



# **Emergence: The Indelible Face of Artistic Creativity in the Struggle for Self-Determination in Africa**

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## **Abstract**

Emergence has characterized artistic creativity throughout history due to art's proven efficacy as a vehicle for expression and self-determination. This article critically examines emergence in artistic creativity in Africa. The discussion starts with emergence and artistic creativity under feudal systems where despite the attempt to domesticate art by kings through hiring court artists, the common citizenry vented their anger or dissatisfaction against the social injustices meted out to them by the feudal systems. This is followed by a critical discussion of the use of emergence in artistic creativity to respond to slavery and colonialism, as well as the brutal systems that shook the socio-economic foundations of African societies following independence. Emergence in artistic creativity prevailed beyond colonialism as Africans became victims of exploitation by the nationalist leaders who took over leadership in post-independent Africa. A key question addressed is whether Africa's bondage to capitalism signals the end of emergence in artistic creativity, the age long indelible face of self-determination.

## **Résumé**

L'émergence a caractérisé la créativité artistique à travers l'histoire en raison de l'efficacité éprouvée de l'art en tant que moyen d'expression et d'autodétermination. Cet article examine de façon critique l'émergence dans la créativité artistique en Afrique. Le discours commence par l'émergence et la créativité artistique dans les systèmes féodaux lorsque, malgré la tentative de domination de l'art par les rois avec l'engagement d'artistes de cour, les citoyens ordinaires exprimaient leur colère ou leur mécontentement face aux injustices sociales infligés par les systèmes féodaux. Vient ensuite une discussion critique sur l'utilisation de l'émergence dans la créativité artistique en réponse à l'esclavage et au colonialisme, de même que ces systèmes brutaux qui ont ébranlé les fondements socio-économiques des sociétés africaines. L'émergence dans la créativité artistique a prévalu au-delà du colonialisme, les

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Africains devenant victimes d'exploitation de la part des dirigeants nationalistes qui ont pris le pouvoir dans l'Afrique post-indépendante. Une question clé soulevée est de savoir si l'asservissement de l'Afrique au capitalisme marque la fin de l'émergence dans la créativité artistique, longtemps la marque indélébile de l'autodétermination.

## Introduction

Emergence has characterized artistic creativity throughout history for the simple fact that art has proved its efficacy as an expression of the quest for self-determination. Emergence in the arts has been most pronounced in situations of stark socio-economic inequalities, domination and oppression of the majority by a few. Those on the wrong end of such injustices have often sought to defend themselves through various forms of resistance, political engagement, sabotage or even armed liberation struggles. Artistic creativity, in the form of music, poetry, drama, dance, recitations, storytelling, painting, cartoons and many others, has rendered itself as an effective tool to express the views of the oppressed.

The history of the African continent has presented many justifiable reasons for the birth and persistence of emergence in artistic creativity. As the continent went through feudalism, slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and capitalism, its people rose against the social injustices of such systems, regardless of the might of the perpetrator. Artistic creativity has been applied to express defiance, to rally people against oppression, and to urge people to rise and fight to end the injustices.

It is important to note however, that not all artistic creativity has been characterized by resistance in Africa or any other society for that matter. History has many examples of non-resistance-oriented art.

There is, for example, the art of acquiescence whereby artistic creativity joins forces in the ruling or exploiting class to reinforce the status quo. Indeed, this type of artistic creativity has, at times, produced art that has bordered on the psychopath. One is reminded of the Malawi women dance groups of the 1980s formed specifically to sing the praises of the then President Kamuzu Banda. Donned in "chitenge" clothing with pictures of President Banda, these women dance troupes performed during Presidential tours around the country. Other ruling regimes in Africa of the same period, including Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, applied similar, though less drastic, uses of artistic creativity for presidential or ruling party aggrandizement. See the following song from Tanzania, for example,

Nyerere baba mlezi ee  
 Nyerere Mwana mapinduzi  
 Sisi sote twakupongeza baba  
 Na sifa zako zimesikika duniani kote

### Translation

Nyerere our guardian  
Nyerere the revolutionary  
We all praise you our father  
Your fame has spread all over the world  
(Nuta Jazz Band: 1971)

This type of art has done injustice to some African countries by painting rosy pictures of undesirable regimes and dictatorships, legitimizing their ascent or prolonged stay in power. This was particularly true of countries with single party ruling systems immediately after independence where, unless deposed through military coups, leaders tended to stay in power for years on end.

