

The Impact of Thomas Tafirenyika Mukanya Mapfumo's Music on Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle.

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ABSTRACT

During the Zimbabwe liberation struggle revolutionary Zimbabwean musicians were motivated to produce music that had an impact on the freedom fighters, war collaborators as well as the civilians. Thomas Mapfumo was one of the pioneers of music that complemented the war of liberation in Zimbabwe as well as motivating the gallant sons and daughters who were fighting in the bush. Mapfumo came up with Chimurenga music to describe his kind of music that evolved in the early 1970s during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle. The study explored the impact of Mapfumo's music during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle. A qualitative research methodology was used for this study as it enabled me to carry out an in-depth exploration of the problem. A case study research design was used where I purposively sampled several songs by Thomas Mapfumo to find out how they had an impact on the black majority during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle. The songs were analysed using discourse analysis combined with thematic content analysis.

Key words: Chimurenga music, Freedom fighters, war collaborators, civilians, Zimbabwe Liberation Struggle

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I. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Music plays a pivotal role in society as it has the potential to influence people to react in certain ways by influencing their emotions. Music was an important aspect of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle where musicians also supported the struggle of independence through music (Pongweni 1982). Today music in Zimbabwe is used as a way of expressing people's insights on the hardships they are facing as well as a symbol of expressing their feelings as evidenced by the urban groove artists. Before and after independence in Zimbabwe music has always served important functions in communicating people's struggles. Music reached quite a number of people in languages which were understood by almost every Zimbabwean.

I observed how Bob Marley used music to change Jamaica, his music also strongly influenced the rest of the world as reality was portrayed through his music. Bob Marley sang a number of political songs which included the following "Redemption Song", "Zimbabwe", "Chant Down Babylon", "Buffalo Soldier", "Get Up Stand Up, Stand Up for Your Rights", "Blackman Redemption", and "War", to mention only a few. I also noted how Bob Marley brought together two competing politicians, Michael Manley and Edward Seaga during his stage performance in Jamaica. His music shows the power of music as it can change lives. The history of the Zimbabwe struggle for independence is not complete especially when nothing is written about the role and impact of Chimurenga songs during the Zimbabwe liberation war.

Statement of the problem

To what extent did Thomas Mapfumo's music influence the war of liberation in Zimbabwe?

Purpose of the study

The study was meant to analyse the content of Mapfumo's music and to examine its impact on Zimbabwe liberation struggle.

Research questions

- What motivated Mapfumo to produce music during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle?
- How did Mapfumo's music motivate freedom fighters, war collaborators as well as the civilians to carry on with the war of liberation?

Limitations of the study

Data was generated from Thomas Mapfumo's music only leaving out other musicians who also came up with music during the war of liberation in Zimbabwe. Relying on the analysis of the lyrics only might illuminate the extent to which music impacted the war of liberation.

Delimitations of the study

The study was limited to investigating the impact of Thomas Mapfumo's music during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle. Mapfumo's purposively sampled songs were composed between the period of 1975 and 1979.

Significance of the study

- The current/emerging musicians may produce music with an expression of the existing order in Zimbabwe.
- Music may be used as a powerful weapon to bring out specific interpretation of specific policies, law or ethics.
- Music may be used as an inspiration for combat as well as a form of soldier's expression
- This study has the potential to contribute new knowledge to the limited literature on the impact of music on Zimbabwe war of Liberation.
- I assume that since Thomas Mapfumo was the pioneer of revolutionary music the impact of his music during the liberation struggle will serve as the basis of the overall impact of music by other musicians who were also fighting for the common cause to end colonialism through music with inspirational lyrics that had an impact on the black majority.
- To have a clear picture about how everyday citizens felt about wars, music is one of the best media to consider as a tool for military recruitment or a means to boost public support

Definition of Terms

The following are the definitions of terms for purposes of this study:

- Freedom fighter – A person engaged in an armed struggle to achieve political freedom for themselves as well as others. According to Vaknin (2004) a freedom fighter is a person who exercises violence in the pursuit of what they hold to be just causes.
- Chimurenga music – According to Pongweni (1992) Chimurenga music is defined as artistic products of a team of young men and young women whose hearts and minds were brimful of confidence and defiance, confidence in their own ability to liberate Zimbabwe and defiance of the system which would have them remain forever unwanted but necessary servants whose role was to service a way of life both alien and antagonistic.
- Zimbabwe Liberation Struggle – refers to the war of liberation that took place between the period of 1966 to 1979 which led to the end of colonial rule in Rhodesia and resulted in the independence of Zimbabwe.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.

