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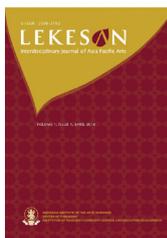
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Performing Authenticity And Contesting Heritage In The Unesco- Inscribed Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Of Zimbabwe

Nesta Nyaradzo Mapira¹, Made Mantle Hood²

In African societies, traditional dances form and shape a multitude of cultural expressions that reflect socio-cultural status, stalwart traditions and degrees of heritage maintenance. Due to colonisation, westernisation and Christianity, the performative aesthetics of many African traditional dances have been drastically modified over time. One such traditional dance in Zimbabwe that has undergone continual socio-cultural and aesthetic change is Jerusarema/Mbende from the Murehwa and Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe districts of Mashonaland Eastern province. In 2005, The Mbende Jerusarema Dance of Zimbabwe was proclaimed on the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) list of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Authentic elements of the dance were compiled by the Zimbabwe National Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ZNOICH) committee in an effort to safeguard it against change. This safeguarding led the Jerusarema/Mbende dance along a contested path of endorsement and utilisation in multiple contexts by some performance ensembles such as Swerengoma, Ngomadzepasi, Zevezeve, Shingirirai and Makarekare as promoted by prominent dance festivals. These ensembles assert different agendas through music, props, instruments and dance movements. Drawing upon documentary video evidence from the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe and interviews, this paper evaluates the extent to which the authentic elements of the Jerusarema/Mbende dance inscribed on the UNESCO list have been safeguarded in formalised performances from 2013 to 2015. Video recordings from this period showing continuous participation of Ngoma Dzepasi, Makarekare and Shingirirai are used to assess similarities and differences from the fixity of authentic elements. We argue that UNESCO's recognition of the Jerusarema/Mbende dance as intangible cultural heritage has, on the one hand, revived and maintained some characteristics of this dance but, on the other hand, gradually compromised innovative aesthetic music and dance elements introduced by inheriting generations.

Keywords: UNESCO, authenticity, heritage management, ethnomusicology

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Introduction

Different conservation programmes have been adopted by many countries world over, to promote the legacy of oral and intangible cultural heritage, for instance, in the safeguarding of traditional dances. For the past four decades, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has made international efforts to influence the conservation of oral and intangible cultural heritage by funding various heritage conservation and management initiatives. One of the oral and intangible cultural heritage initiatives that have received some recognition from UNESCO is Jerusarema/Mbende traditional dance of Zimbabwe. UNESCO listed Jerusarema/Mbende traditional dance as an oral and intangible cultural heritage to help safeguard it from extinction.

An implementation programme to safeguard the Jerusarema/Mbende dance of the Zezuru people of Zimbabwe was put in place in 2005 when UNESCO proclaimed the dance as an oral and intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Two important questions that can be raised concerning this safeguarding programme of the dance elements are: (a) to what extent have authentic elements of Jerusarema/Mbende dance been enshrined during the dance performances; and (b) are there any adopted innovations that might add value to the dance or threaten its authenticity? These questions will be answered in this article, which seeks to evaluate the extent to which the perceived authentic elements of Jerusarema/Mbende traditional dance have been safeguarded in formalised performances.

Video recordings of performances from 2013 to 2015 at the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival held in Zimbabwe and interviews conducted by Nesta Nyaradzo Mapira in 2017 during her Master degree studies will be used to answer the questions. Firstly, the article will discuss the concepts of heritage and heritage management with special reference to Jerusarema/Mbende traditional dance. Secondly, a historical overview of this performing art will be provided. Thirdly, the authenticity of the dance will be explained and finally, the extent to which Jerusarema/Mbende dance has been preserved will be discussed based on video recordings of ensembles performing during the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival held in Zimbabwe from 2013 to 2015 and interviews conducted by Mapira in 2017.

Heritage and management of heritage

Heritage is a term derived from the Latin *hereditas*, meaning something handed down from others such as traditions, culture, and family (Smith, 1870: 601). Some scholars claim that heritage can be an open and exchangeable term that embraces a huge range of meanings with great possibility for agreement (Elia and Ostovich, 2011), which has led to no agreed definition of heritage. However, other

scholars have come up with different definitions of heritage such as a legacy people want to conserve, protect, or collect usually with a view of passing it on to others (Howard and Ashworth, 1999; Timothy, 2011). Craith (2008: 54) states that *kulturerbe*, a German term for heritage, infers a legacy handed down, untainted.

