change color at the same time (white cobra to red cobra), symbolizing the all-important transition from boyhood to manhood.

A left-handed Tsonga, who may tend to hold his maphumela dance baton in the wrong hand, is ostracized as a swiniwatina, Child-of-the-Left-Handed-One. It refers to social attitudes toward left- and right-handed functions. There is a Tsonga saying which runs thus:

Ku sweni lelow hi rimati
To kill a cow on the left side (wrongly).

The Tsonga allude to the left hand as the ‘hand of the nyene (monkey), for in Tsonga life it is reserved for toilet functions, the right hand being reserved for offering food to guests at social beer-drink dances. A left-handed dancer may disturb uniformity of symbolic movement, and therefore appear to threaten community stability.

Mannomane excursion dances which, in their use to dispel alien possessing spirits, mix traits and custom of the Shona, Zulu, Pedi, and Lavele, tend to reflect cultural canons of taste, and feature in group-event-group stereotyping. One dance mixes Zulu eating fish, and berates them pictorially for this ‘bad’ habit; another makes allusion to the Zulu avoidance of circumcision, so necessary among the Tsonga.

Mannomane excursion dancing releases inhibitory mechanisms, and patients speak freely in tongues, thus aiding the diagnosis in her diagnosis of the spirit’s provenance. This specialist healer is licensed by the local chief, in return for a fee, and she in turn collects a fee from patients and their relatives, in the form of beer, fowl, or cash. Her dance accompaniments include a skin hat, wooden stage-prop hatchet, kilt of tails, hyena-tail whist, ceremonial skin mat, and four or more flat, round tambourine-drum, played by numerous assistants. In the case of a male excursion, he is assisted by his wife, the public exhibition of whom constitutes a conspicuous display of personal wealth and serves to affirm previous successful practice. Well-attended excursion dances are a source of revenue for healers, and, through them, the local Tsonga chiefs and headmen, thus mannomane dancing may be seen as part of tribal economies.

To expel the mild mandleko (Zulu) spirits, dances using duple rhythm are prescribed, while the more abhorrent Ndan spirits require dances featuring triple rhythm, which materializes as a faster, more intense pulsation. This is a differential activity of Tsonga historical experience at the hands of alien groups, is reflected in the differential severity of cases of possession which in turn is reflected in the intensity of dance movement. In Tsonga mannomane dancing, the patient is covered with a large calico cloth, and a clay pot containing smouldering embers is inserted under the cloth. Into the clay pot are introduced various medicinal pellets, made from animal fat and other substances supposedly related to the diagnosed provenance of the spirit. Closing in on the patient,
The core Tsonga rhythmic patterns which are learned early through dance and drumming form a deep-rooted component of Tsonga modal personality, and in many ways may be regarded as a crystallization of the culture. Physiological learning mechanisms have been well-studied. Neural tissue is by nature active, with its own characteristic rhythm and synchronies of firing sequences which can be recorded on the EEG for the infant from the time of birth. These patterns, which form a basic substratum of neural activity, are consistently broken into by sensory activity associated with outside stimuli, such as dance. Instead of supporting the rhythm, long, slow waves already being discharged, the internalization of outside sensory activity breaks up the established firing sequences and gradually changes them in a never-ending learning process (Robertson-DeCarbo 1974: 34).

The order, both mathematical and acoustical, found in dance rhythm may serve to bring order into a developing schemas sorting system, and that order is culturally determined. Hanna (1977: 222) has pointed out that dance rhythm may contrast and intersect with the numerous autonomic rhythms of the human body, such as brain waves, muscle contractions, heart and respiratory rates, and hor-

Possession cult dancing therefore functions as a cathartic release for the pent-up emotional rivalry of the polygynous kral, as a respite from oppressive labor, as a creative and expressive medium, and as a woman’s front against patrilineal dominance-submission hierarchies. It also serves to reduce interpersonal stress: junior wives’ children are subordinated to senior wives’ children, with less territorial and inheritance rights. These are matters which can cause a high level of anxiety among junior wives. There also occurs a limited redistribution of wealth: Tsonga men fear the aliens spirits, and the gifts-in-kind which with they must placate those spirits bring food and drink and pleasure to possession cult women, who perceive this is a measure and means of social redress.

