

Ethnomusicology and its relationship to some aspects of music in Cetshwayo's time

“The study of African music is at once a study of unity and diversity, and this is what makes it exciting and challenging.”¹ These are the words of Professor Nketia, noted writer, scholar and ethnomusicologist, who is head of the Department of Musicology at Ghana University. This statement is based on his own investigations into African music in general, and in particular, the music of his own Ghanaian people, of which he has made a special study.

Ethnomusicology:

Ethnomusicology or ‘comparative musicology’ as it is sometimes called, involves research into music of non-Western cultures. This requires an understanding of the social, religious, historical and political background of the people concerned, as well as a knowledge of their instruments, songs and dances. Ethnomusicology of course is not only confined to the continent of Africa, but involves research into music belonging to other cultural groups of non-Western origin, in Asia, the Americas and the ‘Ancient World of the East’. It is also a relatively recent discipline, as research in this field has only gained momentum in the last three decades or so. Investigations have also become easier in one respect, as the availability of more sophisticated sound-recording equipment has resulted in more accurate and scientific results. This subject works hand in hand with other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, ethnology, history and linguistics which all have a bearing on the cultural lives of people.

In Africa, particularly with the emergence of ‘black consciousness’ and rise of the ‘Third World’, active research into different branches of African culture has become significant. The ‘black consciousness’ movement has also re-awakened a sense of pride among African people generally, and it is to be hoped that this new awareness will preserve something of the rich cultural heritage of the past. Scholars have argued, however, that Western influences have had such a marked effect on different language-speaking groups, particularly south of the Sahara, that little remains of earlier cultural practices. Although this is true in many respects, and music is not immune to Western influences, certain customs and traditions do still exist. A study of these practices has led to a broader understanding of earlier cultures, and has enriched the cultural life of South Africa as a whole, to which the Zulu people have made an important contribution.

'Oral Tradition'

The richest source of information is through the medium of 'oral tradition' handed down from generation to generation. The historian, John Fage, believes that in this respect, the ethnomusicologist could even be more valuable to the historian than the historian is to the ethnomusicologist. In his essay on "Music and History" he says that discoveries through 'oral tradition' could possibly help clarify and in some respects even consolidate certain historical data. He also maintains that 'oral tradition' can be treated as the equivalent of 'written chronicles' as "there is such scanty record, if at all, of written historical evidence".² He does however add a proviso—"oral traditions are not record material. . . they are not absolute data. They are *ex parte* statements which must be subjected to careful checking."³

Zulu Music

Music, particularly when related to song and dance, is a significant feature of Zulu cultural life. Professor Krige says the following: ". . . . dancing and song play an important part in the life, not only of the individual, but also of the community as a whole".⁴

Important as music is, however, relatively little scientific research has been carried out in this particular field. To-day it has become even more difficult to trace songs that were once a vital feature of earlier customs and practices, and consequently, any specimens found in early histories or any that can be traced through 'oral tradition' are extremely valuable. I have been able to trace some musical evidence relating to certain aspects of life in Cetshwayo's time, and also some written accounts which describe ceremonies and dance performances.

In 1908, Father Franz Mayr wrote "A Short Study on Zulu Music", and although his descriptions are not scientific in the modern sense of the term, information contained in his essay is interesting and useful. He illustrates a number of instruments which were used, and also transcribes eight songs which were performed on various occasions. One of these is indirectly connected with Cetshwayo and was sung during the marriage ceremony. This is what Mayr says: ". . . . it comes from Cetshwayo's time, and is widely used as the 'isingeniso', or first song at a marriage, when the bride makes her first appearance with her friends at the place for dancing 'isicawu'."⁵

The text and translation as well as the music transcribed by him are as follows:

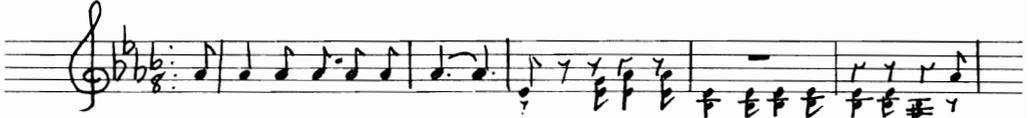
*"Anongilondolozani,
Uye watint' a-o Nqakamatshe*
Anongilondolozani,
Zinyane lendhlovu,
Zinyane lendhlangamandhla†*

*Keep me safe ye,
He went and attacked the heroes.
Will you protect me,
Young one of the Elephant,
Young of the great heroes."*

*Name of one of Cetshwayo's regiments.

†Praise-name for chiefs.⁶

Moderato



A-no-ngi lo-ndo-lo za--- ni u-ye wat-int' a- o-Nqa-ka-ma-tshe A-



-no-ngi-lo-ndo-lo za----- ni zin-ya-ne Lendhlangaman-dhla
 zin-ya-nel-en-dhlo-vu-----

Our main source of information comes from the written word, although L. H. Samuelson has transcribed a short musical excerpt relating to the customary gathering at the "Feast of the First Fruits". The description depicts regiments suitably arrayed, led by chiefs in fine plumage, wearing black ostrich feathers "worn in the centre of their head ring",⁷ who sang and danced from early afternoon until dark.