When conserving something, some procedures are premeditated to facilitate understanding of a property, an acquaintance, its history and meaning and if required, its restoration and improvement. Jerusarema/Mbende dance was listed as an oral and intangible heritage after the Zimbabwe National Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ZNOICH) committee realised that the dance was facing extinction especially due to its widespread use in tourism and other entertainment forums. As has been highlighted above, heritage is concerned with conservation and protection of the dance, meaning, Jerusarema/Mbende dance was listed so that its history and authenticity can be safeguarded and restored where possible.

Harrison (2013: 5) points out that the word heritage is used to describe anything from structures such as buildings, monuments and memorials to ephemeral forms such as songs, festivals and languages. Thus, heritage comprises the cultural expressions of humanity and can be classified as tangible or intangible. Jerusarema/Mbende traditional dance is classified under intangible heritage. UNESCO formalised its initiatives for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in 2001 when the organisation proclaimed and inscribed the first batch of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in selected countries worldwide. In the case of Zimbabwe, Jerusarema/Mbende dance was proclaimed in 2005 and inscribed on the UNESCO list in 2008. As an intangible heritage, Jerusarema/Mbende traditional dance is amenable to change; however, some key authentic elements can still be passed on and maintained to help conserve the dance. Hence, safeguarding programmes have been set up and implemented to help manage Jerusarema/Mbende dance activities in Zimbabwe.

Heritage management has been a priority for National Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage Committees all over the world. Heritage management is concerned with the identification, protection and stewardship of cultural heritage as determined by public interest (Elia and Ostovich, 2011). According to Pwiti (1997: 83), 'one of the major constraints in heritage management in Africa is the lack of funds to finance the programmes given that most of the nations suffer from depressed economies.' However, Jerusarema/Mbende dance has conquered this constraint as UNESCO and The National Trust Fund of Zimbabwe have played a major role in funding the dance festivals as well as training workshops for Jerusarema/Mbende dance trainers or coaches throughout Zimbabwe (Chitepo, 2014).

Due to availability of funds, 400 secondary school-aged youth throughout the country have been trained in Jerusarema/Mbende dance skills. These youth have formed some Jerusarema/Mbende dance ensembles that annually compete at district, provincial and national traditional dance festivals. The top four performing ensembles recorded by Chitepo (2014) are Ngomadzepasi, Bembera, Swerengoma, and Zevezeve.

Chitepo indicated in her report that since 2008 the Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival has been held annually at the Murehwa Cultural Centre and confirmed that the implementation of the programme is progressing well. In addition, Chitepo (2014) claims that communities and traditional leaders in Murehwa have done a lot of activities to ensure continuity and promotion of Jerusarema/Mbende dance since the UNESCO proclamation in 2005. Katsamudanga (2003) concurs that the best approach to safeguarding intangible heritage would be to allow communities, where the legacy belongs, to carry on with their activities. The originality aspect of the dance is supposed to be kept and maintaining the legacy and the heritage aspects must not be separated from the experience of history and authenticity.

History of Jerusarema/Mbende dance

Jerusarema/Mbende is a dance that originated from the Zezuru people of Murehwa and Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe (UPM) Districts. These districts are in the Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe (Owomoyela, 2002; Chitakure, 2016). Mataga (2008: 97) states that the Zezuru people, who constitute a quarter of all the Shona speaking people, are traditionally the dancers of Jerusarema/Mbende. The dance has been performed in three eras of the Zimbabwean culture: the pre-colonial era before 1890, the colonial era from 1890 to 1980, and the post-colonial era from 1980 to present day.

