

Hip Hop Music as a Youth Medium for Cultural Struggle in Zanzibar

by

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Abstract

This paper examines how Zanzibari youth engage in hip hop music as a global youth culture. In spite of the fact that, globally, hip hop music has become a youth form of entertainment and a source of income for unemployed youth, on the Tanzanian islands of Zanzibar (Pemba and Unguja) its development is still slow. The objective of this paper is to examine how hip hop music on the Tanzanian islands creates the cultural challenges and controversies in society and how the youth struggle for its survival. The paper discusses the situation of hip hop on the Tanzanian islands, where the majority of the population is Muslim, and examines youth initiatives or struggles in engaging in it in the construction of a cosmopolitan culture in contemporary Zanzibar in spite of the problems and the generational conflict. The article concludes that this struggle is also contextualized within a larger historical framework of the struggle of the Tanzanian youth since soon after independence (1960s) in shaping new forms of culture.

Introduction

This paper seeks to examine the initiatives of Zanzibar's youths in engaging in hip hop music from its early age to the present. It discusses how youth in Zanzibar adopt hip hop music as a medium to articulate their cultural identity and resistance to traditional art forms. The paper as well, will highlight how hip hop artists strive for the development of Zanzibar's economy by promoting its tourism industry and by criticizing corruption and the poor living conditions. A few songs will also be referred to in order to understand their themes and contextualize their struggle. The data for this study was collected through interviews conducted among the public and among artists in Pemba and Unguja between September 2010 and October 2010. This paper intends to answer three questions: Why do Zanzibar's youth engage in hip hop music? What challenges do they face? and How do they tackle those challenges?

The argument in this paper tries to build on the notion that cultural identity is not a static phenomenon by drawing on the work by Stuart Hall (1990, p. 223) whose work on cultural identity emphasises as equally important "what we really are", "what history has done", and "what we have become". In this sense cultural identity is not something that already exists, transcending place, history, and time. Instead identity undergoes constant transformation. Identities are the ways we position ourselves within the narratives of the past. What elements of difference and contrast are important and emphasised at different times, and in different social contexts, must by necessity vary (Palmberg, 2002). The analysis is also aligned with Burgess (2002) who studies revolutionary politics and youth soon after the Zanzibar Revolution. Burgess looks at how in the 1960s and 1970s political leaders in Zanzibar attempted to prohibit youth from appropriating Western clothing fashions and hairstyles in defense of nationalist, socialist, African and Islamic standards and values. His arguments are very useful in the analysis of the contemporary youth and their struggle through hip hop music. Although space does not permit us to discuss comprehensively the history of Zanzibar and its society, in the following section the paper summarizes briefly its background.

Zanzibar Society in Brief

By way of background, Zanzibar is a coastal region of Tanzania and consists of two major islands, Pemba and Unguja. Following the Omani expulsion of the Portuguese from the coast at the end of the 17th century, the Swahili towns were "under the impetus of Omani-dominated trade and accompanied by markedly greater Arab influences" (Insoll, 2003, p. 201). After the abolition of slavery in 1897 Zanzibar was declared a British Protectorate.

It achieved its political independence from British colonialism in 1963, and in 1964 united with Tanganyika to form the United Republic of Tanzania. The population of the islands is approximately one million and is comprised of the Swahili, Shirazi, Arabs, Indians, Goans, and Pakistanis. Most people of Zanzibar are Muslims, there are also small populations of Christians and Hindus. Traditional African beliefs are still held by many local people, and there is often considerable crossover between aspects of Islam and local customs (McIntyre and McIntyre, 2009; Depelchin, 1991; Bowles, 1991; Ferguson, 1991; Sherrif, 1991; Othman, 1995; Hoyle, 2002). The following section discusses the development of the hip hop music in Zanzibar.

Emergence of Hip hop in Zanzibar

Hip hop music started in Zanzibar in the late 1980s, but it was not until the 1990s that it really matured. The popular appeal of this youth culture in Tanzania, and many African countries, was a by-product of globalization and cultural imperialism (Ekstron, 2010). Also, liberalization resulted in many youth turning to foreign styles of music for inspiration. The new music represented the otherness and foreignness that many urban youth sought in their movement toward a sense of cosmopolitanism (Perullo, 2007). In the early days of rap, like on the Tanzanian mainland, a hip hop pioneer in Zanzibar DJ Salehe notes that “youth started by imitating the American rap songs by singing in English. At that time there were no private media outlets; there was state-owned radio station *Sauti ya Tanzania Zanzibar* (STZ) and Television Zanzibar (TVZ) but they did not air the music as it was associated with hooliganism”¹. As rap developed they switched to Kiswahili and that was one of the early developments of rap in Tanzania, as Cool Para, one of the first hip hop artists in Zanzibar, explains “On a Christmas of 1993, I rapped Saleh Jabir’s song”². People who attended our rap show at Fuji bar in Jang’ombe were very excited to hear an English song being sung in Kiswahili”³.

