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ARTICLE

The Multiple Meanings of the Shona Traditional Performance Theatre (*Dariro*): Unpacking the Concept

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the multiple meanings of the Shona traditional theatre, commonly known as *dariro*. In this paper, *dariro* is taken to refer to traditional theatre in which socialization, singing, instrument playing, incantations, dance and other artistic skills are enacted, especially during social or religious events. The data that furnishes this paper was collected from the Shona people using a qualitative ethnographic methodology in which Shona culture bearers from Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe were consulted in order to solicit information concerning the nature, aesthetic functions, and dynamics that surround the concept of *dariro*. The data gathered during the fieldwork indicated that *dariro* is perceived as a traditional theatre designed to create space for individuals or group performance, especially in dance, poetry, or singing. The traditional theatre was also viewed as the social platform on which the Shona epistemic and ontological philosophy of life, chivanhu is enacted. The findings also indicated that the events that unfold within the confines of *dariro*, are characterised by timelessness, team work and events that are aesthetic and socially conjugal. *Dariro* can be created in an open space or under a tree depending on the nature of the context, or can be constructed inside a traditional hut, banya with participants demarcating the boundaries to create the inner chamber in which events are presented. The paper concludes that *dariro* is pivotal in collectively drawing the participants' attention towards one unity of purpose. As such, it acts as a platform where social, physical, and religious forces converge.

1. Introduction

The paper discusses the theory of *dariro* as perceived by the Shona people of Mashonaland province in Zimbabwe. *Dariro* refers to a created space in which social events like singing, playing of musical instruments, incantations, and dance are enacted. *Dariro* is also perceived as a traditional stage or theatre meant to create space for showcasing individual proficiency, especially in dance, poetry, and singing prowess. It is

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also viewed as the boiling pot for several activities that individuals or group members engage in during music performance and rehearsals. *Dandaro* is also perceived as a physically defined space in which individual artistic expertise unfolds. The events that take place inside *dariro*, especially in the context of a sacred ceremony, are controlled by virtual time. Depending on the context, it is usually built within the confines of a traditional hut, *banya*, open space, or under a tree.

The paper will also conceptualise the term *dariro* structurally and functionally. Structurally, it will be considered an enclosure formed by participants standing or sitting in a circle with the central part as the performance arena. Functionally, *dariro* will be considered as a traditional cosmological system in which social and religious interactional forces operate centrifugally and centripetally. The paper seeks to provide an elaboration of the aspects that characterize *dariro*. Another dimension that will be explored is the nature of *dariro* which allows for improvisation and group cooperation. The paper discussed *dariro* in its different contexts, which include children's games, funerary rituals, *pungwe*, *kurova guva*, and an all-night ceremony called *bira* [1]. The paper interrogates how *dariro* can be viewed from a semantic and syntactic perspective. The last part of the paper gives a comparison between the contemporary western stage system and the Shona traditional *dariro*. This will be done to show how flexible, pervasive, and transcendent the traditional *dariro* is as compared to the contemporary stage.

2. *Dariro* Defined

The African system is characterised by a homogeneous social system in which societies are bound by social and religious ties. The system is reinforced by numerous events in which members come together to solve common problems. During these events, performance in the form of dance and music is at the core. It is during these events that members of a village meet to address social or political issues. In order to congregate, the members identify common meeting places. The meeting places may be the chief or headman's home. In some instances, the meeting place can be an open space outside the villages under a tree or somewhere where there are bushes or rocks as a wind break. The rendezvous site must be spacious enough to accommodate everyone who will be invited to attend. The place must also be within the village or a reasonable distance from the village. It must be free from interference by outsiders and children.

When people congregate for a performance or meeting, they do not just sit haphazardly. They sit in such a way that they form an enclosure, which then becomes the stage on which presentations unfold. This performance space is formed while the members are sitting, standing, or both, which defines the area of performance, which is called *dariro*. In this case, a *dariro* is constructed when participants demarcate the performance area by forming a circle. It is within the confines of this defined area that performers or participants use to execute their acts. Whatever happens outside the defined arena is out of context.

The concept of *dariro* transcends most of the Shona activities that require members to congregate. Even children enjoy playing games in *dariro*. Whoever is taking the lead role enters the *dariro* and becomes the centre of attraction. Everyone's attention and focus will be directed towards what is happening in the *dariro*. Members also form *dariro* at the chief's meeting place (*dare*) when the chief conducts his court sessions. When members commit antisocial behaviours, they are asked to sit in the middle of *dariro* to show that they are outcasts. The position of *dariro* enables everyone who is an onlooker to have a full vision of what is at stake.