Jerusarema/Mbende is believed to have originated as a war dance (Welsh-Asante, 2000; Owomoyela, 2002; Mataga, 2008), fertility dance (UNESCO, 2016), hunting dance (Demissie, 2012) and funeral dance (Welsh-Asante, 2000; Turino, 2000). This shows that Jerusarema dance had a ritual function in the Zezuru community. Its original name was Mbende, which literally refers to the name of a mouse that burrows and runs very fast (Welsh-Asante, 2000). Most African dances imitate animals in realistic details. Owomoyela (2002: 147) states that Mbende refers to the dancers' movements of emulating and imitating the darting of the rodent. Mbende is a term depicting curiosity that has revealed much about the dance's variations over the centuries (Mataga, 2008). In the colonial era, the Christian missionaries banned the dance because of the sexual implication demonstrated in the dance movements (Chitakure, 2016). Since Jerusarema/Mbende traditional dance was originally a form of cultural and emotional expression

that occupied a prominent socio-cultural status in the Zezuru community, a council of elders from the Zezuru community met in 1910 to determine a plan of action to rescind the ban of the dance (Welsh-Asante, 2000).

There are two versions of the chiefs' petition to the missionaries, which led to the name change from Mbende to Jerusarema (Welsh-Asante, 2000, Mataga, 2008, Owomoyela, 2002). The first historical account by Welsh-Asante (2000: 48) claims that in the presence of missionaries during a Christmas celebration, village chiefs dramatized the birth of baby Jesus in Jerusalem, even though he was born in Bethlehem. The chiefs presented gifts while dancing Mbende, singing and praising Jesus' birth to the astonishment of the missionaries (Welsh-Asante, 2000, Owomoyela, 2002). The chiefs thought Jerusalem was the birthplace of Jesus Christ so they wanted the dance to be called 'Jerusarema' to please the missionaries. Thus, the name of the dance changed, by default, from Mbende to Jerusarema.

The second historical account is that village chiefs told the missionaries that all-important events in their territory had to be commemorated by their people using the Zezuru traditional dances (Welsh-Asante, 2000). The chiefs requested Mbende dance to be permitted in the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ and to name it Jerusarema. The request was granted and Mbende dance was called Jerusarema. The dance regained its sacred and historical place within the Zezuru culture after the chiefs' convincing plea for the name of the dance to be changed from Mbende to Jerusarema (Welsh-Asante, 2000). The dance's name, Jerusarema, emerged from the chiefs' pronunciation of the name of the city of Jerusalem as the Shona language has no 'l' sound so it was replaced with 'r' and, to complete a Shona syllable, after the letter 'm' the 'a' sound was added. Despite the criticism from missionaries, Mbende dance under the new name Jerusarema remained popular in the Zezuru community. The dance became a source of pride and identity, and an instrument used in the struggle against colonialism by Zimbabweans (Chitepo, 2014). Although Christianity and colonisation influenced the nature of the dance, it appears the change marked the beginning of the continual transformation of the dance's performances.

After the name change from Mbende to Jerusarema, the dance began to be performed for different purposes, for example, as entertainment in beer halls (Turino, 2000) and for recreation in the open areas around the market (Turino, 2000; Welsh-Asante, 2000). It became a socio-economical dance. Eventually, the dance was commercialised and was used to entertain tourists (Thram, 2002; Turino, 2000). This potentially led to change in some of the dance's choreography and aesthetics. According to Turino (2000), the dance was also introduced to stage performances in the colonial era when an unnamed African-American woman came to train the Jerusarema Dance Club to perform on



Figure 1. Jerusarema/Mbende dancers demonstrating how the dance is performed. *Source:* photo by Chimbidzikai Mapfumo, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/Mbende-Jerusarema-dance-00169>

stage. This included how to enter the stage, arrangement on stage and how to perform and impress the audience.

After Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the dance was increasingly used at political rallies and other national functions. For example, the drumming of Jerusarema/Mbende dance was officially introduced to mark the beginning and end of the Zimbabwe Broadcast Corporation (ZBC) news bulletins on television and radio. However, at this point, it was observed that the dance risked losing its original character and meaning as it was now being modified to entertain tourists (Mataga, 2008).

In compliance with UNESCO's initiative to safeguard the oral and intangible cultural heritage of humanity, in 2002 the Zimbabwe National Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ZNOICH) committee nominated the Jerusarema/Mbende dance. The national committee successfully profiled and justified listing of the dance to the UNESCO ICH committee according to the eligibility criteria (Chitepo, 2014). This resulted in the Jerusarema/Mbende dance being proclaimed in 2005 and inscribed on the UNESCO list in 2008, making it one of the few African cultural expressions accorded such recognition (Mataga, 2008; UNESCO, 2016). The listing prompted the safeguarding project of the dance by steering awareness and promoting its performance countrywide. As Mataga (2008) notes, the ZNOICH committee compiled and analysed authentic elements of the Jerusarema/Mbende dance, which were subsequently listed by UNESCO. These elements are presumably supposed to be monitored and maintained to help safeguard the authenticity of the dance and save it from extinction. This is due to the importance of oral narratives as they shape and define local identity (Hood, 2010).