**KHOMBA INITIATION DANCING**

Tsonga dance is a prime mechanism of enculturation, particularly in children’s mime-games, in the teenage girls’ Khombha initiation rites, and in the teenage boys’ circumcision rites. There is also the boys’ pre-circumcision drumming school, called sigaba, in which the dances xifase and ks

**PLATE 2.** Women elders and khomba initiation novices participate in ‘p’mime-dance where water in a drum is stirred by poles, after the drumstick has been punctured, symbolizing flow of water at childbirth. The mime is part of a sequence of fertility dances.

Tsonga possession cults are supported mainly by middle-aged women, who make the ever-changing uniforms, perform the drumming, and constitute the vast majority of patients. In traditional Tsonga society, men’s work is energetic, spasmodic, and interesting. Women’s work is continuous and monotonous, involving raising the children, gathering firewood, collecting water many miles distant, clearing the shacks from the village hearths, and tending the maize gardens and sugar-cane fields. The hut floor must be polished frequently, to a mirror-like surface, with a mixture of clay and cow dung, and the children and menfolk must be cooked for and fed. In addition there is the frequent beer-brewing, which is carried out by women.

Furthermore, a woman’s life is complicated by friction among her co-wives, who may be more senior and possess more privileges such as leisure time and work-party authority. In fact, there is a category of co-wives jealousy dances, called ekhokelo, which function to express perceived favoritism and marital injustices. The Great Wife may possess the right to order junior wives to carry out menial tasks, but the junior wives (each of whom possesses her own small hut within the kraal) may enjoy more nighttime visitation by the husband.

**PLATE 3.** Near the end of the khomba initiation rites, each novice must drink a tree possessing white sap, symbolizing mother’s milk and also semen. A second novice holds her with a stick while a third lies in fetal position on the ground. All must recite secret khomba oral formulas.
moral tidies. It is this rhythmic interaction which may heighten emotional experience during ritual dance, rendering dancers compliant to symbolic-held tribal teachings.

In Tsonga children's mime-games such as Leg-Coasting, and Interlocking figures, great emphasis is placed on mimicking real-life actions, and the 8- and 16-bar repeating metrical cycles are internalized, and the counting of beats made with both hands, the "beat" line in Jav-Java (Cackled by the Witches) teaches prevalent beliefs in witchcraft, and how to avoid making one's self susceptible to them.

In contrast, the Robinson Crusoe of emotional and the reverential, spiritual status of great-grandmother, a child rounding a corner discovering his great-grandmother must perform a little "penis" jigg; she will soon be a wandering spirit, anxiously to be placated. Children's mime-dances often reflect the natural environment, and so does their scheduling. The mime-games cease when the Tsonga hild grains in the rainy season become too noddy and slippery.

The girls' Khombes initiation dances mirror (and sometimes reflect) the Tsonga social structure and techno-environmental factors. For instance, in the various line-dances the abushabe (Great One) proceeds first, followed in turn by the casubu (sisters-in-law) and dume (sisters) of the milkbakh (milkmaids) who reflect the dominant-submissive hierarchy. Dance grouping and didactic social networks at Khombes reflect the female-dominated society, the girls constitute a work-party age-group. The period of Khombes itself reflects subsistence, for it must wait until after the harvest period is done.

Khombes combines diverse symbolic behavior: movement, gesture, mime, music, and play. The author was fortunate in being able to observe the ritual. In one mime, the novice must break away and find a stick or rough staff which, upon rejoining the mime, they must dance around holding it above their head in imitation of the ground in simulation of mortar and pestle. In another, they mime the gathering of firewood, and hold one hand on the other to symbolize a cooking pot. Red body oil strips forest幁, while later (tree-climbing and enacting novice to shoulder-height by four others, and dancing around while making suggestive hand movements high in the air, and in the mine, the meaning has been last, but the mime survives in abstract.

Frequently, khombes dances make use of asy- meteric exchanging and accountings which deny the body's bilateral symmetry and sensory frontal plane which normally leads to innate forward, upright, bipedal movement. Red body oil strips forest幁, while later (tree-climbing and enacting novice to shoulder-height by four others, and dancing around while making suggestive hand movements high in the air, and in the mine, the meaning has been last, but the mime survives in abstract.

In the final week of Khombes dancing, novices undergo a drug ritual on a wagon which separates them from the dust they know as children. The ritual administration of datura flowers, auditory rhythmic driving, exhausting choreography, and accentuated accountings of the dance, a motion may intentionally disrupt the melodic symmetry of the dance.