Theoretical framework

The study was informed by Louis Althusser and his two theories that he propounded in 1970 that is, the Ideological State Apparatus and Repressive State Apparatus theories as well as Antonio Gramsci and his theory of hegemony of 1950.

Repressive State Apparatus uses force or violence to function while the Ideological State Apparatus functions by ideology. I am of the opinion that these two theories are ideal theories, especially considering the environment in which the black majority lived in during the Smith regime where they were oppressed, victimized and violated by the colonial government.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony postulates that man is not only ruled by force but by ideas as well. According to Gramsci, hegemony locks up a society even more tightly because of the way ideas are transmitted by language. The theory of hegemony is relevant when looking at how music was used as a form of resistance against colonial rule. People were able to express their ideas during the war of liberation through revolutionary music in support of the struggle.

Music during the North Carolina Civil War

The reporter of the New York Herald (11 January 1862) noted the following, "All history proves that music is as indispensable to warfare as money; and money has been called the sinews of war. Music is the soul of Mars...." During the North Carolina civil war, music was everywhere. It served as a powerful and meaningful influence during the nation's crisis. Music became an important vehicle for communicating ideas about the war.

In his 1966 classic *Lincoln and the Music of the Civil War*, Bernard stated that music was used as a powerful weapon by the soldiers as they took the love of music to the battlefield so that they can be comforted and have a spirit of victory instilled in their hearts and minds so as to attain independence, in a way music was one of the powerful weapons for fighting the enemy in the bush comforted, it brought back memories of home and family; it strengthened the bonds between comrades and helped to forge new ones, it helped create the sense of national identity and unity so necessary for independence.

Music in the Eritrean struggle for independence.

During the Eritrean struggle for independence music was all over the country as it served paramount roles in uniting the Eritreans as well as in revealing the injustice that was evident during the struggle. (Boon and Plastow, 1998). The Eritreans were not free to discuss any politics during the war as the Ethiopians put forward stern measures to punish those who were revolting against their stipulated code of conduct. The Eritreans managed to come up with music that only appealed to the Eritreans, music was written and sung in languages that only the Eritreans could understand. The messages that were in Eritrean music had a great impact to the hearts and minds of many people as the messages were nationalistic. (Thomas, 2013).

Eritrean musicians sang songs that revealed the harsh life they lived under the rule of the Ethiopians, the musicians managed to sing songs that were challenging the Ethiopian culture preventing cultural imperialism from engulfing the Eritrean culture as the Ethiopian culture was dominating the Eritrean culture during the struggle for independence. (Broughton, Ellingham and Lusk, 2006). Eritrean singers included proverbs, parables and figurative speech that only so that only Eritreans would be able to understand. According to Banham (2004). Eritrean artists wrote their music using coded messages and symbolism to support the liberation struggle. For example Bereket Menghsteab composed a song in 1972 called "Meley," the lyrics state "atahalafmegediinterekikkaya" which symbolizes Eritrean on the way. The coded messages secretly induce patriotism amongst the nationals. According to Broughton, et al (2006) music was also used to inspire Eritrean youth to join the Eritrean struggle for independence and also used to raise political consciousness and to revive patriotism amongst the youth.

Music and the Apartheid movement in South Africa

According to Historpedia students in 2012 music played a key role in facilitating change and in uniting South Africans during the apartheid movement. The presence of music served as a key player in driving the anti-apartheid movement to great success. Music encouraged a lot of people to join the struggle as it was said to be one of the reasons that the apartheid era has ended. South African musicians brought their anger through singing during the apartheid era. Music was the most powerful rallying weapon that the African National Congress, (ANC) had ever had since it was educating as well as entertaining the people so that they can forget about the miserable lives they were living in and concentrate on the struggle that will gain them independence. (Historpedia, 2012)

When Nelson Mandela was put in prison by the apartheid government from 1962 to 1990, musicians used Mandela's jailing to churn out global protest songs. Artists such as Stevie Wonder and his 1985 song called "It's wrong," and Brenda Fassie's "My Black President," a 1989 song, Johnny Clegg and Savuka song called "Asimbonanga" of 1987 managed to sing global protest music.