Performing authenticity

The term 'authentic' can be defined in different ways depending on time and place. So, definitions of 'authentic' are varied and include synonyms such as open, honest, simple, real, integrity and original (Moore 2002; Boyle, 2004; Heynen, 2006). Per Radbourne et al. (2009: 16),



Figure 2. Douglas Vambe playing a pair of drums called mitumba. *Source:* <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/Mbende-Jerusarema-dance-00169>

'Authenticity can be defined as a form of truth within the performing arts events.' It includes an accurate replica of a score or script or trustworthiness to the spirit of the work (Kemal and Gaskell, 1999). The score or script makes a guideline for the authentic performance. Radbourne et al. (2009: 16) also point out that, 'quality measurement in the performing arts is critical to policymakers, government funding agencies, foundations and sponsors who evaluate competitive bids for support and are required to substantiate their investments using set measures.' For the Jerusarema/Mbende dance, the government of Zimbabwe appointed the ZNOICH committee to investigate the dance. After their research, the national committee collaborated with UNESCO to compile the authentic elements of Jerusarema/Mbende dance published on UNESCO's website. An authentic element or characteristic is an essential part of forms of cultural heritage. Therefore, authentic elements refer to the agreed-upon genuine performative constituent parts or characteristics of an intangible or tangible heritage. Authenticity is grouped into two components, which are the authenticity of what is being presented and that of performing arts (Radbourne et al., 2009). The former refers to the technical standards of the performance and faithfulness to score in the performance; whilst the latter refers to the audience's emotional perception. In this article, the authenticity of what is being offered is the area under scrutiny. Elements of the Jerusarema/Mbende used as technical standards are categorised into context, choreography, material culture and songs (Mataga, 2008; Chitepo, 2014; UNESCO, 2016). Kemal and Gaskell (1999: 224) stated that 'Authenticity in dance performances must reveal itself almost unconsciously as a living embodiment of past practice.'

The context where the Jerusarema/Mbende dance is performed is one of the elements to consider. Kramsch (1993: 67) defines context as the total environment in which a text unfolds. In the case of the Jerusarema/Mbende dance, the context is 'flexible' meaning the dance can be performed at any place and time if it suits the performers and purpose (Mataga, 2008). The literature reviewed (Mataga, 2008, Chitepo, 2012) and interviews conducted by Mapira



Figure 3. Men playing wooden clappers during a Jerusarema/Mbende dance demonstration performance. *Source:* photo by Chimbizikai Mapfumo, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/Mbende-Jerusarema-dance-00169>



Figure 4. A woman performing Jerusarema/Mbende dance whilst blowing a whistle. *Source:* screenshot from video recorded for UNESCO nomination file, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/Mbende-Jerusarema-dance-00169>

in 2017 concur that Zimbabwean performance contexts currently include recreational centres, political gatherings, competitions, and festival arenas.

Through this investigation, the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival introduced in 2008 was taken up as the context under scrutiny. According to Chitepo (2014), the festival helps in celebrating the proclamation of the Jerusarema/Mbende dance as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2005. The Murehwa Culture Centre, located in Murehwa Township, acts as the reference place for safeguarding purposes of the Jerusarema/Mbende dance. The main aim of this annual dance festival is to safeguard the Jerusarema/Mbende dance (Chitepo 2014), which is done through:

- Organisation of training workshops from master practitioners and school teachers involved in the dance;
- Organising annual dance festivals, concerts and exhibitions to create employment for dance ensembles;
- Organising exchange programmes with other districts and international groups at least once a year; and
- Screening and registering master practitioners who will train teachers and school children in the skills of the dance.

Well-known ensembles demonstrate how the dance is performed during the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival as a way of safeguarding the dance. Recordings of performances from 2013 to 2015 show the elements used by the performers to demonstrate how the dance is supposed to be performed and are also used to help evaluate the extent to which the elements have been safeguarded. The period from 2013 to 2015 was chosen in this article because this is when most workshops on Jerusarema/Mbende dance were held. Many youths were taught how to dance Jerusarema/Mbende and authentic elements of the dance were part of the training package. The authentic elements included choreography, material culture and songs.