Another type is the neutral art which opts not to side with the oppressed or the oppressor and instead loses itself in some irrelevancies, often in the form of frivolous entertainment, devoid of any commentary or ideological position on the welfare of the country and its people. This type of artistic creativity is also dangerous because it turns a blind eye to undesirable regimes and does not offer a hand in the struggles to better the lives of the oppressed and exploited. Indeed, it even diverts the attention of audiences to fun-fare, instead of providing a catalyst for critical thinking towards action for change. At times, it serves as some kind of opium to make people forget their woes.

The colonial masters, for example, encouraged this type of art and introduced it in schools with the basic aim to merely entertain. The Shakespearean drama, British country dance and European songs on winter and spring that had little or no meaning to life in Africa, dominated artistic performances in schools during the colonial time and kept the colonial subjects entertained.

Emergence, however, is a factor associated with the art of resistance against injustices because emergence is driven by the need to change life for the better.

### **Why Emergence in Artistic Creativity in Africa?**

The African continent has never been short of reasons for emergence in artistic creativity. This is due to Africa's unfortunate history of oppression and exploitation of the majority of its people through feudalism, slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. The suffering of the masses from these systems inevitably moved people to fight for liberation from economic, social, political and cultural dehumanization. As Cabral rightly puts it;

“Whatever the condition of subjugation of a people to foreign domination and the influence of economic, political and social factors in the exercise of this domination, it is generally with the cultural factor that we find the germ of challenge which leads to . . . development of liberation movements” (Cabral:1980)

Language and the arts have always been part of the cultural manifestations of resistance to domination.

### **Artistic Creativity under Feudalism**

Whereas sometimes there is a tendency to romanticize precolonial Africa, the truth is that there were many cases of exploitation and oppression through feudal systems where powerful kings or chiefs subjugated the serfs into servitude. While kings and chiefs managed to domesticate court artists into singing or reciting praises for them, resistance art was also present whereby the ruled found space to vent their anger or dissatisfaction with the social injustices meted out to them by their feudal rulers. At times, even court artists, specifically employed to praise the king or chief, managed to sneak in messages critical of the king or chief, taking advantage of the poetic license they enjoyed to criticize the ruler without fear of repercussions.

The Diwiku (post-burial ceremony) among the Wakaguru of Kilosa district, Tanzania, offers examples of resistance art against rulers. A Diwiku ceremony is a forum for people to praise or critique any relative of the deceased. During the ceremony, there is a poetic recitation performance where, if someone was wronged by a relative of the deceased, he or she tables the complaint. But the case must be presented in the form of the Diwiku poetic recitation and the accused must also defend himself or herself using the same form. If one is not good enough artistically, one can request an artist to present it on his or her behalf. There is a responder who urges him or her to say it all and who responds to every verse he or she recites.

Finally, on the basis of the facts and arguments presented, the matter is settled by the elders where the guilty person has to apologize and pay a fine of a declared number of goats or cows, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

Every member of the community, including the ruling elite, was subject to Diwiku because the ceremony had to be performed whenever a person died. This Diwiku was an effective way of keeping everyone, irrespective of their class or status, in check in terms of how they related to their fellow citizens. See the following example of a Diwiku recitation directed at a traditional chief (Mundewa) who was famed for ill-treatment of his people.

Mwidiki mwidiki

Hee!

Mwidiki mwidiki

Hee!

Kulila nikulila ninga indilo isihelaga

Heeeeeeee!

Moloko isimonga chikutalasila isimonga chikuleka

Heeeeeeee!

I mundewa yuno ninga mundewasi nhanga  
 Heeeeeeeee!  
 Moloko monahi mundewa nghena wanhu?  
 He!  
 Hambiya loo chusage chinangiligwaki kwi wiku?  
 He!  
 Diyelo chigaluka cha wanhu?  
 He!  
 Moloko chikiyuse digoya ahano nhafo chilondaki?  
 He!  
 Cho chikugonela meso choni ?  
 Diyelo chigaluka wanhu seye?  
 Ase cha wanhu chelu hegu uposi wetu umoto wochiketola?  
 Nyusileni munhu yuno, kachinangilaki kwi wiku?  
 Mnghona ninyamale kumlomo kwichaka  
 Heeeeeeeee!  
 Nigambeni mateto  
 Matetoooo!  
 (Recited by Mzee Msagala Mbilu, Chibanhi village, 1971)

(Translation from Kikaguru)

Hear me, hear me out responder  
 Yes!  
 Hear me out responder  
 Yes!  
 Yes, we are mourning but mourning never ends  
 Yeeees!  
 Friends some things we shall talk about, some we shall not  
 Yeeeeees!  
 This one is really much more than all other chiefs put together  
 Yeeees!  
 Friends where have you seen a chief without subjects?  
 Yes!  
 We should ask ourselves, why were we invited to this wake?  
 Yes!  
 Have we today turned into people?  
 Yes!  
 Friends we should ask ourselves, what are we doing here?  
 Yes!  
 We are staying awake the whole night for who?  
 Yeeeeees!  
 Are we people to him? Are we only worth the fire of the wake?  
 Yeeeeees!  
 Someone please ask him for me. Why did he call us to this wake?