The same concept of *dariro* is also used when one wants to address an audience. In this case, the *dariro* may be the front part of the gathering, not the central part. The moment one is in the *dariro,* they assume authority and control of all the audience present. In other words, they determine the direction that the whole discussion or performance should take. They become the leaders, and everyone is expected to pay attention to what they say. In this context, the *dariro* should be such that every member is in good view of the main participants as well as other fellow members attending the ceremony. The scenario is also common during churches or political gatherings. The leader or anyone responsible for addressing the crowd has to be in a strategic position where he/she can have maximum conduct with the rest of the audience. This is meant to allow full participation and coordination between participants. If it is a performance, which is the main focus of this paper, then the performer/s have to be strategically positioned to coordinate with each other and the audience.

The word *dariro* can also be defined in terms of its function. It is considered to be a traditional practice in which members of a particular village showcase their artistic skills to their fellows. It acts as an arena for skills development and rehearsals. More importantly, *dariro* in this context creates room for songs, dance patterns, and any other activities associated with performance to be inculcated in young adults and children. This is one way in which the cultural heritage of a people is orally

passed on to the next generation. In almost all the sacred or secular ceremonies conducted by Shona, *dariro* is used as a platform for communicating with fellow villagers and also with ancestral spirits, *vadzimu* [1].

3. *Dariro* in Children's Games

As previously alluded to above, *dariro* is fundamental during children's games. Usually, children spend most of their day playing games. Most of the games are those that involve movement and singing. These games are important for children's social, physical, and intellectual development. Children learn as they play, and learning as they play is a serious business for them. When children are playing, they also make use of the *dariro* as the center stage on which the main character or characters operate. When they enter the stage, they take the lead, and the other members follow. In other words, *dariro* creates room for the children to interact with each other as they play the game [2]. The *dariro* here is the classroom where children learn numeracy, norms, values, love, sharing, and physical development through games. The leader has to be in the *dariro* so that everyone will have full view of him/her. Below is a photograph of children playing a game called *Sarurawako* and an illustration of the formation of a *dariro* in diagrammatical form:

From the photograph above, it can be noted that the children standing in a circle are marking the boundaries of the interior and exterior of the performance, which is called *dariro*. Every member's attention is directed towards what is happening in the interior, which is *dariro*. Referring to the game *sarura wako* only one main player

enters the *dariro* and sings the song presented below:

Lead: *Dede* *Dede*
Response: *Kadeyadeya nendorochena* *Kadeyadeya* with a white scar
Lead: *Sarurawako* Choose yours
Response: *Kadeyadeya nendorochena* *Kadeyadeya* with a white scar
Lead: *Wangumusvuku* Mine is light brown
Response: *Kadeyadeya nendorochena* *Kadeyadeya* with a white scar
Lead: *Asinazvimbi* Has no long toes
Response: *Kadeyadeya nendorochena* *Kadeyadeya* with a white scar
Lead: *Zvenge zvenjongwe* Like those of a cork
Response: *Kadeyadeya nendorochena* *Kadeyadeya* with a white scar
Lead: *Wangu ndiyeyu* This is mine
Response: *Kadeyadeya nendorochena* *Kadeyadeya* with a white scar
Lead: Kiss me dhari Kiss me darling
(Extracted from Matiure and Matiure [2]).

The *dariro* is strategically formed in such a way that whatever happens should take place inside, not outside the performance area. In the game above, as the lead singer sings and moves around, he or she will be looking for someone to choose. His or her experiences inside *dariro* assist in developing aspects of leadership and authority. From this type of *dariro*, it can be noted that *dariro* has the capacity to develop skills like leadership, cooperation, and socialization.