In this case, emic symbolism abounds. The novices are required to squat upon an upturned, elongated drum temporarily called Pensi, to the

sound of a hollow, Bellelike makholela kulu antelope horn, with which they are later defec-

tured. In Tsonga old age, the funeral feast (critical for after-life) is given by one's own and infant mortality are very high. The lobola (bride-price) is really a child-price, for if the bride does not bear a child, she may be returned, or be

used by all for the heaviest mental tasks in her husband's village. Furthermore, her brother may

have already used the intention of a bride, and his marriage also is in jeopardy. Khombes dances guarantee fertility and serve to reduce stress levels before and after marriage. The dances require precision, and this very precision provides an explanation for later sterility: someone committed dance errors, perhaps too late. At certain Khombes dances exist to provide immunity and amulets to protect one from the social malaise of witches, who are always one's real-life social enemies in disguise. Such dances frequently feature much pelvic and torso shimmying, which have fertility rather than erotic significance. One such dance features the songwords "Ngiye nqele", which is an enomatopeaism for the sound made by a bro-

ken clay pot, as it is tested by being rolled on the ground, after firing. Ngiye nqele symbolizes the infant who perishes prior to one complete garden-planting year, and who thus returns to the clay firing (Tsonga children are not named until this year has elapsed). Such infants are buried in broken clay pots, because of their supposed origin in the clay pot, returning to earth. Another Khombes fertility symbol is the color black, used as paint, gores, all of the form of black drooping rain clouds to bring growth.

Khombes is a form of psychomotor socialization, for, in the dance dramatization, it is the physical sensa-
tion of the upstroke which produces the tension-

laden rhythmic syncope of Khombes dance rhythms. Khombes also be of psychoanalytical significance: in secret mimes performed within the nocturnal confines of the adobe initiation hut, the child is trapped in pairs, elongating the labia minors. Without considerable elongation, girls cannot marry. Nineteenth-century anthropologists ignorant of the above described this phenomenon as a genetic mutation called Hoitesot's Aperon. The resulting alteration of body proportion may be a unique age, in much the same way, in other parts of Africa, elongated heads, necks, ear-lobes, lips, and pessies project altered shape, and modify stature.

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inhabit Tsonga thatched conical roofs, and it inspires blue face-paint, blue uniforms, and music-color syn-

thesis. These visions are the visions-specific to the vision-seer, where the vision-specific sensory system is per-

manently replaced. The voices and visions are unanimously reported by all visionaries, the visions probably become confused with the hallucinations of the alcoholic hallucinogenalkaloid plant-drug daturas fastuosus. Perceptual distortions and perspectives found in Khombes dance and mime help suspend the usual rules of life. The identity which facilitates the transition from childhood, through the adolescent or teenage state, to social reintegration as a marriageable woman.

Khombes dancing is protected, by walls of secrecy and taboos which provide isolation in which disillu-
sionation and discontinuity of experience can be sustained.

Khombes, which is run by women, manifests in many parallels with missacome, which is likewise run by women, often the same women. They both exhibit selected imported fads and fashions from year to year, in the costumes, accoutrements, uniforms, and dance styles. This sets to counter and mock the aforementioned conservative influence of dance upon society, and limited change, particularly in material culture such as musical instruments (which may be borrowed) does in fact occur.

Khombes changes originate in impulsive oral transmission, in selective borrowing from the Shona and Venda, in re-working of the old, and in invention stimulated by changing ethos. For instance, in one Khombes dance, novices mime being hanged together in jail after being arrested for violation of South Africa's Bantu Administration pass-book laws. In another, a black hawk, in a form of waving of stage-prop wooden hatched, and the limited administering of drugs, are shared by missacome. In both dances multiple functions and survival, for such dances are not tied to just one social institution. In the context of certain of the dances, the functions are highly analogous and the spontaneous composition of new dance steps. This, together with Khombes dance's cultural references are to high esteem and entertainment value, ensures survival and continuity. The secret Khombes dances serve in later life as credentials with which to identify oneself and one's age-set, in distant villages, and furthermore serve to distinguish Tsonga women's dance style from that of the neighboring Pedi and Lofevo. This identity function helps to ensure relative perpetuity of Khombes dance.