Apart from context, the choreography is also an important characteristic in Jerusarema/Mbende dance. Per Fos-

ter (2009: 98), choreography can be defined in two ways, namely by the art of music and by the art of writing dances on paper. The art of music defines all aspects of dance as choreographic including the process of teaching someone how to dance, the process of learning the dance, the event of performing the dance or the labour of creating the dance. The art of writing dances on paper is the writing down of all aspects of the dance so that performers will follow the manual procedures and can learn how the dance is performed without an instructor's presence. It is the illustration of dancing by symbols like music notes characterise music.

Literature reviewed (Turino, 2000) and interviews conducted by Mapira in 2017 showed that choreography in the Jerusarema Mbende dance includes aspects such as dance movements, stage formation, entrance and exiting the stage. Jerusarema Mbende dance movements were listed by Welsh-Asante (2000) and an inventory of authentic choreographic movements was compiled by the ZNOICH committee for the nomination file submitted to the UNESCO ICH committee. Figure 1 shows some of Jerusarema/Mbende dance movements listed on the UNESCO website, which include acrobatic and sensual movement, waist shaking and hip movement by women in unison with men. Men often crouch while jacking both arms and vigorously kicking the ground with the right leg in imitation of a burrowing mole as illustrated in Figure 1.

Mataga (2008: 100) reiterates that the uniqueness of Jerusarema/Mbende dance movements gives the dance its character, but it is the material culture that gives the dance its unique identity. He identifies two categories of material objects that constitute most objects used by the dancers, which are costumes and musical instruments. Elements of material culture listed in the UNESCO ICH nomination file are the use of drums (ngoma) called Mitumba – a plural word referring to the big drums – played with hands by a single drummer and rattles (hoshho) and wooden clappers (manja) played by men (see Figures 2 and 3). Hand clap, yodelling and whistle blowing by women is also part and



Figure 5. Raised stage used by performers at the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival. Photo by Paul Gama.

parcel of Jerusarema Mbende cultural material (see Figure 4).

All elements of Jerusarema/Mbende dance proposed as criteria of authenticity in the UNESCO ICH nomination file are of great value for the revival of the dance. These authentic elements are incorporated into the dance and are supposed to be passed on from one generation to another to safeguard the originality of the dance and preserve it. So, if these elements were listed to preserve the dance, to what extent have they been enshrined and used in the dance performances? Are there any innovations that might add value to the dance or threaten its authenticity?

An analysis of the incorporation of authentic elements of Jerusarema/Mbende traditional dance in performances

During the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival, the dance is performed on a raised stage (see Figure 5). Murehwa, as a small town, does not have a hall or theatre big enough to hold size of the festival audience, so the festivals are held in an open space. The audience watches the performance from three sides: left, right and front as illustrated in Figure 6. Dignitaries and invited guests sit under a tent pitched a few metres away from the stage (see tent B in Figure 6) and a tent in front of a thatched house (see Figure 7).

The number of ensembles that perform at the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival depends on the number of invited groups and if the ensembles manage to attend. Each year from 2013 to 2015, a minimum of two and a maximum of six ensembles demonstrated how the Jerusarema/Mbende dance is performed. Ngomadzepasi, Makarekare and Shingirirai dance groups performed at the festival every year during that period. Recordings of performances presented by these ensembles were used to evaluate the extent to which Jerusarema/Mbende dance elements were being safeguarded during formalised performances.

During the festival, each invited ensemble goes on stage to demonstrate how Jerusarema/Mbende dance is performed. The ensembles must demonstrate the correct elements of