Ntuli (2010) states that a song is something that we communicate to those people who otherwise would not understand where we are coming from. You could give them a long political speech, they would still not understand, but I tell you, when you finish that song people will be like, "Damn I know where you niggas are coming from."

Vershow (2010), in Music and Resistance in South Africa article noted the following in (Olwage 2004). "There has yet been little investigation of how music was used by political movements, either within the country or in exile. In addition, little detailed research has been conducted on freedom songs, the ubiquitous but largely informal and un-professionalised genre that was probably the dominant musical medium of popular political expression"

Music and the Zimbabwe war of liberation

A number of musicians such as Jordan Chataika, Zexie Manatsa, Oliver Mtukudzi, Jonah Sithole and Susan Mapfumo. among others had music that emphasized on homelessness and desperation during the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. Their protest music helped to fight white rule in Zimbabwe and pushed for independence. Their music was for peace and they portrayed reality as they were singing about what was happening during the war of liberation.

Oliver Mtukudzi in his song called Ndipeiwozano (Please give me advice), the Green arrows and their song *Hama dzapera* (Our relatives have been finished), and Musangomunehangaiwa (There are pigeons in the bush) by the Green Arrows are some of the revolutionary songs that pioneered the war of liberation in Zimbabwe by instilling a liberation spirit, encouraging the blacks to continue fighting the enemy.

Music was used as a voice to tell everyone that victory was undisputed. The contribution of the musicians during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle as shown in their lyrics was equal to the contribution made by the gallant sons and daughters who were fighting in the bush for the liberation of Zimbabwe, for they were fighting for the common cause to end white rule. The emotional language and technique that was employed by the revolutionary musicians in Zimbabwe had a great impact to the freedom fighters, war collaborators as well as to the civilians. Music was well received by the public especially the black majority.

Music and its power can be greatly understood by analyzing music that was composed during the liberation struggle where it had a political, social and cultural contexts revealing the brutal treatment of blacks by the white government of the Smith regime during the Zimbabwe war of liberation. Through music Zimbabwean musicians managed to raise awareness of the holistic nature of the war.

According to Pongweni (1982) during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle music was an expression of what the Germans called *Zeitgeist* which means the sum of the thoughts, attitudes, strivings, drives and living forces of the people expressing themselves with given causes and effects in a definite course of events.

During the struggle musicians composed songs mainly in Shona and Ndebele languages in both inside and outside Zimbabwe. The songs were poetic with more stylistic devices such as figurative speech, alliteration, metaphors parables, hyperbole and similes among other styles, all with the effort of uniting the black majority in a struggle to liberate Zimbabwe from colonial occupation and rule.

I wonder whether Mapfumo's music during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle had the same impact as the music from other countries during their liberation struggles hence this present investigation.

Gaps in Review of Related Literature

Little research has been conducted on the impact of revolutionary music on war collaborators, freedom fighters as well as to the civilians during the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe hence this current investigation.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative case study design. The main strength of this method lies in the depth of understanding that it allows. As Carla Willig (2001) has argued, qualitative research is usually concerned with meaning and in particular how people make sense of the world and how participants experience events from their perspective.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

I purposively sampled Mapfumo's music that he produced during the Zimbabwe struggle for independence and analysed the following five songs;

Pfumvuparuzevha

Tumiraivanakuhondo

Matiregerera mambo

Muchandiuraya

Chirizevhachapera

Discourse analysis is the ideal data analysis technique that I used as it had the ability to enable me to study how language and text was used in Mapfumo's lyrics in his music so as to find out the impact of his music on the black majority during the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe.

Cited in Richard Nordquist on discourse analysis;

"Discourse analysis is not only about method; it is also a perspective on the nature of language and its relationship to the central issues of the social sciences. More specifically, we see discourse analysis as a related collection of approaches to discourse, approaches that entail not only practices of data collection and analysis, but also a set of metatheoretical and theoretical assumptions and a body of research claims and studies." (Linda Wood and Rolf Kroger, *Doing Discourse Analysis*. Sage, 2000)

Discourse analysis enabled me to analyse Mapfumo's music written in Shona language to find out the influence that the language and its content had on the war of liberation in Zimbabwe.