The rap founders in Zanzibar in the early 1990s include DJ Salehe, DJ Kim, Cool Para, Dula Ukasha and Abdullah. Later they were joined by Makoya Man, Cool Muza, Salima Juma Kibao a.k.a SJ, Dogo Halifa, Kif B, the defunct New Rapping Style crew (Rama B, Bakari a.k.a Cool B, Stick Bingo and Ibrahim Jeshi), Alhaji Goya, and the defunct Wazenji Kijiwe. Other popular artists today are Rashid Amin (Rico Single), Shubana Halifani Metaya (Short Gun), Mbaraka Abdalah Mbarak (White Berry), Mbaraka Abdalah Mgeni (Berry Black), Dorica Mukaka, Jamila Abdallah Ally (Baby J) and Hadija Ramadhan Rashid (Didah).

The motivating factors for the young generation in Zanzibar, and Tanzania in general, to do hip hop music are, according to them, the possession of singing talent, a desire to engage in a global culture, search for employment and a fascination with local and foreign stars.

According to hip hop artist Hatibu Hassan, “When we sing we entertain and educate society and most importantly we also want to be known up to America and across the world like Ronaldo who is currently renowned worldwide as a soccer player from Brazil.”⁴ Although in its advent it was not known that rap music would develop to this stage, it was through struggle and persistence that hip hop has got its current shape and has become a source of employment and a forum of expression for many youth. There are not as many artists in Zanzibar as there are on the Tanzanian mainland, but a handful of artists are continually engaging in it. As a result, a generational conflict between young and older generations arose.

Generational Conflicts

It has been revealed in fieldwork that it is difficult for some youth to engage in hip hop music. Various reasons have been put forward by informants. With regard to Pemba, Salum Ali Mselem, like many other informants of this study, raises the issue of religion as the main factor of the parental refusal. He points out that:

Although hip hop is contemporary youth music but few of them get involved in it, because Pemba is compliant to Islamic morals. Morals of this island don't give opportunity for both girls and boys to involve in such music. Even in Unguja it is not entirely acceptable as the Tanzanian mainland. It is true that Unguja and Pemba's population is mainly Muslims but we differ in our stands, here in Pemba people are so devoted compared to Unguja⁵.

Salum reveals that on the Tanzanian islands, hip hop is to some extent more acceptable in Unguja than in Pemba. He links this disparity of reception to religious conformity. Supporting this is the fact that since the early 2000s in Unguja, apart from the STZ station, the following FM radio stations were established: Spice FM, Coconut FM, Zenji FM, Chuchu FM, Bomba FM and Hits FM. In Pemba, however, there exists STZ (which covers Pemba Island for only a few hours), Radio Istiqama and Radio Maria (which are religious stations), and Radio Micheweni. In addition, while in Pemba there is currently no recording studio, in Unguja there are several, namely Heartbeat Records, Teddy Record, Jupiter Record and Makonela Records. In comparison with the Tanzanian mainland, Rico Single also adds “In Zanzibar we are lagging behind in hip hop because in the Mainland people are mixed up so they live a Western style but here we follow Arab traditions so we are more religious”⁶.

As stated earlier, a large percentage of Zanzibaris are Muslims, and most of the informants commented on music with several references to Islam. It is therefore necessary to briefly discuss the stances regarding music and Islam to better understand their arguments. With regard to music and Islam it seems that there are two stances. The first stance belongs to the advocates of music, the Muslim mystics, to whom music was a spiritual staple, not merely a permissible (*halāl*) religious practice, but a required religious practice (*wajib*). With regard to the significance and legitimacy of music in the Islamic tradition S.H. Nasr (1987) points out that it is not merely juridical or theological; it involves most of all the inner and spiritual aspect of Islam (Lewisohn, 1997).

Opponents of music, the mediaeval ayatollahs, take the second stance. They are individuals who call blasphemy to all who believe music to be food for the soul. Such exoteric clerics considered music as belonging to categories of sinful things such as fornication and intoxication, and argued that all musical activities, whether playing instruments or singing, are fundamentally vanity. They defend this position, in part, based on a religious interpretation that reference the sixth verse of the Sura Luqman to “idle talk” as designating and thus banning singing (Lewisohn, 1997, p.3). This paper, therefore, argues that those who prohibit their children from doing music make reference to the second stance that music, in particular hip hop, is profane (as opposed to sacred).

In regard to music and Islam Hatibu Hasan elaborates that, “Society is against this music because it does not confine to Islamic practices. Parents don’t like to see us wearing *bling bling*, smoking *weed* and drinking alcohol. Things that will make us abandon prayers” (personal interview, 22 September 2010). Although alcoholic beverages may be consumed at various occasions “Alcohol is portrayed as a modern demon luring people into disorderly conduct and threatening the moral order of people” (van Dijk 2002, p.259). This caution is made believing that “there is a link between alcohol consumption and sex” (Moto, 2004, p. 352). As “Islam signifies a civilization and a culture, *music* and art in an Islamic environment are inevitably affected by Islamic thought and artistic tradition” (Adahl, 1993, pp.131 & 141, emphasis added). It should be noted that however, “many urban youths (even Muslims) appreciate *dansi*, Western clothes and *hip hop music* without necessarily meaning to oppose their parental generation and its religious and moral rules” (Suriano, 2008, p.202, emphasis added). Zanzibar is not a conservative Muslim society (Hoyle, 2002). It is also important to cite Insoll (1999 and 2003) who says that Islam in Africa was adapted in many different ways to suit many different contexts. Though the core elements of belief might remain the same, there exists diversity, represented by different ways of life: nomad and sedentary, rural and urban, as well as ethnic, cultural and geographical factors, elements of non-observance, and varying interpretations and creeds. Though similarities exist, the East African coast must also be seen as an area of diversity, rather than as an homogeneous entity.