Figure 1. Children playing a game that makes use of *dariro*. (Photograph taken by author in Chemhanza Mission 2012)

Figure 2. Transcription of the song Sarurawako (Transcription by author, 2013)

4. *Dariro* in the Context of *Bira*

Dariro may accommodate more than one participant depending on the nature of the event. In some contexts, such as traditional *bira* performance according to the Shona of Mutoko, the *dariro* can be thought of as having both immediate and remote dynamics, as illustrated by the model below:

In the model above, the red stars inside the circle on the left stand for participants inside *dariro* and the black stars represent those performing a lesser duty. Those inside the *dariro,* the ring dancers, are the ones performing more by dancing. This kind of performance is democratic and free in nature, and participants are also free to withdraw when they feel like doing so. The black stars represent participants who are supporting the performance by singing traditional songs and playing traditional instruments. They may also dance, but usually their effort is slightly lower than those inside. The black stars on the right form a remote *dariro* which comprises the youths. There will also be singing and dancing outside the main performance venue. The youth are an important arm of society. The traditional *bira* practices have to be orally transmitted to the young. So the youths have to be near in order to learn from and imitate the elders. Those who become adults leave this remote *dariro* to join the main *dariro*. The performances in the remote *dariro* differ from those in the main *dariro* in that the music has a faster beat and can encompass even church songs. The rules for the remote *dariro* are a bit more relaxed, unlike those of the main *dariro* which may be strictly adhered to according to the dictates of the event.

The model presented above is a whole nexus of *bira* events that are highly codified and communally shared. The model presents a number of aspects ranging from
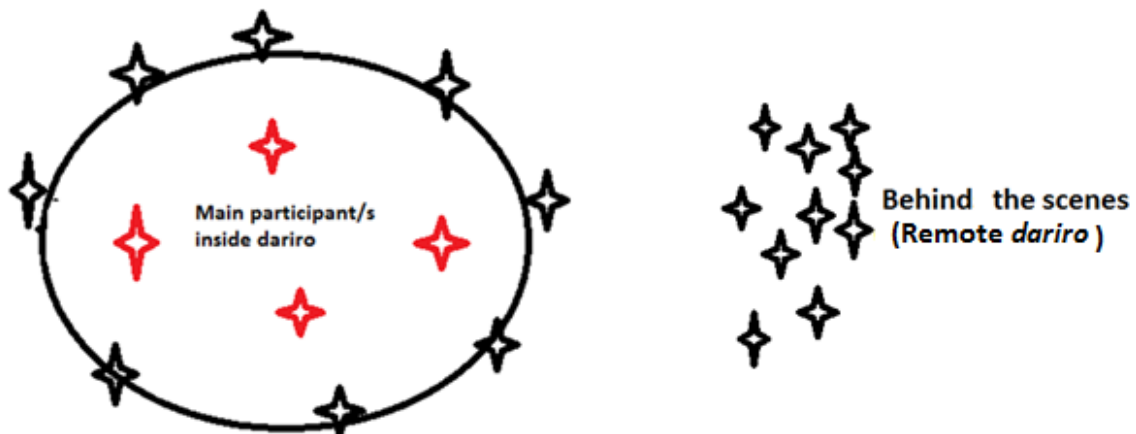

Figure 3. Model of the concept of *dariro* during a traditional bira

socialization, interaction, group cohesion, participation, and group spirit. In a traditional setting, every member has a part to play, whether they are in *dariro* or not. Apart from those in the immediate *dariro* there are other members who are behind the scenes. They will be cooking food for everyone to eat. The other group comprises the elderly (vasharukwa) who will be sitting around the fire outside if it is conducted indoors. They only enter the immediate *dariro* inside the hut when there is something special to do.

In the case of a *dariro* where participants perform a traditional dance, the interior of the semi-circle formation is where performers showcase their dance prowess or instrument payers demonstrate their expertise in instrument playing. They come in turns and withdraw when tired, to give others a chance. dancers occasionally get into the dancing space and pull out when they feel like doing so [3]. Baily's experiences were echoed by one traditional dancer, who said that when dancing, you start with a dance routine involving everyone and then break into a solo act where dancers enter the *dariro* and engage in a self-improvised act. (Interview: July 23, 2015) The moment one exceeds the ordinary threshold and becomes outstandingly prudent, they become the center of attraction and consequently assume the status of a ring or star dancer. The rest of the participants will tone down their level of participation and leave room for the ring dancer to avoid competition. However, the extent to which the ring dancers portray their skills is highly dependent on the support given by fellow members who will be singing, clapping, ululating, and playing instruments. Thus, the formation of a *dariro* must allow optimum interaction and participation by all the members. Everyone must be aware of each other, with no one prejudiced about accessing what other members will be doing. As one participant stated, the *dariro* is a unifying institution. It binds everybody in one spirit of sameness and a sense of belonging.