Thematic content analysis was also used together with discourse analysis in a bid to analyse Mapfumo's music. As Boyatzis (1998) writes in *Transforming Qualitative Information*, thematic analysis is a process of "encoding qualitative information"

Research philosophy

Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) are of the view that different philosophies enable researchers to study phenomena in different ways, therefore in this study I used a positivist philosophy which according to Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) postulate that "what truly happens in organisations can only be discovered through categorisation and scientific measurement of the behaviour of people and systems and that language is truly representative of the reality." The philosophy is relevant especially considering that I was looking at the impact of music during the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe where I analysed how language and the lyrics in songs by Mapfumo were used in portraying the war of liberation and how the songs had an impact on the freedom fighters, war collaborators as well as to the civilians.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

PfumvuParuzevha -- Trouble in the Villages

Pfumvuparuzevha is a song by Thomas Mapfumo that was supporting the struggle for independence. Mapfumo was singing in plight of the people of Zimbabwe who lost their lives during the liberation war, some ran away from their homes to stay in the cities, others disappeared while other lost their arms legs and other body parts during the Zimbabwe liberation war. The following lyrics help to reveal the tense atmosphere especially encountered by the black majority during the Smith regime

Wakazvinzwa *here* *kutimaivakashaya?*

Have you heard that mum is dead?

Wakazvinzwa *here* *kuti* *baba* *vakashaya?*

Have you heard that father is dead?

Ndiyopfumvuiriparuzevha

This is the trouble in the Reserves

Aiye-iyehonandazoverombe

Oh! I have become a destitute

Pfumvuparuzevha had a huge impact on the black majority in Zimbabwe during the colonial era. People cried day and night after losing their loved ones. Life was very hard. The black people felt destitute especially when they were comparing themselves to the whites who led luxurious lives, they lived in beautiful houses, ate hot food, drove cars and had money in their pockets (Kwaramba 1997).

Tumiraivanakuhondo (Send children to war)

In this song Thomas Mapfumo was encouraging people to send their children to war to fight for the liberation of Zimbabwe. People reacted to this song by letting their children to be involved in the armed struggle. Although it was heartening to see their children leave their homes, they felt encouraged that they will surely be free from colonial bondage. Not everyone was convinced by Thomas Mapfumo to join the struggle but a lot of people responded to his call by taking up arms to fight. The song encouraged Zimbabweans to fight for the cause they believed in. During the world war one, just like during the war of liberation in Zimbabwe music played a prominent role in encouraging people to be brave by lifting their spirits and to continue to fight for liberation.

The most popular Shona spirit medium MbuyaNehanda laid down her life for the liberation of her country which is now called Zimbabwe, she motivated the sons and daughters of the soil to take up arms to liberate themselves during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle as children both males and females were sent to war.

People were encouraged that unless they persevered they were never going to find peace and happiness, this is why they never gave up in war against the white settlers during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle.

Tongotumiraivanakuhondo (We will send our children to battle)

Honamuchadura (You will accept defeat)

Tumiraivanakuhondo had the same impact as music that was sung during the Eritrean struggle for independence. Eritrean youths were inspired to join the struggle for independence through listening to encouraging revolutionary music composed by the Eritreans.

Matiregerera Mambo (Lord you have abandoned us)

People felt that the Lord had turned his back on them. No matter how much they prayed for the injustice to end they felt that the Lord did not answer them. People used to question the Lord to tell them what it is that they have wronged him with, they had lost faith in him. The song made the black people during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle feel deserted as they were dying like ants, being killed by the colonialists during the struggle for independence. They felt very vulnerable and the Lord seemed as if he was not in any way helping them to be free from oppressive and repressive colonial powers exhibited by the whites.

Chemberedzapera (Old people have died)

Nyikayoparara (The country has been destroyed)

Muchandiuraya (You will kill me)

People were made aware of those among them who were sympathizing with the merciless settler regime. Instead of continuing with the struggle to the end there were some people who joined forces with the enemy. In this song Thomas Mapfumo was giving advice that among the populace were black sellouts who rebelled against their own people in favour of the whites. Most black people who were fighting for the liberation of Zimbabwe felt betrayed by fellow sons and daughters of the soil who connived with the white minority against the liberation of Zimbabwe. This song shows that not everyone was in support of the liberation struggle as evidenced by *muroyi* (witch) and *ngarara* (trickster) mentioned in his song.