In Zanzibar, some older generations perceive hip hop culture, clothing styles and way of dancing, as harmful to not only religious beliefs but also to traditional practices. Hence, it should be discouraged to safeguard the longstanding traditional practices in society, as today “most youth avoid the traditions; they go to hip hop performances rather than to traditional dances”⁷. Haji Bakari Simba, a 77 years old former traditional dancer in Pemba (1960s to 1980s), adds:

I watch and hear hip hop music on TV and radio stations. In our childhood you could not see girls wearing clothes showing their navels and breasts. But nowadays youths wear half-naked exposing their bodies; they don't respect our traditions. Their songs are very open; they don't hide things. Contrary to what we used to dance our traditional dances such as *Msewe* or *Uringe*, today when they dance they mingle so closely, there is no boundary between man and woman as we used to dance in the past. This could easily lead them to adultery. Besides that, male artists cut their hair into clumsy styles and braid their hair, which I found immoral to our country. Our society is intertwined with Islamic religion, and our religion does not want things being done and exposed like that (personal interview, 22 September 2010 in Pemba).

The value of local traditions such as modest dresses, traditional music and dances (such as *taarab*, *Msewe* and *Uringe*) and religious practices (chastity and the social separation of the sexes) are observable in Haji Bakari's words. This shows how traditional and religious practices intermingle in defining a culture of a certain society. Even if hair plaiting for men is practised in other Tanzanian ethnic groups, such as among the Maasai and Kurya, some informants consider it inappropriate. Simba's argument is in line with Okè (2006, p. 333) who argues that “it is also commonplace for the older generations in many places to value the cultural patterns of their own times better than the succeeding patterns”. In addition, with regard to dress code it is important to quote Fair (1998, p.83) who discusses the dress culture in Post-Revolutionary Zanzibar and points out that dresses that cover most parts of one's body are seen as “worthy of respect, as well as a reflection of the understanding of Islamic prescriptions about modesty in dress and behaviour”. The impact of Islam, in much of the continent, has been felt in several areas.

Islam must be seen as more than a religion, it is a way of life. But also blending of older traditions with Islam has occurred in many instances. The emphasis of the traditional dances shows the nature of the societies and belief systems prior to Islam, and also how these survived in whole or in part and in a variety of associations with Islam (Insoll, 2003, pp.1- 2).

Because all culture is the ever-changing result of mixing, in culture there are no parents, only old and new mixed forms (Palmberg, 2002).

In additional efforts to safeguard religious and traditional values, other forces impact the lack of hip hop artists in Zanzibar and the disparity in hip hop's growth on Zanzibar's main two islands. While hip hop in Zanzibar is not as developed as it is on the mainland, as noted earlier, there are major differences between the islands of Unguja and Pemba. There are no mainstream hip hop artists in Pemba and few in Unguja, because, as the informants revealed, there is disparity between Pemba and Unguja in terms of media and economic development. The disparity is mostly due to the fact that "Zanzibar (Unguja) is a tourist place so the town is mixed up with foreigners unlike Pemba"⁸. The decline of Zanzibar's agricultural economy has encouraged the heritage industry and tourism promotion (Hoyle, 2002). Cool Para also focuses on the importance of tourism in his song *Zanzibar*:

Zanzibar by Cool Para	
<p>Kiitikio Nchi yetu Zanzibar karibuni twawambia Ni visiwa vya fahari Pemba na Unguja pia Mzunguko wa bahari na fukwe za kuvutia Imepangika vizuri twaieleza dunia</p> <p>Ubeti 1 Jambo la kujivunia hapa kwetu Zanzibar Biashara ya utalii inazidi kushamiri Tuitunze tuienzi izidi kustawi</p> <p>Itoe na matawi na matunda tufaidi... Wageni wakifika kwa heshima tuwapokee</p> <p>Utalii ukombozi wa uchumi tutambue tuelewe Zanzibar</p> <p>Ubeti II Watalii karibuni na msije mkahofu Kwa upande wa amani hapa ndio ngome Muweze kutembea Ngome Kongwe Mangapwani hata Fuji Welcome to Zanzibar feel at home every day every time Kwa upande wa Wizara ombi letu twalitoa Utalii ukuzeni nyie ndo marubani Ndio cha kujivunia hapa kwetu Zanzibar</p>	<p>Chorus We welcome you all in our country Zanzibar We are proud of our Pemba and Unguja islands It is surrounded by ocean and attractive beaches It is well structured we want the world to know it</p> <p>Verse 1 One thing we are proud of our Zanzibar Is the tourism industry that continues to flourish Let's nurture and value it so that it flourishes more So that it branches out and we benefit of its fruits When visitors arrive let's welcome them respectively Zanzibaris let's understand that tourism is the saviour of our economy</p> <p>Verse II Tourists are welcome don't be fearful Zanzibar is known as the land of peace You can visit anywhere in Old Fort, Fuji and Mangapwani Welcome to Zanzibar feel at home every day every time We urge the responsible Ministry To develop tourism industry In Zanzibar we are proud of tourism</p>