Yeeeeees!  
 If you see me quiet there is nothing in my mouth  
 Yeeeeees!  
 Call me the most bereaved  
 Yes!

### **Artistic Creativity Against Slavery**

Slavery which ravaged the African continent with the forceful exodus of millions of Africans, who ended up as slaves in North and South America and the Caribbean, was another catalyst for emergence in artistic creativity. Except in this case, the bulk of the anti-slavery art was produced outside Africa where slavery was practiced. The “Negro Spirituals” among Black American slaves, for example, though often interpreted as a source of religious inspiration and solace from the suffering in the hands of the slave owners, contained a deeper level meaning of hidden resistance and defiance.

See for example the following “negro spiritual” song whose underlying meaning is claimed to refer to the underground railroad, an informal organization that helped many slaves to flee to freedom.

Swing low sweet chariot  
 Coming for to carry me home  
 Swing low sweet chariot  
 Coming for to carry me home.  
 I looked over Jordan and what did I see  
 Coming for to carry me home  
 A band of angels coming after me  
 Coming for to carry me home  
 If you get there before I do  
 Coming for to carry me home  
 Tell all my friends that I am coming too  
 Coming for to carry me home  
 (Negrospirituals.com)

Open defiance to the inhuman treatment from the slave master was met with indescribable cruelty and torture but did not stop the quest for freedom, expressed in various forms of clandestine art. Unfortunately though, besides the “negro spirituals” that were considered harmless by the slave owners, most of the protest art produced by the slaves was not recorded.

In addition, most of the recorded art against slavery appears during the slave abolition movement and is often art that was authored by white slave abolitionists. The “Anti-Slavery Medallion” (1787) by Thomas Wedgwood, an abolitionist, depicting a black man shackled in chains with the inscription “Am I not a man and a Brother”, is one example. This piece of art engraved

in such artifacts as bracelets or hair pins was widely used in the campaign to end slavery in Europe and America and was adopted as the seal for the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787. Other examples of anti-slavery art include “The Anti-Slavery Harp” (1848) a collection of anti-slavery songs by William Wells, as well as the engravings by the English artist William Blake including “Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave” and “A Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallow”. In addition, there are huge collections of anti-slavery art in museums such as the Burrell Collection at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, (Real life histories:2017). Even though the emergence relating to the fight against slavery was basically located outside the African soil, one should not forget that it was for the African people. The horrific nature of slavery which made it almost impossible for the slaves themselves to rise and openly fight for freedom moved white abolitionists to end it. But it was a war fought on behalf of the African people in the bondage of slavery away from home. It is unfortunate that not sufficient attention has been paid inside Africa to this artistic creativity which though produced outside the continent, contributed towards saving the African people in captivity in foreign lands.

Another factor that calls for attention is the need to acknowledge that the African slaves are the origin of what today is known as the “Afro-beat” which has influenced music on a global proportion. It was the African slaves who transported African music abroad as they used it as work songs during slave labour or as a balm for the untold pain they suffered under the slavery system or as quiet defiance to bondage. The dominance of the Africa-beat today, especially in pop music, is a product of the resistance to slavery of the African people. As such, emergence relating to the fight against slavery took on a global proportion.

### **Anti-colonial Artistic Creativity**

Even as Africa was still reeling from the mass exodus of its people into slavery, the continent had to grapple with yet another monstrosity in the form of French, British, German, Belgian and Portuguese colonial rule. Colonialism shook the very socio-economic foundations of African societies, leaving many people devoid of their human dignity and deprived of their cultural identity. Even though the might of the colonial powers enabled them to rule Africa for over half a century and for the Portuguese colonies for much longer, Africa had no option but to rise and apply all means to gain independence.

Emergence in artistic creativity accompanied the various forms of resistance and the struggles, peaceful or armed, against colonial subjugation. Dance, music, poetry, recitations and drama became part of political rallies, clandestine campaigns and mobilization processes and liberation wars against the colonial master.