Another description given by Bishop Colenso is an account of a war-chant performed by an 'ibutho' (regiment) of Langalibalele:

". they went through their dances, which were decidedly superior in spirit and character to those of Pakade's people. There was the usual accompaniment whistling, hissing, and singing in a minor key to the regular time-keeping of their feet."⁸

Statements such as these establish the fact that traditional and ceremonial occasions were celebrated with singing and dancing and, according to Colenso, an accompaniment of sorts was in evidence.

In about the last thirty years, however, some important information has been gathered together. Professor Kirby found examples of Zulu instruments which he included in his treatise on "The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa."⁹ Dr. Tracey has made some recordings, and a set of these songs has been transcribed and analysed by D. K. Rycroft of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.¹⁰ In addition, Rycroft has also transcribed other examples, mainly from the Royal Buthelezi household. There are also some recordings to be found in the archives of the S.A.B.C.

In addition to the above, mention must be made of a rather specialised type of vocal expression which played a very important part in the cultural life of the Zulu. Praise-poems, known as 'Izibongo', recorded 'great events' in the life of an important person. Although the eulogy was performed by

a praise-singer ('imbongi') in the form of a melodic chant, the speech-tones and poetic text of such a work seem to outweigh the musical content.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning one small aspect of a praise-poem ('isibongo') dedicated to Cetshwayo "The Last Zulu King".¹¹ This is taken from Dr. Cope's edition of 'Izibongo' and is a vivid account of Cetshwayo's achievements and deeds during his life-time. It is significant because it is in fact the only reference to the Battle of Isandhlwana throughout the poem, according to D. McK. Malcolm, who did the translation. The line and commentary are as follows:

*"Odl' uMvemve oncokazi He who destroyed the red-speckled
kwabaMhlophe, Mvemve among the White men . . ."*

The commentary which appears at the foot of the page, reads as follows: "The identity of Mvemve ('wagtail') is unknown. Malcolm suggests the red-coated commander of the British force at Isandhlwana, but if so, it is the only reference to the Zulu war in the poem".¹²

Kirby tells us about certain instruments which were used in earlier times. There were different types of whistles and flutes. Ankle-rattles were worn by warriors, and the beating of shields was used in place of drums. Although Colenso makes no mention of actual instruments in his description of the performance he heard and saw, he does refer to certain sounds which accompanied the dancers. Whistles, ankle-rattles and shields are among the instruments mentioned by Kirby, and we do know that such appendages were part of the warrior's dress.

In Tracey's recording of songs performed by Princess Constance Magogo, five of the fourteen examples have some remote connection with Cetshwayo. Princess Magogo accompanies herself in this performance with the 'ugubhu', which is a bow-like instrument used for solo singing. Rycroft describes the instrument as follows: ". a large musical bow with a single undivided string, having a calabash resonator attached near the lower end of the stave. . . . Captain Gardiner noted such an instrument in the 1830s in the time of Dingane".¹³

The instrument is classified under 'Stringed Instruments' in Kirby's book and Mayr has two illustrations in his essay on 'Zulu Music'. According to Kirby "the beater is made of 'tamboukie' grass (*Andropogon marginatus* Steud.)"¹⁴ All three writers spell the word differently, but according to the linguists 'ugubhu' is the accepted spelling.

Rycroft has produced excellent transcriptions of these songs, accompanied



Ugubhu

by a detailed analysis and he also gives a full description of the 'ugubhu'. Shortage of space precludes the inclusion of these transcriptions in an article such as this, so I will devote myself to a résumé of the five songs which are relevant.

A.2 'Helele! Yiliphi Leliyana? (Hurrah! which is that (regiment) yonder?)'

The date of this composition is uncertain. Princess Magogo maintains that it originated during Shaka's reign because of place names used even during Senzangakhona's time . . . But references are made to Mpande's and Cetshwayo's regiments which were inserted subsequently. According to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, "this song was usually sung by girls, remembering their boy-friends in the regiment. . ."

A.4 "Wamthinta uPhefeni" (You have provoked the Phefeni regiment). This song refers to Zibhebhu, who "challenged the leadership of the Usuthu lineage during Cetshwayo's reign. . ."

A.5 "Thulani sinitshela" (Keep quiet, we will tell you) is a song of reminiscences of past "personalities and places".

B.3 "Kwabase sabulawa nguDingane" (Every day we are slain by Dingane) is a lament marking the gradual downfall of the Zulu Nation.

B.4 "Ngiyamazi uZibhebhu" (I know Zibhebhu) is sung by two girls in love with the sons of Cetshwayo, although the text is more in the nature of a lament over Cetshwayo's death.

I include Rycroft's transcription of this final song taken from Tracey's recording.