In his song *Zanzibar*, Cool Para welcomes people from across the world to visit Zanzibar and enjoy beautiful beaches and peaceful environments. He emphasizes the importance of tourism in Zanzibar as it contributes to the island's economy. Even though he seems to invite tourists to visit both Unguja and Pemba, all the places he mentions in his song [Old Fort, Fuji and Mangapwani] are located in Unguja. Cool Para's song intends to attract tourists and recognizes the importance of tourism in Zanzibar's economy. His motivation may be linked to the fact that Zanzibar (Unguja), famous for tourism, might also provide opportunities for hip hop artists, as these tourists also form part of the audience for their music performances. Through hip hop songs artists also strive for the development of Zanzibar's economy. According to interviewees many felt if more tourists visited Pemba it would spark its development in terms of the emergence of hip hop artists. So far we can see that "understanding popular culture in East Africa [hip hop is not an exception] means to engage with larger social forces in the local context, such as Uswahili (Swahili-ness), local perceptions of 'modernity', Islam and the role of media" (Suriano, 2008, p.95).

To this point it has been discussed that there are fewer hip hop artists in Pemba than in Unguja. It has also been revealed that in Pemba there are no music recording studios and few FM radio stations. It is important to present Alhaji Goya's⁹ song *Hali ya Pemba* (Situation of Pemba) to provide a picture of Pemba.

<i>Hali ya Pemba</i> [Situation of Pemba] by Alhaji Goya	
<p>Ubeti Hali ya Pemba miji ishafifia jamani Hizo barabara nazo zina shimo pima Kazi za Mpemba Pemba ni kubahatisha Ni lazima ahame Pemba kwenda zinga maisha Mbona haigeuki hali ya Pemba?... Kazi zetu huku kwetu ni uvuvi na ukulima Na zao kubwa twategemea karafuu Karafuu zangu mwenyewe nikisafirisha Naambiwa ni magendo Serikali ndio wanunuzi Bei wao wenyewe wajipangia Basi pesa muuzazo mafanikio tuyaone Niwekeeni umeme na maji wenye uhakika Pesa nyingine mwanunulia silaha Maana hizo twazona maana awamu iliyopita Zanzibar kwa Wapemba ilikuwa mashaka Ila haya Mungu muwezi Bila yeye sisi wenyewe hatuwezi... Sisi ajali kubwa kuanguka na mkarafuu, uzazi na papa Ila hatutakishwa Kwani uzazi wa Mpemba asiye na kizazi watoto tisa</p>	<p>Verse Pemba's towns have declined Roads are full of big potholes There are no reliable employments in Pemba One has to move somewhere else to look for life Why Pemba's situation does not change?... Our main occupations are fishery and farming We depends mainly on cloves If I transport my cloves I am told that I am smuggling Because government is the sole buyer It sets the price it wants But we don't see any development There is no reliable water and electricity in Pemba You spend some money to buy weapons Because we saw it in the former government Pembans were harassed in Zanzibar But God is almighty He saves us from many calamities Our main accidents are falling from a clove tree, maternity death and shark attacks But we will not be in extinction Because in Pemba a small family has nine children¹⁰</p>

Goya expresses his resentments in regard to Pemba; that although Pemba is the main producer of cloves there is no reliable employment, roads, or electricity. In addition the price of cloves is low resulting in low profits for growers. He asserts that the government uses weapons to harass Pembans. Goya also alludes to the general, multiparty elections in Zanzibar before power sharing between CCM and CUF in 2010. The “general elections of October 1995, in which President Salim Amour from the ruling party *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM: the Revolutionary Party) gained a narrow victory, was controversial, and involved accusations of human rights violations and persecution of the opposition Civil United Front (CUF) members” (Hoyle, 2002, p.147), of whom most were from Pemba. Goya refers to the “outbreaks of riots and state-sponsored violence especially during elections” (Askew, 2006, p.34). According to Cameron (2002), Goya laments on the miserable situation of Pemba, “the impoverished island whose cloves were the main source of the Isles' foreign exchange” (p. 313). Since the international clove market has collapsed, international cultural tourism is reviving rapidly (Hoyle, 2002). Goya fights for cloves' farmers and pickers who “have a grievance with the government's exploitative monopoly on the clove producers' prices. Pemba growers and pickers have the perception that the foreign exchange earned from clove production supported the infrastructure of Zanzibar Town or found its way into the pockets of elites and bureaucrats, rather than into their own rural communities” (Cameron, 2002, p. 320). Goya's language is full of humour, in spite of poor living conditions; saying Pembans cannot die out because customarily the smallest family has nine children. “Humour allowed artists to continue to make *ujumbe mkali* (strong message), while listeners could laugh at the absurdity of the country's political development” (Reuster-Jahn, 2008, p.52) and makes criticism entertaining (Omari, 2009). Goya, like many other hip hop artists, leaves all these lamentations to God to punish the wrongdoers. “God is evoked as a higher power, who determines the destiny of political leaders” (Reuster-Jahn, 2008, p.49) and saves the oppressed.