In Tanzania, for example, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) party used indigenous dance troupes that were established with the encouragement of the British colonial power to provide entertainment for the “native” labourers in Dar es Salaam, to recruit party members and garner support for the struggle for independence. Kiswahili poets along the coast and inland in Tabora composed poetry in support of independence. Even Mwalimu Nyerere himself turned poet and wrote poetry to rally people to support the cause for freedom. This includes his poem “Kunakucha kulichele na kulala kukomele” (Dawn is here, it is the end of sleeping) where he urged people not to give up or slacken the fight because freedom is about to be won (Nyerere: 1961).

Indigenous Dances such as Beni, Lelemama, and Gombesugu as well as songs and poetry recitations were a common feature of TANU rallies across the country. See the following example;

Amka msilale  
Msiwe wajinga mu Tanganyika  
Tanganyika ni mali yetu  
Tukidai tutapewa

#### Translation

(Wake up don't sleep  
Don't be stupid you are in Tanganyikan territory  
Tanganyika is our property  
If we demand it we'll be given)  
(Hiari ya Moyo dance song 1954 as quoted from Semzaba 1983 by Vincensia Shule 2010)

It is argued that the key role played by the arts in mass mobilization for independence was one of the reasons Mwalimu Nyerere included a full ministry of Culture in the first cabinet on gaining independence.

Some of the best examples of the application of artistic creativity are however, found within the armed liberation struggles, particularly in Southern Africa including Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola and South Africa. Music, song, dance and drama became a common phenomenon of the war for liberation. As Elliot Siamanga observes of Zimbabwe “The war was won through song and dance, drama and poetry” (The Herald – Music motivated the Fighters – 8<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

According to Siamanga, in Zimbabwe, music united freedom fighters and the masses. Using the “Pungwes” which were all night vigils where people gathered to dance and sing, supposedly for entertainment, the freedom fighters performed song and dance to educate and inform the masses about the struggle. Other songs



such as “Tumira Vana Kuhondo” were used to motivate young people to join the armed struggle as fighters. The people also used song and dance to confirm support for the fighters and the struggle. Songs were also used extensively to raise the morale of the fighters at the war front. The famous Zimbabwean musician, the late Oliver Mutukudzi is also famed for his songs dedicated to the struggles of the black people under the white minority rule in the then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. His Song “Dzandimomotera” (1970s) for example, is an expose of the suffering of the Zimbabwean under the white settler regime.

The war of liberation against the brutal apartheid regime in South Africa is another example of the use of artistic creativity as a weapon against the oppressor. Both within the liberation movements in exile and the resistance movement inside South Africa, the arts played a key role in the fight to bring apartheid to an end. The Soweto uprising in 1976 for example, led to an increase in the production of overt or covert protest art. Anti-apartheid graffiti, posters, mural images became part of protest rallies even though the artists remained anonymous to avoid stiff punishment under the strict apartheid laws.

The war against apartheid was also fought outside South Africa in countries like Tanzania where songs, dance, poetry, drama were composed to rally the masses in support of the liberation struggles. The Nkrumah Hall of the University of Dar es salaam, which in 2014 was accorded the status of a UNESCO cultural heritage site for its historical role in providing space for intellectual discourse on Africa’s liberation struggles and development, was home to numerous artistic performances by Southern African countries liberation movements in exile. Dance, poetry and song also reverberated across Tanzania where community and school-based groups rallied support for the liberation struggle.

A song popular in schools during that time was:

Vijana twendeni,  
 Vijana twendeni  
 TANU inaita Msumbiji  
 Tukawaokoe ndugu zetu

(Translation from Kiswahili)

Rise up young people  
 Rise up young people  
 TANU is calling us to go to Mozambique  
 To liberate our brothers and sisters.

The spirit behind this was that Tanzania was not free as long as some countries continued to suffer under the yoke of colonial or other forms of bondage like apartheid or white minority rule.

Similar application of the arts in support of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa were present in other countries including Mozambique, Namibia and Angola which were engaged in armed struggle for their independence.

At the intellectual level, the African continent was for a long time during the colonial period engaged in literary movement to free the mind of the African from intellectual and psychological domination. Beginning from the 1930s and inspired by Caribbean writers, particularly Aime Cesaire, African poets, especially Leopold Sedar Senghor, advocated for Negritude, a movement which was a rejection of colonialism and an assertion of black identity.

Eventually the bitter wars for liberation against colonial rule across the continent, the white minority settler rule in Zimbabwe and against apartheid in South Africa and Namibia were won. From the above examples, it is clear that artistic creativity joined hands with other forces of liberation to free the continent from colonial bondage. Once again emergence in artistic creativity in the fight for Africa's rights, dignity and self-determination prevailed.