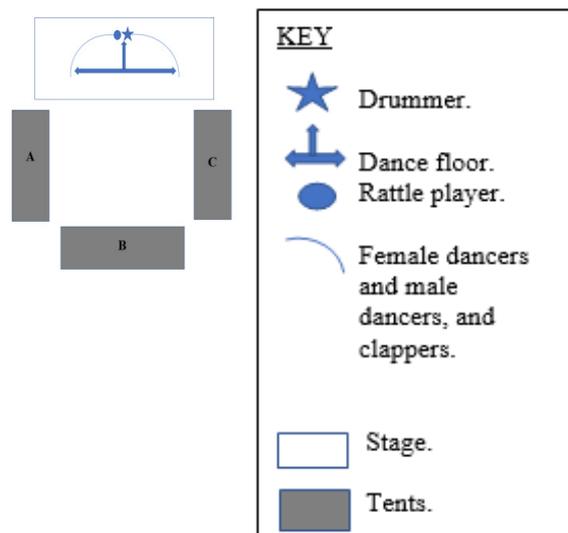


Figure 6. An aerial view illustration of the context where Jerusarema/Mbende dance is performed during the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival. Diagram by Mapira.

Jerusarema/Mbende dance to help safeguard the dance. Whilst watching the videos of selected groups in terms of the dance processes, the authors of this article based observations on the authentic elements of Jerusarema/Mbende dance listed in the UNESCO ICH nomination file. For example, each ensemble had a style for entering the stage; some started with the drummer playing the drums followed by the entrance of manja players clapping and then the dancers dancing. The performers form an arc (see Figure 8) or straight line (see Figure 9) so that every performer can be clearly visible.

To begin, performers must salute and greet the chiefs of Murehwa and Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe, honouring them for being the custodians of the land and the dance as illustrated in Figure 10.

Culturally, this is a way of recognising the custodians of the dance and the people as represented by their chiefs. The UNESCO register notes that a performance must include dance movements, instrumentation and no songs. Whilst watching videos of Ngomadzepasi, Shingirirai and Makarekare, the authors of this article found that all three groups effectively demonstrated the authentic elements listed in the UNESCO file of: acrobatic and sensual movement, waist shaking and hip movement by women in unison with men, and men crouching while jacking both arms and vigorously kicking the ground with the right leg in imitation of a burrowing mole. Jerusarema/Mbende drummer Douglas Vambe (pers. comm., March 2017), explained that the men's dance movements are like a male mole digging a hole as a safe place for a pregnant female mole to give birth. Women's dance movements are like a female mole shaking its hips when entering the hole so as to fit into it. Hip shaking is one of the most important movements



Figure 7. Three tents pitched in front of the stage at Murehwa Cultural Centre. Photo by Paul Gama.

in the Jerusarema/Mbende dance and must not be omitted. However, innovations have been introduced. For example, whilst watching videos of the Ngomadzepasi ensemble from 2013 to 2015, the authors of this article observed that the men who used wood clappers got a chance to display their wood clapping skill throughout the performance (see Figure 11).

This looked like an improvisation on stage, which can end up being adopted if the custodians of the dance do not disprove it. Carter (2000: 181) states that, ‘the expectations of dancers change to the extent that skilful repetition of pre-set choreography will no longer be considered sufficient.’ For instance, some Jerusarema/Mbende dance performers no longer consider the original elements to be sufficient. The audience interests also tend to change the performer’s perspectives on the dance. In stage performances, dancers often rely on improvisation to please the audience.

Hood (2017) mentions that, “Enduring aspects of expressive culture is the relationship between movement arts and percussive accompaniment.” Male performers play the wood clappers accompanied by drums played by a master drummer and a rattle player. All three ensembles used wood clappers, drums and rattles effectively. All three ensembles used a solo drummer, each of which played different variations of Jerusarema/Mbende dance music. However, the number of drums used is a point of contention as the Shingirirai, Ngoma Dzepasi and Makarekare ensembles used six drums in their performances (see Figure 12) but Douglas Vambe asserts that only two drums are used in a traditional Jerusarema/Mbende dance performance.

The number of drums used seems to be taking a new twist. Vambe mentions that some contemporary drummers use more than two drums perhaps to display their skills, but, since he was young he has been playing only two drums in all Jerusarema Mbende dance performances (see Figures 13, 14, 15).

Other traditionalists and the junior drummers claim that multiple drums are better than two in terms of the quality of sound and rhythm. Most performers feel that this element adds value to the overall substance of the dance



Figure 8. Ngomadzepasi Dance Ensemble performers standing in an arc form whilst a girl performs inside the arc. *Source:* screenshot from video courtesy of ZBC.