The introduction of private media in Tanzania has had a significant impact on the spread and popularizing rap music in Tanzania. The legalization of private radio broadcasting in 1993 and the introduction of satellite television in 1995 altered patterns of musical consumption, and in turn led to the rise of new forms of music to take advantage of them. As performances could be recorded on video and replayed back, many clubs and bars found it cheaper to buy a television and sound system (Hilhorst, 2009). Youth music fascinated the young generation as it is aired on radio and television stations. According to Omari Mwinyi Sued from Pemba who is in his fifties, “It is very hard to stop youth as we can't force them to do things we used to do in our youth hood; things like to dance *Msewe* and so forth. They want changes; scientific and technological development made them to see ‘cultures of others’ across the world. As a result, our children think that if they don't do it they will be out-of-date”¹¹.

Stick to the Guns: Strategies Adopted

Parental refusal and allegations that music is hooliganism do not completely discourage Zanzibar's youth from appropriating hip hop music. "Artists had to fight hard to make this music get its current shape¹² because at the early period of rap music these generational conflicts occurred all over the world, Zanzibar is no exception" (Cool Para, personal interview, 27 October 2010). They had to adopt various techniques to engage in this music, one of the first initiatives is reflected in their music group names as DJ Salehe explains:

We call our group *Hard to Find* whose members were me, DJ Kim, Cool Para, Dula Ukasha and Abdullah because at that time there were no rap crews in Zanzibar and we as the founders we faced a lot of difficulties from society. Even if it was 'hard to find' our way through rap music we didn't give up. And the situation was very difficult, especially for female artists. But today the music enabled me to take care of my family, construct a house, and establish my music video production company (personal interview, 27 October 2010).

Another early rap group in Zanzibar that falls in the same line is *The Struggling Islanders* whose members were Cool Para, Cool Muza and Salma Juma Kibao (SJ)¹³. The names of these early rap crews in Zanzibar were not accidentally chosen. They were partly reflecting the difficulties and challenges they got in appropriating this music genre. I argue that they were resorting to African naming customs where naming refers to circumstances, events or seasons that take place surrounding a person's birth (Lubisi, 2004).

Salum Ali Mselem, a radio presenter at STZ in Pemba, also notes that, "there are underground hip hop artists in Pemba but if I interview them on a radio program they hide their real names and opt for pseudonyms to conceal their identity for fear of recognition by their parents. Because if it happens that their parents notice that they are doing music they will be summoned and advised to pay heed to education for the reason that music can take them into a wrong direction" (personal interview, 19 September 2010). Most youth who engage in this music are students or are school aged. Parents and elders encourage their children to focus on education instead of hip hop, discouraging hip hop "fearing that it would encourage students to leave school, turn them into criminals and make them forget their cultural traditions" (Perullo, 2005, p.77). I therefore, argue that the use of stage names in hip hop, among other things, shows youth's struggle and the need of the negotiation in cultural identity.

Fusing rap with other local music genres is one of the techniques adopted by Zanzibar's youth since the early period of rap music in Tanzania. For instance, in the early 1990s, Cool Para knowing that rap music was not widely acceptable by the older generation fused rap with taarab. This was because "taarab is a traditional music genre in Zanzibar and I had to mix rap with taarab to attract customers as most of them were used to taarab". He identified his music style as *taarap*, a fusion of taarab and rap music. This was a commendable initiative in the youth music development in Zanzibar and Tanzania because "mixing is a ubiquitous feature of cultural development" (Palmberg, 2002, p.121). It should also be noted that fusing local and foreign music has been practised since colonial Tanganyika and East Africa. This has been useful in the development of urban music genres in Tanzania such as jazz, *beni* and taarab (Ranger, 1975; Kubik, 1981; Martin, 1991).

Furthermore, the emphasis on employing the term Zenji Fleva over Bongo Fleva¹⁴ to describe youth music in Zanzibar (including hip hop) came to the fore for some artists from Zanzibar. For some of them Zenji Fleva should be used to identify youth music in the Zanzibar islands and Bongo Fleva for the Tanzanian mainland. Rama B, a former hip hop artist and a radio presenter, points it out:

The objective of coining the term Zenji Fleva was to emphasize the use of what is musically available in Zanzibar that was not available in other parts of Tanzania. This includes traditional taarab, which even if it is sung in other parts of the country, is originally Zanzibari. We make use of traditional *dances* that are available in Unguja and Pemba such as *Kidumbak*, *Msewe*, *Kibati*, and *Mkunungu*. Additionally, language of our songs should use Zanzibari dialects and accent, together with the use of music instruments like ganun, oud and others that are not available on the Tanzanian mainland¹⁵.