### **Post-independence Artistic Creativity**

It was not long after the attainment of political independence that the African continent realized that the war for liberation was far from over. In fact the post-independence war for economic, social and cultural liberation was to prove even tougher than that for political independence for most countries.

The Tanzanian poet and singer, Kalikali, captured the illusion with independence in his poem below, composed in Kisukuma language in 1964.

Ukitawala twitawalile  
 A bana Tanganyika  
 Nghana twitawalile  
 Bakulumbagawitawaji  
 Abo bali na milimo mitale  
 Abo balipandika magana  
 Buli ng'weji  
 Al'abalimi ba baluba  
 Nduhw' iyakupandika  
 Litingang' ili busese  
 Ililima lyingile  
 Tubyulima buluba  
 Buguji bushike  
 Guchel' umpango  
 Tuliginya sumba Ng'wana Mbagule  
 Ming'wana gakwigutaga  
 Kulola ha sa kwesa  
 Na kumigija mu shitambala

(Translation)

We have really got independence  
 The people of Tanganyika  
 Truly we are independent  
 They are giving thanks to independence  
 The ones with big jobs  
 The ones who earns hundreds  
 Month after month  
 But the growers of cotton  
 Have nothing to gain  
 Prepare farms  
 As the planting session comes  
 Growing cotton  
 The prices fall  
 This is not a good plan  
 We are fattening other people, son of Mbagule  
 They are really eating  
 They are laughing and dancing  
 And blowing their noses with handkerchiefs.

(Songoyi, 1990, p 57-58)

Besides the mismanagement of resources by the new African ruling elite, as portrayed by Kalikali above, the forces of neo-colonialism and imperialism were quick to impede the development of the African continent through the control of its major resources including natural resources, industry, agriculture as well as the provision of social services such as education and health.

The need for socio-economic self-determination, after the political independence, is manifested in various movements adopted by African countries individually or collectively to combat these forces of their continued domination. These range from Zambia's President Kaunda's Humanism, Tanzania's President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's Ujamaa na Kujitegemea (Socialism and Self Reliance), South Africa's Thabo Mbeki driven African Renaissance or South Africa's Ubuntu.

African Renaissance's essence was in the desire to harness Africa's potential, to remove sources of conflict, restore its self- esteem and turn it into a zone of economic prosperity, peace and stability. Senegal's former President, Abdoulaye Wade even attempted to capture this essence through the erection in 2010, as part of Senegal's 50<sup>th</sup> Independence anniversary from France, of a mammoth 160 feet African Renaissance monument on a hill in Dakar. The monument depicting a man with a bare ribbed torso holding an infant aloft in one arm and guiding a woman with the other, is meant to represent Senegal and Africa emerging from centuries of slavery and colonialism (Atlas Obscura:2014).

Unfortunately, this monument has been mired in controversy, part of it around the fact it was not an African creation but rather of a North Korean artistic production firm, the Mansudae Overseas Projects.

Even as Africa struggled at the ideological level for self-determination and identity, there was a clear emergence at the artistic creativity level through which Africa expressed a refusal to return to foreign or other forms of domination by fellow countrymen and women.

Taking Tanzania as an example, artistic creativity has accompanied all phases of the post-independence attempts at self-determination. The neo-colonial tendencies of the post-independence political elite was met with various forms of artworks which ridiculed what they called “Manaiza”, civil servants who took over from the colonial machinery through the Africanization process, Naiza is a corruption of the Word Africanization and “Manaiza” people from this process. The “Manaiza” were particularly ridiculed for their tendency to get into the shoes of the colonial master and behave like “Black Europeans” against the interests of their fellow Africans.

“Vichekesho” an improvisation-based drama genre was a forefront art form in this castigation of the “Manaizas” and depicting a refusal of people to be reminded of the colonial mind-set that saw Africans as devoid of human value. One storyline of a “Kichekesho” is about a man (a “Naiza”) who was promoted to be the manager of a public institution, taking over from a former European boss. As soon as he assumes office, he changes his manner of speaking and talks like a European. He refuses to shake hands with the staff, bosses them around, shouts and threatens to sack them all the time. At home, he refuses to associate with the uneducated and does not allow village people, including his own parents, to enter his home because they are beneath him. Eventually the workers rebel and go on strike, as a result of which the manager is sacked and ends up in the streets.

One is here reminded of similar artistic creations on the “black European” syndrome like Uganda’s Okot Bitek’s “Song of Lawino” where Lawino decries her husband’s “black European” behaviour.