Figure 9. Shingirirai Traditional Dance Ensemble performers standing in a line whilst a female performer is dancing approximately a metre away. *Source:* screenshot from video courtesy of ZBC.

and gives the drummers the opportunity to be skilfully creative on stage. Alfred Chiyangwa (pers. comm., February 2017) of the Ngomadzepasi ensemble mentioned that the old people used to play two drums but his ensemble has added four more drums making a total of six drums for the dance. He further states that it is not only the younger generation who are using six drums but also some elders use more than two drums. Rishon Marandu (pers. comm., April 2017) concurs saying the drummer, Mr Zanda, in his ensemble plays three drums. Chiyangwa notes that the addition of drums and skilful drumming of the Ngomadzepasi ensemble contributed to their achieving first position during the Chibuku Neshamwari Dance Festival. This development shows that Jerusarema/Mbende dance has adopted a dynamic trend to suit the interests of both performers and their audience (Elia and Ostovich, 2011).

In most Zimbabwean traditional dance performances songs form the basis of the dance while in Jerusarema/Mbende dance performances, songs are non-existent. Jerusarema/Mbende dance music comprises of only instrumentation and yodelling. All videos watched for this research showed that no ensembles included specific songs during their performances. All research participants contend that songs are not included in formalised performances. However, some practitioners like Rishon Marandu and William Majururu believe the addition of songs in Jerusarema/Mbende dance is important. Both artists stated that songs with specific



Figure 10. Shingirirai male performers greeting the chiefs before they begin their performance at the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival, 2015. *Source:* screenshot from video courtesy of ZBC.



Figure 12. Makarekare master drummer playing six drums during the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival, 2015. *Source:* screenshot from video courtesy of ZBC.



Figure 11. Ngomadzepasi wood clappers showcasing their skills during the rest session at the Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival. *Source:* screenshot from video courtesy of ZBC.

lyrics, for example ‘Tirikutandara’ (We are Relaxing) or ‘Yarira Ngoma’ (The Drum is Beating), give meaning to the dance. For instance, the song ‘Yarira Ngoma’ gives the audience some idea of where the dance comes from. Therefore, performers’ interest becomes a priority. The safeguarding of the Jerusarema/Mbende dance may be diminishing as UNESCO cannot control the interests of the various ensembles.

Yodelling is also one of the authentic elements of Jerusarema/Mbende dance listed in the UNESCO ICH file and is noted as only being performed by women. Yet, the videos of different ensembles performing at the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival show all yodelling is led by a man. First, a single male singer starts the yodelling and then the women yodel together with him. During interviews, all Jerusarema/Mbende dance practitioners mentioned that all the performers are involved in yodelling and stop during the active session of the dance. However, one of the elements only performed by women is ululating, which is not mentioned in the UNESCO ICH register. A high-pitched trilling sound of ululating is made during the active session to praise the dancers. The authors of this article believe there was misinterpretation of this element. Instead of noting yodelling as only being performed by women; it should be noted that ululating is only performed by women.

Besides some elements being retained and some being modified, some have been eliminated from performances of the Jerusarema/Mbende dance. The UNESCO ICH file mentioned that women clap hands while men play wooden clappers. All ensembles used wooden clappers, but, none of the female performers employed hand clapping. Mr. Mateyo, an experienced traditional dance adjudicator and traditional dance trainer, pointed out that clapping has been overshadowed and overridden by wood clappers in this dance. Hand clapping by women is no longer important. Females must shake their bodies whilst waiting for their turn to perform. Also, none of the three videos watched showed the use of a whistle during the performance. The leader of Swerengoma Arts groups, William Majururu, claims that a whistle is used as a guide for performers through the active and the rest sessions during the Jerusarema/Mbende dance. Other performers disagree, stating that the wood clapper and drums guide the performers through the active and the rest sessions. Chiyangwa adds that most of the time during the active session the drumming stops and it starts again during the rest session, so the whistle is not very important during Jerusarema/Mbende dance performances. According to Hood (2015, p2), one of the challenges heritage groups face is disinterest among the youth.