The emphasis of Zenji Fleva over Bongo Fleva is "a choice of an identity, signified by the choice of a name, which is the most fundamental act of self-identification that a group can engage in" (Spencer, 1994, p. 548). Music is the particular space of negotiation of ethnicity and identity (Stokes, 1994) and the arena of the cultural struggle. Despite the fact that Tanzania was formed by the merger of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, the preference for the term Zenji Fleva by some artists resonates well with research done by Hoyle (2002) who asserts that Zanzibar continues, to guard its autonomy, and in some respects the union remains fragile.

Another technique adopted by Zanzibar's youth is to do music without the consent of their parents, because "If your parents notice that you do music they feel bad. That is why we do it secretly in our *maskani*" (Ahmed Ali Salim a.k.a. Prince, personal interview, 14 September 2010, Pemba). *Maskani* is a place where youth meet as their 'office'. It can be in one's room, at an unfinished or abandoned building or under a tree. It is also known as *kijiweni*, camp or ghetto. Most youth, especially when they are unemployed and/or on their weekends, like to bide time at *maskani*. They use *maskani* to develop plans, strategies, compose songs, rehearse, and sometimes some of them smoke *weed* (Omari, 2009). With regard to Pemba some of the underground hip hop artists revealed that they have already composed their songs, but they haven't recorded them yet due to lack of money and recording facilities. But lack of recording studios does not deter these determined artists because "Although I am doing it secretly my plans are to go to Bongo [Dar es Salaam] to look for mainstream artists to help me" (Answari Etheri, personal interview, 13 September 2010).

Migration in search of more opportunities in music caused by lack of sponsors, recording studios, radio stations, distributors and big artists to collaborate with is also one of the major initiatives adopted by hip hop artists, both on the islands and on the mainland. For instance, the group Offside Trick and Ally Ramadhani a.k.a AT were originally based in Zanzibar but have moved to Dar es Salaam. "Offside Trick is an old group in Zanzibar but as artists are perceived as hooligans and due to lack of enough support they (with their recording studio called Akhenato Records) moved to Dar es Salaam. In Dar es Salaam they became popular quickly with their songs which they previously recorded in Zanzibar"¹⁶. According to Rico Single, "in Zanzibar there is a problem of music distributors and the population is small compared to Dar es Salaam, so we have to go to Dar es Salaam to look for distributors and market for our albums; because Dar es Salaam is the centre for everything" (personal interview, 26 October 2010, Zanzibar). Alhaji Goya explains his case "I started music in 1998 then I went to Dar es Salaam but when my parents knew that I was doing music they saw that I would become a bandit so they returned me to Zanzibar" (personal interview, 27 October 2010, Zanzibar). The practice of migrating for better opportunities for Tanzanians can be traced back to colonial time. The relationship between mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar existed since colonial rule. For example, people from Tanganyika used to go to the islands to work on clove plantations (Ferguson, 1991; Othman, 1995). The reasons given for migrating to Dar es Salaam and not elsewhere does suggest that it is a site of juxtaposition between the local, the national and the cosmopolitan (Brennan, Burton & Lawi, 2007) which offers the business, social and economic advancement (REPOA, 1998).

Furthermore, due to lack of facilities such as recording studios and lack of money to record their songs and/or to travel to Dar es Salaam some of them decide to engage in dancing, popularly known as *kushakeshake*. *Kushakeshake*, also common on the mainland, is a dancing style that has now emerged among the youth. With regard to Pemba where there are currently no hip hop artists, *kushakeshake* serves as one of the ways to engage in music. It becomes a quick way for these youth to get money through entrance fees when dancing at the festivals, ceremonies and holidays. Lost Boys, the *kushakeshake* group in Pemba, while dancing imitate idols from America in terms of outfits and hairstyle.

To make our dancing shows attractive I normally don't straighten my hair, but I wear wigs so I look like the late Michael Jackson. But we have to do it far from our homes. Parents dislike it because they associate it with hooliganism especially the way artists dress up. They say we imitate Western culture hence we can forgo our tradition of wearing *kanzu* and *kofia* (Answari Etheri and Ahmed Ali Salim, personal interview, 13 September 2010, Pemba).

Kanzu and *kofia* are popular male Swahili clothes. Fair (1998) points out that according to observers of 19th century Zanzibar, male Swahili residents of the island typically wore a *kanzu*, white calico gown reaching to the ankles. They also covered their heads, often with an embroidered cap known as a *kofia*. By the turn of the century, the *kanzu* and *kofia* became the most common items of clothing for men living in Zanzibar. Clothing served as one important and visually immediate means of articulating these changes of identity.

Youth efforts to make sure that hip hop music survives are also witnessed on the radio programmes. Ali Kombo, a radio presenter of Micheweni Community Radio in Pemba, reveals that "It is interesting that on the radio program *Chaguo la Msikilizaji* (Listener's Choice) most callers who are youth choose hip hop music. But the older generations want us to continuously play qasida. But we can't because this is a community radio; it is not aligned with any religion or tribe" (personal interview, 22 September 2010, Pemba). Generational conflicts in Africa have always been common due to different cultural interests. For instance, clashes between older generations and young educated Africans were a common feature throughout sub-Saharan Africa in colonial times. And in the post-independence era schools continue to produce music disliked by the older generation (Burgess, 1999; Burgess, 2002; Collins, 2002; Chachage, 2002; Ivaska, 2005, Ivaska, 2007; Suriano, 2008; Ekstron, 2010).

