HEIDEGGER'S EXISTENTIAL AUTHENTICITY AS MANIFEST IN ZULU DANCE-SONG PERFORMANCESPOST-1994

A AUTENTICIDADE EXISTENCIAL DE HEIDEGGER COMO MANIFESTO NUMA PERFORMANCE ZULU DE DANÇA E MUSICA APÓS 1994

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Vusabantu Ngema

ABSTRACT: This paper aims to describe the concept of Heidegger's existential authenticity as produced or pursued through dance-song performances by the Zulu people post-1994. It also attempts to explain the bases for some opposingviews regarding what is perceived as "authentic" and "inauthentic" in Zulu dance-song practices. The paper addresses the problem that is rooted in the definition of the concept of "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" within broader Zulu cultural expressions. The conceptual framework for existential authenticity and inauthenticity developed by Martin Heidegger was therefore chosen to be used as the channel for analysing and interpreting data. This was achieved through utilizing both primary and secondary data collection and analysis methods which includes interviewing experts and practitioners of dance-songs as well as archival documents and scholarly articles about Zulu dance-songs. The results indicated that a person is not invariably "authentic" or "inauthentic". In fact, there is no authentic self; one can only momentarily be authentic in different situations.The paper concludes by describing the significance of the results and impact of this research on the general field of study of authenticity and inauthenticity in the Zulu dance-song performances post-1994.

Keywords: Ingoma dance; Zulu; Existential; Authenticity.

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RESUMO: O presente artigo visa descrever o conceito heideggeriano de autencidade existencial no contexto na performance de dança e música do povo Zulu pós 1994, além de explicar os embasamentos de posições contrastantes a respeito do que é percebido como "autêntico" ou "não-autêntico" nas práticas em questão, definindo esses conceitos de acordo com expressões culturais zulus mais amplas. O aparato teórico desenvolvido por Martin Heidegger para a compreensão da autenticidade ou não-autenticidade existencial foi aplicado como pauta para a análise e interpretação de informações oriundas de fontes primárias e secundárias incluindo coleções de aquivos, entrevistas com músicos-dançarinos, bem como artigos científicos. Os resultados indicam que uma pessoa não é invariavelmente "autêntica" ou "não-autêntica", mas sim, que não há em verdade um eu autêntico, visto que a autenticidade se dá de forma momentânea e contextual.

Palavras-chave: Ingoma (dança); zulu; existencialismo; autenticidade.

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"Experiences have different meanings for individuals and for their societies."
(Boorstin, 1964 and MacCanell, 1973)

Among the Zulu[2] peopleit has become the norm that, during the annual Easter and Christmas breaks/holidays, young and old men and women stage dance festivals and competitions within their communities. Over and above these community-based competitions and festivals, staged dancing has becomean integral part of the tourism industry and is one of the main attractions for both domestic and foreign tourists in that part of the province of KwaZulu-Natal which is the land of the Zulu, colloquially known as Zululand.The Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education have both also occasionally staged schools' festivals aimed at the presentation by learners of the various cultural expressions among Zulu cultural landscapes.

Such events have created uncertainties that have led to debates as to whether what is being presented in these festivals and competitions, as well as that which is offered to tourists, has remained true to the Zulu culture and traditions. The debates therefore essentially concern what should be viewed as "authentic"and what as"inauthentic".

People have debated these questionsfor many years. Ironically, this debate has become fiercer post-1994 as South African society became more cosmopolitan due to the anti-segregation stance and the subsequentfreedom of movement and association of its people. People are no longer by law confined to settlements that are defined by ethnic and cultural boundaries as was the case before 1994. Many cultural and ethnic groups have consequently experienced all sorts of challenges regarding the preservation and promotion of their own cultural expression and heritage due to the acquisition of freedom. This has resulted in a

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[2] It should be noted that the word "Zulu" is used both as a noun and as an adjective. Thus, "Zulu" can be used to describe someone as being of the Zulu ethnic group ("He is a Zulu"; "King Goodwill Zwelithini is the king of the

dichotomized society where some seek to purify what they had lost during apartheid while some seek to venture into new territories and to explore innovative ways of expression based on the influences of other continental as well as global cultures.

As far as Zulu dancing is concerned, the concept of authenticity is very unstable both among dance practitioners and appreciators. Its meaning tends to be a "muddled amalgam of philosophical, psychological, and spiritual concepts which reflects its multifaceted history" (STEINER; REISINGER, 2006, p. 299). The problem is compounded because the term is often used in two distinct senses:either to describea genuineness or realness of events; or as a human attribute signifying being one's true self or being true to one's essential nature. Those who could beregarded as conservative accept a meaning in line with what is regarded as "realness" of dancing (a realness of event) while the progressives adopt the meaningof "being true to one's self".

Although this scenario could be viewed as a good thesis and antithesis for a healthy synthesis towards the advancement of knowledge regarding dancing among diverse cultural groups, it has created factionalism among the Zulu dancing community. A controversy exists regarding how best one can freely express and advance his/her cultural identity while on the other hand preserving his/her heritage which has now become factionalised into a question of "heritage" versus "destiny". To some, freedom has come to mean holding on to and reviving what was yours before oppression while others see freedom as an opportunity to venture into new territories in cultural expression. However, both sentiments are incomplete and controversial. As such, people are failing to consider that to separate heritage from destiny is to destabilise the advancement of Zulu dance performances.

Such debates, however, are meaningless unless it is clearly understood what it is meant by "authentic" and "inauthentic". By applying Heidegger's concept of existential authenticity/inauthenticity as a conceptual framework to explain, describe, and explore (some) elements of performances in Zulu dancing it becomes possible to determine both authenticity and inauthenticity in Zulu dance-performances.