Evidence from videos and interviews shows that there are some innovations within and deviations from the authentic elements of Jerusarema/Mbende dance listed in the UNESCO ICH nomination file. Logan (in Graham and Howard, 2008) observed that securing intangible heritage is especially troublesome, particularly given that it is difficult to claim individuals in the way that we can possess, purchase and sell, pulverize, remake or safeguard the tangible heritage of place and artefacts. Innovations and deviations in Jerusarema/Mbende dance performances are unavoidable as the performative gap between younger and older performers widens when the dance is handed from one generation to the next. These innovations and deviations are a way of improvising. In the words of Carter (2000: 181), ‘in arts, improvisation involves suspension of set structures



Figure 13. Douglas Vambe playing two drums at a political rally. *Source:* Newsday Zimbabwe.



Figure 14. Douglas Vambe (center) playing two drums. *Source:* screenshot from video recorded for UNESCO nomination file, https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/Mbende-Jerusarema-dance-00169?include=film_inc.php&id=41786&width=700&call=film

for a practice and the introduction of non-traditional elements.’ Carter also reflects that improvisation gives room for the performers to generate different dance movements to please the viewers. If the use of improvised elements continues, it can become a habit for the performers to use some element repeatedly thus making them permanent characteristics. This is what is happening to Jerusarema/Mbende dance as performers adopt some improvised elements. Improvisation and stage performance also have a connection. When Jerusarema/Mbende dance is performed on a stage for an audience, it is significant to note some improvisations which tend toward pleasing the audience. Hence, stage performances also stimulate change in some dance movements through improvisation to fit the context of the performance. Yang (2015) claims that heritage maintenance can influence innovations. So, besides improvisation, abandonment of some authentic elements are also caused by heritage management. In the case of Jerusarema/Mbende dance, the use of choreography in place of hand clapping and playing wood clappers rather than a whistle may be a necessary compromise in the contestation of heritage.

Conclusion

In this article, heritage was taken to be an open-ended and interchangeable term that can embrace a wide range of meanings and potential disagreement. The Jerusarema/Mbende dance of Zimbabwe was certainly at risk of extinction in 2005 when UNESCO proclaimed it as an oral and intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Thus, UNESCO’s intervention promoted the preservation of the dance and, in fact, it is Zimbabwe that is currently benefiting from UNESCO’s initiative as the country endeavours to preserve the dance. However, despite the availability of resources, there appear to be some problems for ensembles especially related to the preservation of elements of



Figure 15. Douglas Vambe playing two drums at the 2011 Zimbabwe Republic Police’s Kuyedza Women’s Club function in Marondera. Photo by Nesta Nyaradzo Mapira.

the Jerusarema/Mbende dance listed as authenticity criteria in the UNESCO ICH nomination file. Video recordings of performances from 2013 to 2015 at the Annual Jerusarema/Mbende Dance Festival held in Zimbabwe and interviews conducted in 2017 evidence that there are some innovations within and deviations from elements in Jerusarema/Mbende dance. The safeguarding of an intangible heritage is a difficult task because of the traditional and cultural dynamics. While most of the elements of the dance are being maintained, this research showed that it would be impossible to not consider evidence of innovations and deviations found in Jerusarema/Mbende dance performances. These changes can compromise the aesthetics of the traditional dance. Some key authentic elements were missing in performances by all three of the ensembles observed, such as hand clapping by women, use of a

whistle and yodelling. This shows that variations in Jerusalem/Mbende dance are being entertained to a point of contention. It also appears that dancers are not held back from introducing new dance movements and some may have intentionally deviated from authentic elements listed in the inventory compiled by the ZNOICH committee in collaboration with UNESCO. Preserving the Jerusalem/Mbende dance as intangible cultural heritage appears to be difficult particularly because of innovations in instrumentation and songs. These changes are influenced by the context where the dance is performed and the dynamics of culture and age groups performing it. Stage performances also introduced improvised dance movements, which have become a habit for the performers and thus a characteristic of Jerusalem/Mbende dance. Overall, to a greater extent, authentic elements have been safeguarded in formalised performances especially at the Annual Jerusalem/Mbende Dance Festival held in Zimbabwe from 2013 to 2015. However, the contestation between UNESCO's criteria and current practices of Jerusalem/Mbende dance ensembles continues to be an area of debate. This means Zimbabweans in partnership with UNESCO must consider the interests and identity of inheriting generations in the contestation of heritage. There is also need to look beyond the Annual Jerusalem/Mbende Dance Festival in order to evaluate the extent to which the perceived authentic elements of Jerusalem/Mbende traditional dance have been safeguarded in other contexts.

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