In post socialist Tanzania technological development and the conglomeration of media have been the current sources of the generational conflicts, as they lead to the cheap accessibility of music and the dissemination of images that are considered immoral or indecent to society. Despite the parental objections and other obstacles hip hop continues to flourish due to the existence of media and the fact that it offers employment for many youth in Tanzania. Hence, “The youth...claiming their rightful place in the never-ending movement of identity construction, of curving out new ways of being and of making history” (Akindes, 2002, p. 101).

Youth continually plead with parents and society that their music is not hooliganism. Their talents should be nurtured because music is an education, entertainment and employment. To show that artists will not retreat, Alhaji Goya in his song *Mwanajeshi Halisi* [Real Soldier] points out:

<i>Mwanajeshi Halisi</i> [Real Soldier] by Alhaji Goya	
Mwanajeshi bado nipo kwenye vita ya kita Nagangamala nakomaa sitokata tamaa... Ninachokitaka sasa wasanii tuheshimike Kutuita wahuni hili jina liondoke... Alhaji Goya mdomo ndio silaha yangu Mwanajeshi ukisikia mwanajeshi sio nashika gun...	I am a soldier still in the war I stick to the guns I'll not give up... What I want now is for artists to be respected Don't call us hooligans any more... Alhaji Goya mouth is my sole weapon When you hear that I'm a soldier don't think that I hold a gun...

Due to lack of sponsors and distributors of their artistic works, artists plead for support from the government to intervene and also to start music schools. Rico Single puts his pledge that:

The Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar is not supportive to artists. We want it to be like the Mainland so that companies should be allowed to sponsor us. Because some companies such as breweries are not allowed to sponsor even soccer teams because they are selling beers. It is also forbidden to wear sporty jerseys or t-shirts that advertise alcohol; this is unfair because the same government grants permission to sell alcoholic beverages in Zanzibar. Beers are sold in the hotels and bars, and some officials and Zanzibaris also drink beers. Taxes are imposed on alcoholic beverages whose money helps to run the government. But it does not want to see a soccer player or an artist being sponsored by the breweries and wearing a Serengeti¹⁷ t-shirt (Rico Single, personal interview, 26 October 2010, Zanzibar).

According to Rico Single in Zanzibar beer companies are not allowed to sponsor events, due to Zanzibar's predominantly Muslim population. Although there are other companies or organisations that can sponsor hip hop artists in Zanzibar, Rico Single wants breweries to be allowed to sponsor artists like in the Mainland.

Generational conflict between old and young men has long been recognized as a foundational feature of many African societies (Brennan, 2006) as youth continually get inspirations from various new styles and fashions such as dance, music and clothes. "The struggle over youth was a central theme of Zanzibar's revolutionary past, and it dominated much of the discourse of the period" (Burgess, 1999, p. 45). The revolutionary leaders in Zanzibar in the 1960s and 1970s prohibited people from adopting the Western clothing and hairstyles they saw in the movies, as they were viewed as contrary to African cultural integrity, socialist values and Muslim standards. They even controlled the importation of all clothing into the islands. Clothing decrees were introduced to fashions in clothing, cosmetics, and hairstyles. For women it included cosmetics, skin creams, long nails, wigs, miniskirts, slacks, shorts, and transparent blouses. Prohibited for men were such things as slim fitting shirts, bottleneck pants (*suruali za chupa*), bell bottom pants (*mabuga*), shorts, big Afros, high-heeled boots, and T-shirts printed with 'disrespectful words'. Despite the prohibition both male and female youth in the late 1960s began to resist by privately taking material to tailors who made clothing according to the latest film styles. They also grew their hair and women began to wear wigs and to use cosmetics. The Afro Shirazi Party Youth League arrested the offenders, took them to court, had their heads shaved or beat them up. They also prohibit cinematic images of violence, slavery, marijuana, drunkenness, nudity and sex or those that encouraged disrespect for the government (Burgess, 1999; Burgess, 2002). Similar campaigns were also introduced in the 1960s and 1970s to the youth on the Tanzanian mainland. The Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) Youth League banned "indecent" fashion, such as the mini skirt, in Dar es Salaam as being antithetical to 'national culture' (Ivaska 2005; Ivaska, 2007; Ivaska 2011; Suriano, 2008; Ekstron, 2010). The generational conflicts are recurrent because:

The past like the present is not finite; it is continuously under construction informed by new experiences. The balance between the past, present and the future lies at the heart of the enigma called identity. Memories of the past, exigencies of the present and anxiety over the future are the currents that propel identity articulation. They generate the tensions which foreground the *why*, *when* and *how* groups insist upon their identities (Okwori, 2002, p. 149).