MURUHUNDU CIRCUMCISION DANCING

Makwana occurs within the confines of the circumcision lodge, and is associated with a limited degree of secrecy. The circumcision lodge is usually guarded by the initiates for five on five years by a visiting Pedi medicine-man or doctor. From le bole, to eke, with a knife. The mandatoristic role is characterized by body-to-body touching, and symbolize the cutting of the mother's son tie, virility, hunting skills, warrior

skills, and formal entry into manhood. Cross-cultural study of African circumcision rites suggests that the rite should be seen as an important moment in the transition to the closeness of the society's mother-sun tie.

Drumming is not used as dance accompaniment in south African ceremonies, and the songs and motions of the lodge, which is distant from the village and taboo for women. When the chief's council and the masie or recognized upon the period and terms for the rite, instructions are sent out for the unrecruized boys and youths, aged about 9-14, to assemble. The nurse-games of Nkima are taken in close order, meaning the liberties women are given the privilege of hugging the novices in the air by compressing their hands as sticks between their fingers and raising the sticks.

Novices learn dances and mimis, sleep in the open, without blankets, are deliberately meagerly fed, and after undergoing circumcision, perform a purification dance, after which they receive new clothing and a new name.

In ancient times, makwana dancing may have been geographically functionally in that weak members of the group did not survive the hard times.

In a stylized metaphor reflecting the natural environment, makwanda dancers are required to shuffle like a chameleon, which changes color:

Kanyu-kanya Nwanzapensi
Hundufo mawala

Step! Step! Child of the-Chameleon
Change your color!

The novices then exchange their white ochre body-

paint for red, symbolizing the red fertile clay of the earth during the bloom.

Dance skill is emphasized as a means of demonstrating virility, and, in fact, a novice who fails to complete the rite is shamed and chopped and excluded from recreation. The num-

mrous secret folklore is memorized by the novices in later life as evidence of age-set status, and establish seniority at the Tsonga formal social beer-drinks.

In pre-contact times, makwana dancing taught emotional preparation for battle to warriors-to-be, as a compensatory mechanism for the denial of having sons to inherit the chief, for the stages of manhood may be shamed and excluded from recreation. The num-

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The author was fortunate in being able to observe the ritual. In one mime, the novice must break away and find a stick or rough staff which, upon rejoining the mime, they must dance around holding it above their head in imitation of the ground in simulation of mortar and pestle. In another, they mime the gathering of firewood, and hold one hand on the other to symbolize a cooking pot. Red body oil strips forest-grain, while later (tree-climbing and enacting novice to shoulder-height by four others, and dancing around while making suggestive hand movements high in the air, and in the mine, the meaning has been last, but the mime survives in abstract.

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SOCIAL BEER-DRINK DANCES

The Tsonga formal social beer-drink marks life-cycle crises such as birth, marriage, death, the harvest, and ancestor — spirit, propitiation. Beer-drink dances include mshapancha, vhsekamile, vhshikhuza, women’s elalas, the competitive team of lakelelana, and the house dance, which the men and women’s mchungololo, which is regarded as the Tsonga national dance. Mchungololo means to strike; the stampers flourish knobby batons with which they extend their motions in space, and humorously point. This dance behavior serves to offset social control of drinking and provides social leverage against an intransigent social enemy.

Most Tsonga dances are grouped in standardized categories, and in the emic classification name, and featuring its own set of rules and movement concepts. Tsonga work dances, for instance, exhibit the point of minimum footwork and head-scratching at the point where the worker must exert most effort in connection with his or her task. Where women in pairs perform a dance at the mortar for pounding maize, the two pestles are raised alternately as one pounder lifts, the other dances.

Tsonga beer-drink dances are an important integrative mechanism wherein traditional status is redefined and validated. Formal dance etiquette marks reaffirmation of order and serves expressively to reduce interpersonal stress. For instance, within the formal areas of the chief’s beer-drink, opposing litigating kin groups may dance out their complaints before the local judiciary, emphasizing their main points with analogous dance movements, and with existing psychodrama which raises the pitch of the proceedings and sways public opinion.

Likewise, at wedding beer-drinks, the opposing groups of in-laws line up on either side of the host’s beer-drink forum, and alternately execute dances which reflect the transfer of one valuable unit of labor (the bride) from one kin group to the other. Cattle are only part of the transaction. The dance movements reflect the act of putting aside inborn and inherent in the economic loss of the donating kin group, and the new economic acquisition of the receiving kin group. In typical dance depictions, the bride is portrayed by the donating side as their stewardess, most fertile, most willing farmworker, but by the receiving side as a lazy, insectile, and unfaithful parasite.