A similar spirit was portrayed in indigenous dance in Tanzania. It is important to note that indigenous dance was largely prohibited during the British colonial period, particularly by European Christian missionaries who preached that African indigenous dances were symbols of paganism and the work of the devil. Christians were therefore, prohibited from participating in such dances. Only much later, the Colonial Office in London directed the colonies to allow a bit of indigenous dance performance in town so that the “natives” could entertain themselves with their dances and be distracted from organizing against colonial rule.

On attainment of independence the government allowed the performance of indigenous dances and other artistic forms in villages, schools, public institutions and public events. This move unleashed a country wide expression of the spirit of independence and the refusal to ever be under bondage again. Many dance songs were composed castigating the colonial powers and urging people to guard their independence. See the following Mbeta dance example from Morogoro, Tanzania.

Panua uwanja tuwale  
 Uwanja tuwale lelele  
 Lelele tuwale panua uwanja tuwale  
 Utu wetu tumepata tuwale  
 Asirudi mtawala kutusozo  
 Lelele tuwale panua uwanja tuwale.

(Translation from Kiswahili)

Widen the dance floor for us to have fun.  
 Yes let us have fun, widen the dance floor.  
 We are human once again  
 No ruler should ever come back to frustrate us  
 Yes let us have fun, widen the dance floor.  
 (Mbeta dance song from the 1960s, from Morogoro,  
 recorded by Mlama, 1984)

Kiswahili poetry and popular music which, as mentioned earlier, played an important role in mobilization for independence, also flourished in support of independence and self-determination.

In a way it is not surprising that artistic creativity in Tanzania wasted no time to rally behind the ideology of Ujamaa na Kujitegemea when it was introduced in 1967, just six years after independence. This ideology which espoused equality, human rights, human dignity and non – exploitation found willing allies in the masses, the majority of whom were poor and still reeling from the impact of colonial exploitation and denigration.

Emergence in artistic creativity against capitalism was triggered by the spirit of freedom from exploitation offered by the principles of Ujamaa. The resistance was against capitalist forces that continued to oppress the poor masses even after the attainment of political independence. For some time, artistic creativity was at one with the political leadership in their quest for an egalitarian society. Even a new artistic genre was born out of Ujamaa, namely Ngonjera. This is a type of dramatic poetry, founded by a renowned Tanzanian poet Mathias Mnyampala. A typical ngonjera poem has a protagonist and an antagonist who, through poetic recitation debate on an issue. In this way the

merits and demerits of the Ujamaa ideology were expounded upon but always ending on a positive note for Ujamaa.

Unfortunately, very soon artistic creativity assumed the role of propaganda to exult the virtues of socialism. The period between 1967 and 1980 witnessed a huge production of propagandistic art in Tanzania. It is this development that triggered the introduction in the 1980s of the “Theatre for development movement” in Tanzania. There was an urge to counter propagandistic art with art forms where the people could find space to express their views about the socio-economic developments in the country instead of only posing the official views and positions. The theatre for development process involved active participation of grassroots people in critique of development processes and how they impacted on their welfare and then create and perform artistic performances where they portrayed what action needed to be taken to solve the problems impeding their welfare.

Theatre for development used the same art forms of song, dance, drama, storytelling, *ngonjera* but this time the content was critical of the shortfalls in the socialist development processes. These artistic performances castigated corrupt leaders, mismanagement of resources by officials, oppression of citizens by political leaders and the failure of government machinery to achieve meaningful economic and social development for the ordinary people (Mlama :1991).

As disillusion with Ujamaa continued to set in, other forms of artistic creativity were not slow in providing a critique of where the values of socialism had been betrayed and how corruption, mismanagement of resources or lip service to equality had replaced the hope for an egalitarian society. Tanzanian song, poetry and theatre once again took up the mantle to raise the voice of the people against tendencies towards injustices.

See for example the following poem by Euphrase Kezilahabi,

*Picking up Rice*

News came from Arusha  
We began sorting out the rice of *Ujamaa*  
With eyes ahead, eyes sideways, we removed sand  
We made a small burial place for the sand  
We began to remove broken rice one by one  
The fingers worked like a sewing machine  
Night and day until the eyes hurt  
We made a small white pile  
There was too much broken rice and sand  
We cooked after labouring a long time  
We began to eat  
We found out there was still sand and broken rice

When shall we eat without sand, without broken rice?  
 (Euphrase Kezilahabi in Shule 2010, pp 93)

See below another example of a song by the The Kilakala theatre group in Morogoro, Tanzania, performed in 1983 as a critique of leaders who enriched themselves through illegal trade.