In this context, a *dariro* must resonate with the mental state and spirit of the participants. It will be the focal point of the entire activities of the day. In fact, *dariro* during a *bira* ceremony becomes the intersection of all the other surrounding activities that punctuate the main ceremony or performance. It is indeed the core, as shown by the model below:

From the diagram, it can be noted that all other activities, like singing, dancing, drinking traditional brew, playing musical instruments, and many other activities, congregate to take place in *dariro*. From another angle, *dariro* can be a universal set with other factors as shown below:
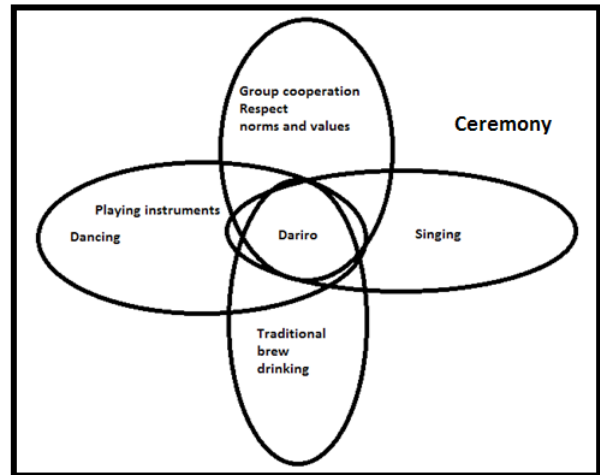

Figure 4. Diagram showing the various activities involved in a ceremony with *dariro* as the core.
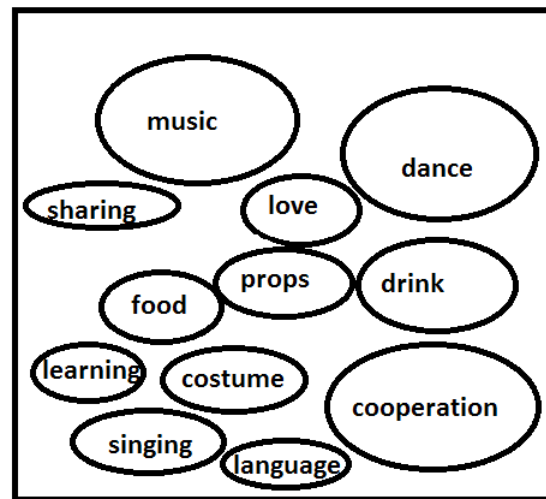

Figure 5. Factors of culture that are portrayed and used in the *dariro*

The square enclosing the various sets resembles the *dariro*. All the aspects involved in *dariro* are written inside. The collection of the various sets presents *dariro* as a complex nexus of various components constituting the various components of an event.

The structural form of *dariro* is determined by the type of participation involved. In some cases, *dariro* is not formed by participants forming a circle as discussed and illustrated above. If the level of participation is distributed almost equally among participants, then *dariro* becomes the aggregate of all the members. Under such circumstances, the atmosphere is highly democratic. People are free to do what they want, ranging from self-expression through dance or gestures. However, whatever they do is controlled by the essence of the context.

5. *Dariro* during Funerary Rituals

The Shona funerary rituals start from the day when the loved one dies until they distribute the deceased's estate. During the funeral, relatives of the deceased sing to calm and entertain themselves. Those who will be singing and dancing inside the room where the body will be lying before burial use *dariro* as their performance area. Even during other related rituals, *dariro* is used as centre stage. For instance, when villagers conduct a ceremony for selecting an heir (*nhaka*), they form a circle or a semi-circle and contestants vying to be chosen to take over as the heir of the family left behind will sit inside the circle (*mudariro*) ready to be chosen by the widow. The rest of the people are onlookers presiding over the process.

The other funerary ritual, *kurova guva* is the one conducted to bring the spirit of the deceased to the village and enable it to join the ancestry hierarchy. To initiate the ceremony, the eldest member gets into the *dariro* and presents some incantations meant to mark the beginning of the ceremony. The same takes place during the ritual at the grave, where *dariro* provides an opportunity for the eldest member to invite the spirit of the buried member to get out of the grave and follow the whole procession back home.