Conclusion

This paper examined the introduction of hip hop music in the 1980s and how it creates generational conflicts in Zanzibar; between youth who want ‘new’ cultural identities and the older generation who are in defence of Islamic practices and traditional norms. The argument is that youth in Zanzibar, like other youth across the world, are fascinated by hip hop culture; but they face various difficulties that hinder their music’s progress. This includes, among others, lack of media and recording facilities, poverty, lack of family support, and lack of sponsors. Throughout this study it is shown that there are struggles two both sides. On the one hand, the older generations struggle to preserve the traditional norms and culture, Islamic conventions and good upbringing of their children. On the other hand, the younger generation struggle against parental objections in favor of hip hop music and culture. While parents strive to safeguard religious and traditional values, youth strive to be part of the global culture. They adopt various strategies like concealment of their real names, doing their music secretly, adopting *kushakeshake* and moving somewhere else in search of recording studios, markets, collaboration with other mainstream artists and media outlets whereby they can be hosted at, or featured in, various radio or television music programmes. Their cultural struggle is also revealed in their crew names and creativity in their music styles such as *taarap*. In this instance, hip hop is a good phenomenon in explaining youth movement in the construction of cultural identity. It has been revealed that their song lyrics are very useful in dealing with societal issues. In their songs artists strive to make sure that Zanzibar flourishes by developing its tourism industry, and by criticizing corruption and the poor living conditions. It is also important to note that even if their songs are politically charged they also make fun of leisure stuff such as alcohol (Rico Single, personal interview, 26 October 2010, Zanzibar).

This article reveals that in spite of the fact that Zanzibar’s population is mainly Muslim, there is also co-existence between traditional practices, Islamic practices and popular culture forms; to quote Hoyle’s word, Zanzibar is a product of ‘two worlds’; the modern and Islam-traditional (Hoyle, 2002).

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Endnotes

¹ Salehe Abdalah Yusuph a.k.a DJ Salehe is one of the hip hop pioneers in Zanzibar. He is working with Television Zanzibar (TVZ) since 1996. Interview by author on 27 October 2010, Zanzibar Town.

² Saleh Jabir is one of the early rappers in Tanzania; he is credited as a founder of rapping in Kiswahili.

³ Ali Ahmed Khamis a.k.a DJ Cool Para is an old hip hop artist in Zanzibar. He is the founder of *taarap* music style in the early 1990s; which was a combination of rap and taarab. He used to be a club DJ, rapper and radio presenter. Interview by author on 27 October 2010, Zanzibar Town.

⁴ Hatibu Hassan is underground hip hop artist in Pemba, interview by author on 22 September 2010, Pemba.

⁵ Salum Ali Mselem, radio presenter of *Sauti ya Vijana* (Youth Voice) programme of Voice of Tanzania Zanzibar/*Sauti ya Tanzania Zanzibar* (STZ), interview by author 19 September 2010, Pemba.

⁶ Rico Single (real name Rashid Amin) is a hip hop artist from Zanzibar, interview by author on 26 October 2010, Zanzibar.

⁷ Hakimu Saidi Juma, an Officer of Culture in Micheweni district-Pemba, interview by author 22 September 2010, Pemba

⁸ Answari a.k.a Michael Jackson, interview by author on 13 Sept. 2010, Pemba, Ramadhani Madogo (Rama B) on 29 Oct. 2010, Rashid Amin (Rico Single) and Hadija Ramadhan Rashid (Didah) on 26 Oct. 2010, Dorica Daudi Mukaka (Dorica) on 27 Oct. 2010 and Ali Salehe Juma (Alhaji Goya) on 27 Oct. 2010, Zanzibar.

⁹ Alhaji Goya (real name Ali Salehe Juma) is a popular hip hop artist originally from Pemba but resides in Unguja (Zanzibar).

¹⁰ I was told by some informants that now the situation in Pemba has been improved following the release of *Hali ya Pemba* in 2000. There is availability of electricity and some main roads have been rehabilitated.

¹¹ Omari Mwinyi Sued used to be a singer of *Msewe* in the 1970s and 1980s, interview by author on 23 Sept. 2010, Pemba.

¹² Ramadhani Madogo a.k.a Rama B, is currently a radio presenter at Zenji FM Radio, Zanzibar. He was a hip hop artist from New Rapping Style crew (NRS) that started in 1998, he then went solo, interview by author on 29 Oct. 2010, Zanzibar.

¹³ It is from the crew name *The Struggling Islanders* that this paper got inspiration of its title.

¹⁴ During my fieldwork it was learnt that some artists preferred the use of the term Zenji Fleva to represent (youth) music from Zanzibar over Bongo Fleva to represent (youth) music from Tanzanian mainland.

¹⁵ Ramadhani Madogo a.k.a Rama B *ibid*. He claims to be the founder of the term Zenji Fleva.

¹⁶ Sadick Ali a.k.a DJ Flash in Zanzibar, he is one of the hip hop founders in 1980s, interview by author on 26 Oct. 2010, Zanzibar; Salum Ali Mselem; Answari Etheri also known as Michael Jackson; Dorica, Didah; Shot Gun; Berry Black; Dj Cool Para, *ibid*.

¹⁷ Serengeti it is the name of the biggest animal National Parks in Tanzania, but it is also a name of a brewery and a beer. Breweries are one of sponsors of various entertainment activities on the Tanzanian mainland. For instance, Tanzania Breweries Company annually organizes the Awards called Kilimanjaro Music Awards that involve various musicians and artists on the Tanzanian mainland.