*Tunalaani sana enyi viongozi wetu*  
 Mnaoshiriki madhambi nchini mwetu  
 Biashara mwaendesha kwa siri tunatambua  
 Biashara uchwara wala msikatae  
*Mmekabidhiwa madaraka muongoze*  
*Mnayatumia kwa manufaa binafsi*  
*Utasikia simu yapigwa maulizo*  
 Ngano imefika gunia mbili nyumbani  
 Kesho kutwa hotelini maandazi  
 Twatambua sana kuwa mnayashiriki  
 Watu hatupati ngano imeadimika  
 Mnastawisha huko mfaidikako  
*Hao hao viongozi na walioshika madaraka*  
*Hao ndio chanzo cha hali ngumu*

(Translation from Kiswahili)

We curse you leaders who engage in evil deeds in our country  
 You are engaging in private business secretly, that we know  
 Petty business and do not say, it is not true.  
 You have been given positions to lead us but you are using that for your own  
 benefit.  
 You will hear the telephone inquiring; Has wheat flour arrived? Two sacks at  
 my house  
 The day after, buns at the hotel  
 We know that you engage in this, we do not get flour because you send it where  
 you benefit  
 It is the leaders in power,  
 They are the cause of our economic hardship  
 (Mlama 1991:105)

Tanzanian theatre of the Ujamaa era, most of which was in Kiswahili, was in the forefront in critiquing Ujamaa and pointing out what was not working for the interest of the broad masses. The Kiswahili plays that can be listed in this type of theatre include Kaptula la Marx (Marx's oversized short trousers) (Euphrase Kezilahabi, 1979), Duka la Kaya (The village shop) Ndimara Tegambwage, Nguzo Mama (the Mother Pillar) (Penina Muhando), Lina Ubani (There is an antidote for rot) (Penina Muhando), Ayubu (Job) (Paukwa Theatre Association), and Mkutano wa Pili wa Ndege (The second conference of the birds) (Amandina Lihamba).

It could be fairly argued that artistic creativity in Tanzania kept alive the spirit of refusal to succumb to any type of bondage, in this case from a bureaucracy or central political leadership that attempted to replace the intended values of Ujamaa based on the concept of egalitarian, with other socio-economic systems of exploitation and subjugation of the ordinary citizen. In this way, emergence in artistic creativity became necessary and was present even during the period of Ujamaa, whose ideology was basically about equality and dignity of all people.

### **Artistic Creativity under Capitalism**

The most intriguing question about emergence in artistic creativity relates to capitalism. The African continent has reeled under the forces of capitalism since the onset of foreign rule. Except for a few countries like Tanzania, Guinea or Ethiopia, that briefly experimented with socialism, capitalism has been the socio-economic development path for the Africa continent. Capitalism has been floated as the only sure way to socio-economic development and its character of private ownership, free market economy, competition, profit and democracy paraded around as the most efficient means of wealth creation and human advancement. It is true that a few people in Africa have become very rich under capitalism.

It is true, however, that the majority of Africans are wallowing in abject poverty due to capitalism. It is also undeniable that external forces, supported by external capital and globalization forces, are the major beneficiaries of capitalism in Africa. There is no denying the fact that Africa's natural resources have been exploited to the full by foreign companies and the small profits that have remained in Africa, have mainly ended in the pockets of a few local businessmen and more often, corrupt political leaders. The continent is mired in a culture of greed, exploitation, cut throat competition, corruption, consumerism, and commoditization of everything, including people, that has the potential to fetch profit. Attitudes which exult individual interests over the common good and which value material goods over human beings are common place. It should further be noted that capitalism has intensified in Africa, especially after the demise of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe and the end of the cold war which used to provide a check to the spread of capitalism. It is also sad that Africa is yet to find effective ways of protecting the majority of its people from this intense exploitation through capitalism.

Has there been a response by artistic creativity in Africa to capitalism? The answer is yes. As has been the case with capitalism globally, many artists have been quick to swim with the tide of capitalism and grab the opportunity



to make quick money, like everybody else. They have turned their art into commodities and sold them to the highest bidder. Artistic creativity has been driven by profit, stardom and individual benefit rather than the collective social good. Because entertainment has proved to sell better than social commentary, education, correction or sanction, the bulk of artistic productions have settled for meaningless fanfare, often bordering on titillation or vulgarity.

The irony of capitalism is in the fact that the cut throat competition characteristic of its economic survival, demands high levels of creativity. There is almost a craze for creativity and new thinking in order to survive in business as manifested, for example, in the advertisement industry. Yet there is very little creativity in confronting or resolving the numerous problems arising out of capitalism faced by the majority poor. The traditional function of the artist as an educator, a critic, a mentor or guardian of accepted societal values seems to have gone with the wind. The creativity of the artist, like the millions of Africa's poor masses, and their drive to change their fate for the better, seem to have been paralyzed by the forces of capitalism.