During *kurova guva* ceremony, members of the village take turns entering the *dariro* to dance as a way of celebrating the return of the spirit of their beloved one. When one enters the *dariro*, he or she assumes a totally new status. She/he may be dancing or singing or doing both. The conditions of *dariro* are that, once one becomes the ring performer, she/he not only becomes the centre of attraction, but also gets full control of the space inside the *dariro*. Both women and men are free to enter the arena depending on the context of the ceremony. They may be dancing in pairs, as in the case of the *mbende* dance of Murehwa or as individuals, as in the case of the *shangara* of Masvingo.

In some cases where the Shona perform to communicate with the spiritual world, *dariro* is used as a platform for generating a devotional framework where the ancestral spirits communicate with the living through the possessed spirit mediums. Usually, in the African context, traditional events are not controlled by time. Instead, they unfold naturally, and everything operates within the framework of timelessness.

During these performances, everyone who participates by singing, dancing, or playing musical instruments is respected regardless of age, sex, social status, or creed. There is also respect for the environment in which the *dariro* is formed. Examples are shrines like *rushanga* or spiritual hut (*banya*) where people gather to contact a rainmaking ceremony. Some customs have to be followed, which include desisting from derogative utterances that are likely to perturb the ancestral spirits. Respect for oneself and others is also a common characteristic. Participants share space, skills, sound, ideas, food, and drink. In some cases, certain taboos have to be followed. The author attended one ritual in which participants were not allowed to enter the *dariro* putting on shoes. The reason given was that it is a traditional belief that shoes separate an individual from the earth.

6. *Dariro* at the *Pungwe* Ceremony

Dariro was also instrumental during the liberation struggle, especially during the all-night meetings called *pungwe*. *Dariro* was used by freedom fighters to communicate with the parents. They had the opportunity to spread their propaganda while also informing parents about current war issues. *Dariro* was also used as a platform where singing and dancing were done. Below is a diagram of the *pungwe* structure showing *dariro*.
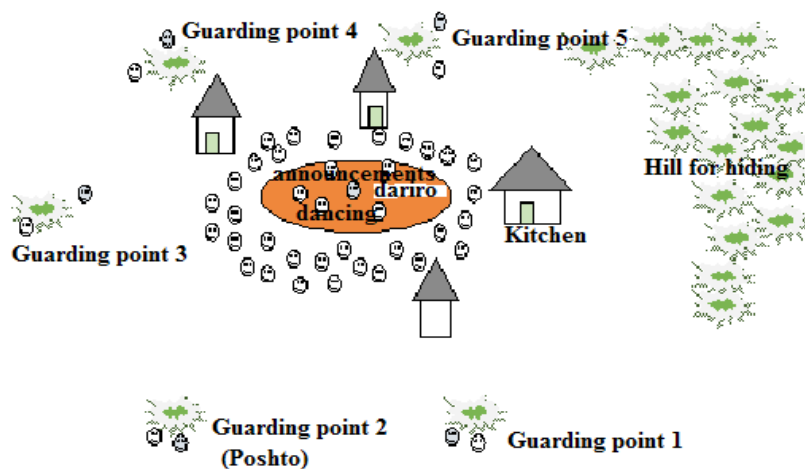

Figure 6. Pungwe structure showing *dariro*

7. The Semantic and Syntactic Nature of *Dariro*

Generally, *dariro* can appear in two forms, which can be considered semantic and syntactic. The semantic form of *dariro* includes the entire environment within which a performance is conducted. For example, if a ceremony is held in a traditional hut, the *banya*, the hut becomes the *dariro* which is characterized by universality. In other words, the environment embraces everything that carries the essence of the event. The universal form of of *dariro* includes traditional objects, props, traditional brew, traditional clothes, musical instruments, and all the participants; men, women, and children. This perception of *dariro* is informed by the theory of semantics, which puts emphasis on the overall meaning of an event. In this case, *dariro* enshrines the entire meaning of the context. When *dariro* is considered from a universal or holistic point of view, it follows that after putting everything together, we get the overall meaning of the event. In other words, whatever is involved during the event contributes significantly to the success of the ceremony.

Apart from the universal context, *dariro* can be perceived as the nucleus of the performance arena. Unlike the universal state, *dariro*'s nucleus form focuses on the interior arena, which is created when other key participants occupy the central part of the performance arena. As previously explained, *dariro* is formed when other members either sit or stand, forming a circle whose interior becomes the nucleus of the entire performance. Such a perception is better explained using the theory of syntax, which concentrates on the various parts of the entire structure. Perceiving *dariro* from a syntactic perspective implies that the most important events and actions are done within the framework of *dariro*.