Honakandatikazuwamuroyi (Greetings to the witch)

kazuwangerara (Greetings to the trickster)

Honamidzimuinoroya (ancestral spirits behaving like witches)

The ancestral spirits were also said to be rebelling against their own people in the fight for independence as they were either sympathizing with the whites of the Smith regime or were detached from warfare. Black people were aware of all the injustice that had resulted due to their fellow brothers and sisters who abandoned their fellow people during the war of liberation in Zimbabwe.

Honamizdimuyakaipa (Our ancestral spirits are bad)

The guardian spirits turned their backs on the black people fighting for independence. People felt destitute and deserted as the people who they expected to be helping them were nowhere to assist during the Zimbabwe war of liberation.

They are like the contemporary witch

The sellouts (white sympathisers) posed a great threat to the liberation of Zimbabwe would translate Mapfumo's music which was made up of deep Shona metaphors, parables proverbs and sayings which were largely understood by the black majority to the white colonialists. Therefore Mapfumo's music was ultimately banned from the Rhodesian broadcasting because the government of the Smith regime was made aware of the lyrics in his songs which were ridiculing the Smith government and conversely awakening the conscious, (revolutionary spirit) of the black people in the same way that music by Banham (2004) evoked liberation spirit among the Eritreans.

.Chirizevhachapera (Rural life has ended)

Pongweni (1982) likened this song to Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart', novel' where he explained that things were falling apart during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle because the age-old routine of the peasant has been rudely and mercilessly interrupted by the killing, maiming torture and incarceration of otherwise peace-loving, industrious and creative people.

People felt that the fabric of their traditional culture was in tatters, largely tainted by the war of liberation. They longed for the old days where they used to live freely without any harassment. During wartime societies change as evident in Zimbabwe during the liberation struggle

Hondo inonzwisatsisti mambo (war evokes painful feelings)

Vamwevakatizahondokumusha (some fled their rural homes because of war)

V. CONCLUSION

Mapfumo's music had an impact on the liberation war in Zimbabwe where people responded to his call of uniting the black majority in a common cause to end colonialism through the use of music as a powerful weapon. Mapfumo's music was used as a propaganda tool that encouraged the Zimbabweans to fight on in spite of the monumental difficulties they faced, hence black people were reminded that their suffering was not permanent. During the Zimbabwe liberation struggle revolutionary musicians including Thomas Mapfumo composed music in Shona and Ndebele languages so that the white colonisers would find it difficult to comprehend what they were singing about. Similarly the Ethiopians during their struggle for independence composed music with words that could hardly be understood by their colonisers during the liberation struggle.

A number of people were inspired by Mapfumo's music as it boosted their morale, the freedom fighter continued fighting the enemy, no matter how much suffering they had, they continued to fight on. The blacks were made aware of the reasons why they were expected to fight during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle, music boosted their morale support. The yearning of the black majority for human dignity was emphasized in Thomas Mapfumo's music.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the above conclusion, the following recommendations are made;

- The current/emerging musicians must produce music with an expression of what is happening in Zimbabwe. Such songs as those composed during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle must be composed even now after independence as they have the ability to educate people about the importance of living together and suffering together for the good of everyone.
- Music has to be used as a powerful weapon to bring out specific interpretation of specific policies, law or ethics. Policies such as the ZIM ASSET ought to be interpreted to the people of Zimbabwe through music. Current musicians will have to unite for a common cause to ensure unity, peace and tranquility in the country for economic, social and political advancement through their music.
- People are expected to highly uplift the use of indigenous languages especially where the targeted audience is made up of people who can easily comprehend the language used in music. During the Zimbabwe liberation struggle the revolutionary musicians composed music in Shona and Ndebele appealing to the black majority, therefore it is important to take note of your targeted audience before one decides to use a certain language. Even the Eritreans composed music with deep lyrics that could not be understood by their colonisers during the liberation struggle.

- Music must be used as an inspiration for combat as well as a form of soldier's expression. Music motivates, boosts morale, makes people feel or react in particular ways after responding to the call of lyrics in the music, the soldiers will be able to fight for justice to prevail.
- Future researchers on the role of music in transforming people's lives should triangulate methodologies, designs and data sources.

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