<i>Hm! hm-hm! hm-hm!</i>	<i>Hm! hm-hm! hm-hm!</i>
<i>Ngiyamaz' uZibhebhu ngobaba</i>	<i>I know Zibhebhu, through whom my</i>
<i>ongemuntu!</i>	<i>father is no more!</i>
<i>Ngiyamaz(i) uZibhebhu ngobaba</i>	<i>I know Zibhebhu for my late father's</i>
<i>ongasekho!</i>	<i>sake!</i>
<i>"Woz'angibone" wash(o)</i>	<i>"He will know who I am"</i>
<i>uDlothovu;</i>	<i>said Dlothovu;</i>
<i>"Woz'angibone" nje lokababa</i>	<i>"He will know who I am", thus was my</i>
<i>ongemunto.</i>	<i>late father's word.</i>
<i>Ngiyamaz (i) uZibhebhu ngobaba</i>	<i>I know Zibhebhu for my late father's</i>
<i>ongasekho!</i>	<i>sake!</i>
<i>"Woz'angibone",</i>	<i>"He will know who I am",</i>
<i>U, zh, zh! hayi, zh, zh!</i>	<i>U, zh, zh! hayi, zh, zh!</i>
<i>Iyu, zh, zh!</i>	<i>Iyu, zh, zh!</i>
<i>Balele, balele,</i>	<i>They sleep, they sleep,</i>
<i>Min(a) angilele belu!</i>	<i>(While) I sleep not, of course!</i>
<i>Balele, balele,</i>	<i>They sleep, they sleep,</i>
<i>Mina kangilele, yeheni!</i>	<i>I am not asleep, ha!</i>
<i>Ibiza ugob' amadolo, inyoni yami,</i>	<i>It calls does my bird, (and) you bend</i>
	<i>(your) knees;</i>
<i>Ibiza vhambis' okomngqithi,</i>	<i>It calls, does my own Secretary bird,</i>
<i>eyami intungunono.</i>	<i>(and) you walk like a Kori bustard.</i>
<i>Ng-hayi, zh, zh! Iyo, zh, zh!</i>	<i>Ng-hayi, zh, zh! Iyo, zh, zh!¹⁵</i>

I conclude with a further transcription of a war-song which was sung to me by Mr. Shakane, who lives in Pietermaritzburg and claims to be a

"Ngiyamazi uZibhebhu"

♩ = 134
Voice $\frac{2+2+3}{4}$

Hm, hm-

ugubhu

— hm! Hm --- m-hm! Hm, hm-

— hm-hm! Ngiyamaz' uZi-

bhe bhu ngo-bab' o- nge-mu — ntu! Ngiyamaz' uZi

50 (Leader)

bi sa; yin tab' e-sha- yo — ke! Wa yengwa yintab' e- sha-

55
zi le li- she-she li- dlu le, li-thand' ukwen- zan'? Len-

Yo! yintab' e- sha- yo — ke — ! Wayengwa yintab' e-sha-

descendant of the Royal Buthelezi family. He had heard this song in his childhood, sung to him by older members of his family.

The translation was done by Mr. J. Radebe.

It is the song of a witchdoctor (isangoma) who charmed warriors before going into battle.

It is in free style, in the form of a chant, and the only clear rhythmic sequence is a three bar phrase 'hawu-ji-hawu' which occurs after each line of the text. This short phrase is also the main unifying factor throughout the chant. The words are subsidiary to the 'melody'.

AYEZA NKOSI — (They are coming O Chief!)

<i>Ayeza nKosi ayez'amaviyo</i>	<i>O Chief they are coming, the regiments are coming,</i>
<i>Aqala thina- hawu-jihawu etc.</i>	<i>They are inciting us — hawu-ji-hawu</i>
<i>Uye z'uye z'uma shushu</i>	<i>(A great person in the place of the chief) is coming,</i>
<i>Ziye z' zinduna</i>	<i>The Indunas are coming,</i>
<i>Ziyeza ziyeza nKosi</i>	<i>They are coming O Chief!</i>
<i>Aye bayeza</i>	<i>They are coming</i>
<i>Usezivile nKosi</i>	<i>He has heard O Chief!</i>

"Ayeza nkosi" (Chief, they are coming!)

chant:

A-ye za-nKos'— A-ye z'a - ma - vi - yo A - qa - la - - - thi - na -

A-ye z'an Kos' Hawuhawu ji hawu hawu ji haw' A-ye A-ye'zinKos'

hawu hawu ji hawu hawu ji haw' A-ye u-ye u-ye zum zum shu-

hawu hawu ji haw'haw'ji haw' A-ye zi-ye zi-zi zindu-na

Hawu hawu-ji hawu-hawu- ji- haw' A-ye zi-ye zi-ye za-'n-Kos'Hawu hawu ji haw'hawuji

haw' A-ye bayeza baye-za hawu hawuji hawu hawu ji haw'haw

A-ye usivi I'n Kos' Hawu hawuji hawu ji hawuhawu A-ye - - -

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