8. Traditional *Dariro* and the Contemporary Stage

Traditional *dariro* is a Shona construction that differs significantly from the contemporary western performance stage that is common in towns today. The difference is that a traditional *dariro* is characterised by freedom of performance and autonomy of song selection. The performance is designed in such a way that it advocates for free, synchronized participation, improvisation, and creativity. In fact, the atmosphere that prevails within the context of traditional *dariro* is highly democratic. Traditional *dariro* is characterised by optimum freedom of expression expedited through physical gestures and facial expressions, free body movements that involve both gross and fine motor manual dexterity, behavioural interaction between participants inside and outside the

dariro, autonomous choice of singing and dancing styles, and deliberate, yet holistic sonic involvement. Performers are usually bound by common social ties, where everyone participates to achieve a common goal. The success of the event is dependent on the manifestation of communal tendencies by every member. Members thrive on achieving a common goal through music and dance, as well as any other non-musical activities associated with the event. The success of the event will benefit everyone, including those who were unable to attend.

Personal experience and data collected from performers indicated that when one enters the traditional *dariro,* they get transformed into a new persona. They engaged in aspects of creativity and improvisation. However, the creativity is executed in synchrony with the other members' performances inside the *dariro* making the whole performance one unit. In other words, all the members of the *dariro* share some common personalities, which resonate with the demands of the context at hand. By virtue of being the centre of attraction, participants in *dariro* showcase their best. Participation is universally shared and owned by every member within the *dariro* space. Although the traditional *dariro* is highly democratic, members have to conform to certain ethos and ethics. Whatever they do should be in line with the accepted standards and values of the community. Anyone who attempts to deviate from the norm will be discouraged or even asked to pull out of *dariro*.

A traditional *dariro* includes other members present, as previously alluded to. In other words, those who are not key-participants (*nyanzvi*) either sit or stand in a circle or a semi-circle to create an open space that becomes *dariro*. This type of formation enables maximum interaction between the key participants and the other members. Everyone will be able to see each other clearly. In fact, the arrangement is a clear testimony that everyone is a participant. The traditional *dariro* is such that there is no audience-performer relationship.

Unlike the traditional *dariro* the contemporary stage negates the laws of *unhu/ubuntu*. It is characterized by the stage-audience relationship. Those on the stage form the *dariro* and the audience are supposed to be passive participants getting entertainment from those on the stage. The ideology is that those on stage are the experts whose duty it is to showcase their talents. Usually, such performances are paid for. Therefore, performers on stage must perform to the satisfaction of the audience. The performance should be worth the money paid. For example, a show in Harare by Oliver Mutukudzi (Tuku) may cost US $5.00. What it means is that the audience must be provided with music that is good and

sufficient enough to warrant US $5.00. Even the quality is determined by the charge. Such a *dariro* is undemocratic, does not embrace everyone.

It is apparent to note that the traditional *dariro* is slowly being impacted by syncretism. Some aspects of the contemporary western style of staging are creeping into some of the performances. For example, during his fieldwork, the writer came across a performance of *mbira* where the performers were on a stage and the audience was set on the other side. As the performance progressed, the majority of the audience remained silent and only acknowledged their appreciation by clapping when the *mbira* ensemble finished a song. In other words, this audience was passive for most of the time, a reaction that can be considered anti-African.

The dichotomy of stage versus audience, commonly practiced in rural communities, is a clear example of a paradigm shift in the way performances are conducted. This has obviously been exacerbated by rural to urban migration and re-contextualization of some of the Shona traditional practices.

The contemporary stage that usually separates performers from the audience has infuriated most performance practices, especially in towns. Halls and restaurants are designed with raised platforms and stages where performances will be displayed. That alone demonstrates a colonial set up where the audience is supposed to sit there as onlookers, watching and appreciating what happens on the stage.

9. The Multiple Dimensions of *Dariro*

From an African perspective, a *dariro* is a highly packaged institution that embraces several aspects of social and artistic experience. *Dariro* is endowed with all the cultural tenets of the Shona culture. It is a center of social and humanisation. When members of a village meet for a function or any social gathering, the participants make use of the *dariro* as a platform to exhibit their acts. In the process, the aspect of socialisation becomes fundamental. Socialisation takes place between fellow villagers through performance or dialogue.