The dances thus serve to express checks and balances in Tsonga economic life, to reassure both parties of the equity of the transaction, and to redefine and reintegrate the bride into society in her new role.

Main beer is a greyish, frothy, nutritious beverage with much sediment and minimum alcoholic content. It serves as remuneration for labor, tributary tokens of rations, a nourishing food in convenient and pleasant form, and a reward for dance. Much formality is observed in the serving and the seating, with eldest being nearest and served first. Beer-drink songs are impromptu, are impromptu, and are accompanied by the ngoma drums, used in sets containing three sizes. Dancers respond to various cues from the three drums.

The most important beer-drink dance is the rhambala phikwana, a dance known to be a space uniformly and rehearsed adult teams travel the territory, bringing humor and recreation to remote regions, and at the same time to strengthen and to prestige to their sponsor, the home chief. Constituents tend to gravitate to the chief’s courts sponsoring the best at most seasons. In each such court, there are generally food and drink to be shared, and welcome cathartic release from monotonous subsistence chores. Here, one experiences the trembling of the ground, the roar of the drums, the odor of perspiring dancers, the smoke of the wood-fires, and the taste of roast meat and plentiful beer.

Old men are seated under the house-ovens, out of the sun, out of the rain. Raised, for status, they are able to survey their wives dancing. The house-wall serves as a base-rect for the deep thudding of the dancers’ feet. Middle-aged women are seated at the edge of the porch, where they perform all of the beer-drink drumming. Here, they can lean the drums on the porch step-up, and survey their charges, the junior wives dancing beyond. These dances on the lowest ground, in the sun, and upright for display as symbols of wealth. Being vulnerable to seduction, the youngest women dancers are surrounded by the low stone wall. This stone wall sets the physical parameters for dance floor movement. The junior wives remain close to their pestles and mihangs, with which they prepare mealie when not dancing.

As Tsonga beer-drinkers, the young men dancers in many ways play the role of antagonist. When not dancing, they stand outside the low kraal wall, leaning on it and watching the unavailable young women who are denied them by the wealth and power of the old men. In space, they stand diametrically opposite to their fathers, and, as a potential threatening group, the furthest from the participating least in the dancing, they deride, and being symbolically outside the enclosing wall, they possess increasingly new values. They are also in the best position militarily, reflecting ancient defense needs.

The social beer-drink commences with a solo dance by the host, who, in religious expression, a little beer is spilled on the ground over his crooked elbow “for the gods.” The host is usually the most senior male present, and his knot is the largest within the kraal. Around the inner perimeter of the kraal are spaced the various cowwires’ huts in hierarchical order, from the Great Wife to the most junior wife.

Most beer-drink dances movements are specific, reflecting psychological attitudes toward posture in daily life, such as the way women must move so as not to open the fold of the draped salerno. In Tsonga life, women must carry enormous clay containers of water on their head for long distances, with head erect and motionless, and this is mimicked in women’s movements in certain dances, where only the legs appear to move. As the legs move, the great quantities of copper bangles jingle on the ankles, reinforcing dance rhythm.

It is noteworthy that in African dance, which is nearly always outdoors, leg movement is ample and often exaggerated, with kicks and high trilling. In Eskimo dance, which is most often performed indoors within confined quarters, leg movement is almost nonexistent. Tsonga men pirouette, leap, and perform sudden reverses, reflecting their relative freedom, and reflecting ancient warrior needs. Their dance baton is derived from the traditional knobkerrie, once carried by all men for defense, and their gumboots, in the gumboot dance, are derived from their sometime migratory labor role. The slapping of the moving gumboots utilizes dance apparel as a musical instrument, while at the same time the motion is an integral part of the dance. In other dances, parts of the body such as chest and thighs are slapped to produce rhythmic accents.

Some beer-drink dance movements closely resemble subsistence actions, such as scraping a small hole in the ground with the toe, and stimulating the dropping of seeds. Men sometimes perform a circular roof-carrying dance, for the thatched conical roofs often overlook the mud walls of a house, and are then transferred by men across fields to a new wattle-and-daub frame.