As Maxine Haven puts it;

“The making of money is arguably engaging the creative minds of our time, while artists play the ever malleable court jester, abdicating their responsibility in time of political and cultural turmoil, to point the saner way forward”  
(Maxine Haven 2010)

It is no wonder therefore, that a lot of artistic creativity, particularly in popular music, is content with playing the copycat to western artists, and finding no shame in competing to copy the latest fashions instead of producing original creations that reflect Africa's reality of huge socio-economic challenges.

Has there been emergence in artistic creativity in Africa to fight the bondage from capitalism?

Before we answer this question in relation to artistic creativity, it is fair to ask whether Africa as whole has shown any intention to fight capitalism. If we go by the political leadership, one can argue that no such will exists. Unlike the political leadership of the struggles for independence against colonial rule, contemporary African political leadership does not often show any signs of understanding that Africa has an enemy, even more formidable than colonialism, in capitalism. It is this same political leadership that has willingly opened the doors of Africa to the many capitalist-based policies, development plans, strategies as well as the foreign companies that seriously exploit the continent's resources. It is this leadership that is benefitting from capitalism through which it has acquired untold wealth, more often than not, through corrupt means.

How can one expect the same leadership to take any interest in leading the African people in a fight against the bondage of capitalism when it is clear that it has sided with the enemy?

Are the artists, on the other hand, fighting against Africa's bondage to capitalism? For reasons explained above, many of the artists have no interest or intention to fight capitalism. They are busy playing the jester, the entertainer. Other artists are not fighting capitalism because they have sold out to the ruling elite, the custodians of capitalism, and are now busy using their artistic creativity to keep political leaders and their regimes in power. Artistic troupes have, for example, become a necessary feature of political campaigns, particularly during general elections, where artists have become willing praise singers of even the most incompetent or corrupt leaders. In Tanzania, for example, pop musicians, poets, dancers refer to general election years as "years of harvest" and compete to be part of the campaign teams of major political parties, regardless of a party's ideological position or its possibility to win the election. Many artists have no qualms to shift political parties where a more lucrative financial offer is made.

As such when the question is asked "Is there emergence in artistic creativity to fight the bondage from capitalism in Africa?" it is not far from the truth to state that, to a large extent, the answer is no.

But it is also true that despite the fierce grip of capitalism in Africa and its lure of the creative minds of the continent, there are sure signs of the seeds of emergence in the artistic creativity of some of the exploited classes. Popular music, poetry, songs and paintings offer space for disadvantaged classes to vent their protest and anger against the injustices they suffer. They castigate the leaders and their foreign collaborators for their corrupt ways and betrayal of the interests of the majority.

See below an example of excerpts from a popular music song by the Tanzanian musician, Ney wa Mitego (2017).

Hivi uhuru wa kuongea kwenye nchi hii bado upo?  
Usije ukaongea vitu kesho ukajikuta central...  
Kuna viongozi wanavuta bangi "Wapo"  
Maana wana maamuzi ya kise "wapo"...  
Kuna radio na TV naona vimeshapoteza CV  
Hakuna uhuru wa habari wala taarifa ya habari...  
Kiongozi mwenye busara anapokea ushauri  
Anapokea mawazo haweki mbele kiburi...  
Siamini nchi hii inaenda kwa haki...  
(Nay wa Mitego: 2017)

(Translation from Kiswahili)

Is freedom of speech still present in this country?  
 You don't want to say things and end up at the central (police station)  
 Are there leaders who smoke marijuana? "Yes there are"  
 Because their decisions are of a strange type... "Yes there are"  
 There are radios and TVs which I think have lost their curriculum vitae  
 There is no freedom of information or news.....  
 A wise leader listens to advice  
 He is open to ideas he does not stick to arrogance...  
 I don't believe this country is led on the basis of justice.

This type of artistic creativity, however, remains largely ignored by the powers that be. Since those in power do not show much willingness to fight the status quo and since a critical mass for resistance against capitalism from the ordinary citizens is yet to develop, emergence in artistic creativity against the bondage of capitalism is deprived of the fuel necessary to make it a formidable force to fight the forces of exploitation and oppression.

In conclusion, it important to point out that the current situation regarding artistic creativity under capitalism should worry Africa's creative fraternity. Will the apparent intensification of capitalism in Africa be the end of emergence in artistic creativity that has, for generations, been the indelible face of self-determination?

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