When a dancer is in the *dariro*, he/she communicates with the audience through gestures, coos, and chants. As he/she does that, a lot of socialisation takes place. It is important to note that when a dancer is dancing in the *dariro*, he/she conveys valuable information to fellow villagers not only through body gestures, but also through facial expressions. Dancers may imitate hunting expeditions, for example, the traditional dance style common in the Chirumhanzu community, which is called *chinyamumbera* or fighting, as shown in Zulu dance.

They may also imitate animals common in their locality. For example, Aleck Macheso, a famous "Sungura" artist, designed a dance called *bhorodhero* in which dancers imitate horse racing. In the case of group dancing, the dancers choreograph some dance patterns as a group. By so doing, the dancers will be communicating and socialising. The communication and interaction that take place between participants during a performance is referred to by ethnomusicology as "musical behaviour". Performers portray some form of behaviour different from the ordinary behaviour that they portray outside the *dariro*. There are certain behavioural expectations that participants should display when they enter the *dariro*. These include responding to the needs of the music provided by fellow members, leaving space for others to take part, performing in unison with others, respecting the ethos of the event, and participating in line with the needs of society.

Dariro also creates space for social commentary among family members. Usually, sisters-in-law (*varoora*) capitalise on the presence of *dariro* by taking centre stage to dance or imitate bad behaviour as a way of disapproving such behaviours by members of society. Some put on men's clothes and started dancing in the arena, almost disturbing the proceedings of the burial ceremony. Besides the sister-in-laws, participants also take advantage of the *dariro* model to express their personal feelings through body movements or poetic singing (*kudetemba*) which is referred to by Berliner [4] as "spoken lamentation... used to express personal troubles" [1]. The spoken lamentation may be about the singer's expectations, feelings, or social problems. Such poetic singing is common in *mbira* performances, especially among the Zezuru people.

Dariro is also an arena for performance, especially in the form of dance, singing, poetry, and the playing of musical instruments. Performance is taken to be an event, and it is considered more concerned with the context itself. For instance, the performances portrayed during a funeral are different from those executed during a wedding ceremony. It is the context that directs the dancers' dancing routines and selection of songs. When dancing, one enters a new world of his/her own, a world of creativity and freedom of expression. It is a totally new experience all together. Dance "must be seen as an integral part of a total way of life" [5]. It is a form of cultural expression and an integral part of society. When someone dances, they feel different[6]. It is often believed that dance makes us remain young and beautiful.

When one dances, they symbolise their entire life experiences through gestures that can only be understood

by members of the same society. In almost all Shona societies, dance is always accompanied by music. After dancing, one feels better and transformed. They feel inspired and completely different from the previous social, mental, and physical state. In some societies, dance reflects the past hegemonies by sustaining the inherited dance patterns. Others imitate what they do when working, hunting, coating, fighting, and many other activities in life. As they dance, they also tell a story. What is important about dance is that it creates room for the body to engage in a deliberate physical journey. Dance is also one way in which the rhythm of a song is made visible. Below are three girls dancing in a *dariro*, and behind them are other performers:

The setup portrayed involves three sections: performers (singers and instrumentalists) behind the dancers, the dancers in *dariro* and the audience. The dancers are placed between the audience and the performers. In this case, the dancers are integral parts of the whole set up. The performers are providing music, and the audience is watching them. Below is a model illustrating the set-up. Some dancers enhance their dance routines by holding props like knives and rods. These props are used to imitate hunting or fighting. These props are symbolic and usually used by spirit mediums when they dance in the *dariro*. Below is a man holding some props, ready to dance.

Dariro is the traditional space for partaking in ritualistic activities. It is certainly the storehouse of the cultural norms and values of a certain community. In certain contexts, *dariro* creates opportunities for members to conduct rituals. There are three forms of rituals, which are life cycle, thanksgiving, and illness. In any of the three types, symbolism is a common feature[7,8]. In each case, when people come together, they create a space where important events concerning the ritual are undertaken. When the ritual is being conducted, every member's attention is drawn towards the centre stage.

Music is understood to be one of the most common elements in any given community. It is also believed to have various functions in these communities which are aesthetics, entertainment, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcing conformity to social norms, validation of social institutions and religious rituals, contribution to the continuity and stability of culture, and contribution to the integration of society and communication[9].