In the afore-mentioned rhambala phikwana competitive dance, the chief oversees the teams of men and women dancers, drummers, and singers, and sends them out seasonally on tour. There, they receive food, drink, and lodging in return for spirited and humorous performances. Teams generally feature a jester who mocks the host, but whose dance provides him with a form of diplomatic immunity. His (normally) socially unacceptable inversion of the social order is a ritual of rebellion. The jester’s role is a cathartic outlet for deviance, for such roles are often filled by epileptics and others outside the pale.

Mchungololo, the Tsonga national dance, is a choreographed set of cognitive-sensory-motor dance patterns closely related to the drumming, and which can be recombined, using relational rules for adapting Tsonga motor lexicon. Mchungololo was described in 1910 by Daniel da Cruz as “m’angulho, ou dansa de homem de todas as idades,” a dance for men of all ages (1910: 177). A photograph by da Cruz shows one dancer brandishing a switch and leaping from the round, while a second dancer faces the opposite direction, grimacing and stamping. Cuinol describes the dance as one in which young men “raise the knees high remaining in one place” (1967: 24). An Nkhuloko (“Progress”) article presents a photograph showing two women in beaded skirts dancing and three women playing
The meanings of some *machungolo* movements, such as pointing, are intrinsic; others possess assigned meaning, where context can vary the meaning. Male *machungolo* dance movements tend to stress maximum effort flow, much extension into space and high amplitude, and peaking via a high-stepping testing phase where the buttocks are outstretched and waved wildly. The torso sways, shoulders and diaphragm pulse up and down, and the arms swing for handlapping. Most Tsonga dance movements possess a hypnotic, repetitive, driving effect. Most Tsonga dances are participant-oriented, emphasize collectivity, and are dominated by group movement, which helps to coordinate the sometimes complex song performance.

In many Tsonga dances, movements respond to intensifying drum patterns and drum improvisation, with close eye contact between drummer and dancer for the transmission of visual cues. This is facilitated by the kral mileni and circular positioning. Tsonga beer-drink dancing, particularly, is a response to, and a reflection of life in the Tsonga polygonal kral. It is an organizing principle and determinant in life-cycle ceremonies, imposing structural restraints and reflecting social stratification and interpersonal networks. Floor movement patterns across the kral arena determine song structure, for the latter is bipartite (call-plus-response) and follows a symmetrical numerical cycle which allows dancers to move amply in one direction as long as they return similarly to the starting point. The structural features of the dance help the dancers to keep track of the cycle's endless repetitions.

In Tsonga social beer-drink dancing, hierarchical, and rhythmic Tsonga drumming and handlapping obligations are distributed among the social group according to experience and hence social rank, and, in the associated dance, the dancers' body movements differentially reflect these rhythmic hierarchies. Thus the feet may be responding to the fast-moving rhythm of the middle-aged women agama-players, while the shoulders may be responding to the long, slow handlap of the groups of junior wires standing on the sidelines. Tsonga of different status and different social roles relate to each other through strata of pulsation which are themselves socially determined. The dances belong to a traditional society which places a high value upon the psychophysiological tension induced by contrasting but mathematically-related body movements.

**CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD TSONGA DANCE**

In the Tsonga highlife dancing performed by Tsonga migrant laborers in the towns, the constraints of traditional group dance are frequently lacking, and town dancers create a new genre where rehearsed individuality, innovation, and audience orientation dominate. In the cast of highlife saxophone and electric guitar bands, musical arrangements tend to become more complex while floor dances tend to become simpler, with both musical improvisation and dance spontaneity becoming less feasible. Dance and song then move in the direction of separate art forms.

**Changing Attitudes toward Traditional Dance**

In fact, the changes observed among the new Tsonga urbanized elite, as shown by the following published responses to a *Nhlebo* journal article (May 1969):

1. ...education is worthier than ancient dances...
2. ...bad characters linger at dances...
3. ...the Zulu and Pedi have customs, so we must retain ours...
4. ...don't blame your ancestors that you are not Europeans...
5. ...our struggle is great, and dancing does not win the diploma...
6. ...civilization is not intended to destroy our traditions...
7. ...we passed first-class even while exhibiting dancing...
8. ...Machungolo must not be eaten by the White rats.

These responses reflect the cultural crossroads reached sooner or later by all non-Western societies, where difficult choices and aesthetic compromises have to be made concerning traditional dance and its continuing value and meaning in the context situation and in a technologically oriented world.

**REFERENCES**