In order for the nine functions of music to be effectively executed, there is need for performers to have an opportunity to perform the music, and the most appropriate platform is *dariro*. If *dariro* is fully utilised so that it facilitates music to play its role, then chances are that the culture of the community involved will be sustained. *Dariro* also enables artists to perfect their skills.

10. *Dariro* and *Unhu/Ubuntu*

From another dimension, *dariro* can be perceived as the focal point for all the cultural forces of a given ethnic group. It is the centre of the traditional power of the people. Each time villagers meet, what binds them is the essence of the ceremony, which is a ritual. The rituals are performed by those who, by virtue of being either knowledgeable about the ritual or the eldest, will lead the whole entourage attending the ceremony. Those who lead the ritual operate within the confines of the *dariro* concept. Africans are known to be highly dependent on social forces generated from their nature of being homogeneous as well as the spirit of oneness, which is one of the various aspects of *unhu/ubuntu*.

Dariro encourages cooperation, togetherness, communalism, and the development of artistic prowess among its members. *Dariro* brings into play *unhu/ubuntu* related aspects of what Kamwamangalu (1999) humanitas (humanity) and caritas (dearness, affection, caring) among participants [10]. Usually, *dariro* is conceived as having the power to dissolve all barriers of misunderstanding among members. Hatred, mistrust, and jealousy are left behind as people enter the premises of *dariro*. Members present are supposed to be guided by the spirit of love and tolerance. The presence of each member must be for the good of the ceremony, and their participation must add value to the event at hand. In the case of a sacred ceremony, *dariro* is highly codified and only those who are pure and free from sinful acts are allowed to participate. One culture bearer interviewed by the author alluded to the fact that during the rain making ceremony, participants who attend are not allowed to sleep with their partners prior to the ceremony, and also that the traditional brew for the ceremony is prepared by women who no longer meet men. All this is done to safeguard the purity of the sacredness that informs their life experiences.

11. Relationship between *Dare, Dandaro* and *Dariro*

The terms *dare*, *dandaro,* and *dariro,* which are part of the Shona dialects, seem to be closely related. For the sake of clarification, the writer feels obliged to probably share some knowledge about these words. *Dare* is a traditional meeting place for the village men, and sometimes women too. It is the place where the chief or headman meets his people to discuss social issues. It is also the place where village social functions are held. From another angle,

we can say that *dare* is a place where traditional courts are held. If a village member breaks the customary law, villagers gather at the chief's *dare* where the culprit is tried.

Another aspect that takes place at the *dare* is entertainment. When the people of the village have nothing special to do or are waiting for an important event to take place, they entertain themselves through music and dance or folk tales. In some families, *mbira* music is played to provide entertainment[4]. The entertainment done at the *dare while* waiting for an important event to start is called *dandaro*.

Although the word *dandaro* is taken to refer to urban music entertainment, which is a re-contextualized rural *bira*, the concept has been in existence within Shona societies from time immemorial. During the pre-colonial period, when people had nothing to do, especially in winter, they occupied themselves with recreational activities as a form of entertainment called *kutandara* in the Shona language. It is from the word, *kutandara* that the noun *dandaro* was derived. As the participants perform any entertainment-related activity (*dandaro*), at a traditional meeting place (*dare*) the ring performers occupy performance space (*dariro*). As a result, understanding the term "*dariro*" without linking it to these two related words may be insufficient.

12. Conclusions

The paper unpacked the indigenous knowledge system that informs the concept of *dariro*. The concept was extrapolated into various dimensions that embrace its structural and functional forms and also how they are viewed from a semantic and syntactic perspective. It also covered a comparative and yet contrastive analysis of the traditional and modern *dariro*. The last part of the paper provided some functions of *dariro* and the overarching aspect was that of cementing the philosophy of *unhu/ ubuntu*. The paper also presents the multiple faces of *dariro*. *Dariro* is the heart of all the social, political, and religious events of most African communities. It is the centre stage where various activities are enacted. More importantly, *dariro* is a training ground for both traditional and contemporary performers. Performance is incomplete if there is no *dariro* created for it to unfold. *Dariro* creates space for fellow community members to remain resolute and united. It acts like a string that ties different pieces of wood together. It is the center (*dariro*) that holds the cosmological infrastructure of a community. Once the centre no longer holds, then the entire community is in shambles.

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