The concept of existential authenticity is part of a long philosophical tradition concerned with what it means to be human, what it means to be happy, and what it means to be oneself. Common themes that echo through most of the discussions of authenticity in both philosophy and psychology include self-identity, individuality, meaning-making andanxiety. At its simplest level, our choices define who we are and what we can become. People must, therefore, assert

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Zulus"); or to refer to the language spoken by this ethnic group ("Do you speak Zulu?") or to describe something that is typically associated with this ethnic group ("She is wearing the Zulu headdress, the *izicolo*").

their will in the choices made when confronted by possibilities; they can make themselves as they want to be.

We need then to examine what "making yourself as you want to be" meanswithin the Zulu cultural context. Using Geertz's approach to the levels of culture, it is clear that Zulu society is not as homogenous as one might assume it to be. There are at least seven [7] levels of cultural determinations among the broader Zulu society in South Africa today. These are:

1. National:Such events are binding on all Zulus regardless of place, age, gender, etc. for example, the celebration of major ceremonies such as *Umhlanga* (the reed dance ceremony).

2. Provincial:Zulus no longer, as in the past, live mainly KwaZulu-Natal but now live other provinces too.There are thus practices that could be associatedonly with specific provincial residencies. For example, on the official public holiday celebrated on 24 September and known as "Heritage Day", Zulus resident in Gauteng Province might prefer to come together for a huge barbecue while in KwaZulu-Natal Provinceit would serve to commemorate the Zulu King Shaka.

3. Regional:KwaZulu-Natal is divided into various regions of which the major ones are the South Coast, the Midlands, uMkhanyakude/uMhlabuyalingana and uKhahlamba. Certain cultural practices are found only in specific regions.These include*Makwaya/Isikapulana*at Manguzi, *Umzansi* in Bergville and Msinga, and*Isikhuze* in Baqulusini. The map on the following page indicates the various regions into which the province is divided as well as the most important cities and towns. From this it is clear that a Zulu living in (say) Tembe, close to the Mozambique border, would have other different experiences to one living in the mountainous area of Underberg, which is close to the Free State and Lesotho.

4. Age: The age of performers is also an important determinant nowadays. Certain things only appeal to members of the Zulu society based on their age.

5. Gender: Another important determinant in cultural practices, possibilities, and choices.

6. Social status or class:This concerns differences based on finances/economics, education, livelihood, and exposure.

7. Religion: A variety of religious practices are also an integral part of Zulu society and include traditional, Pentecostal, charismatic and African Spiritual practices.

Map showing the main regions in KwaZulu-Natal (Courtesy of **Trade & Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN)** a South African trade and inward investment promotion agency)

All these factors determine self-identity and individuality, and enable people to derive or attach meaning to their existence. Culture, therefore, happens in time and its significance is relevant and real *at that time*. What culture represents at any specific time can therefore also differ in significance and interpretation to different individuals and groups. These statements affirm the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz's postulation that culture exists in its moment of occurrence, and leads to the Constructivists' view on authenticity, namely that concepts such as "origin", "real", "natural" and "uniqueness" exist in time and can be attributed to a particular moment and place of occurrence. Even if it is passed on, it is done in such a way that those who receive can also construct or deconstruct the content and meaning thereof. In that way, the meaning of culture is not just in its living, but also in that which is lived.

According to Heidegger, authenticity refers to someone being themselves existentially. His definition goes beyond a mere "being oneself" behaviourally or psychologically; it means to exist according to one's nature or essence. His argument is that existential authenticity is experience-oriented. In other words, the existential self is transient, not enduring, and not conforming to a type: since a person is not authentic or inauthentic all the time, there is, as a result, no authentic self. To Heidegger, being human is to have possibilities and the capacity to choose among them. His idea is that possibilities are sourced in one's individual and communal past which he calls "heritage" and "destiny" respectively (1996, p. 351). Possibilities are experienced as the "world" in which people find themselves. This is a crucial concept for a study of a cultural activity like Zulu dance-performances which are bound to change from time to time, or from group to group, or from person to person.

Since Zulu dance-performances are cultural activities, we must here pause briefly to consider a few definitions of "culture". Wa Thiongó defines it as "a product of a people's history embodying a complete set of values by which a people view themselves and their place in time and space" (Wa Thiongó, 1993, p. 42). This view is echoed by Asante (2003, p. 134) who noted that culture is "the totalization of the historical, artistic, economic, and spiritual aspects of a people's lifestyle". Cabral (1979, p. 141) regards culture as "the fruit of people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence it exerts on the evolution of relations between man and his environment and among men or human groups within a society, as well as between different societies". A reference to culture as *a product of history* is a common denominator in these definitions, which means that discussions about a Zulu cultural activity like dancing will be inadequate and incomplete without referring to Zulu history.

Using Heidegger's concept of existential authenticity as both heritage and destiny, a reference to Zulu history shouldthen essentially be about "heritage and destiny". Indeed, the heritage/destiny concept in Zulu dancing is, among the Zulu people,at the heart of contending views concerning the definition and the acceptance of authenticity/inauthenticity alluded to earlier. The contention concerns whether to hold onto a past heritage or to press forward to a future destiny.

Although this paper focusses on the current popular Zulu culture of dance-performance, it is vitally important to trace this tradition back to the times of the formation of the Greater Zulu Empire by King Shakabetween 1816 and 1828. It is not the intention of this paper to narrate the

entire history and the evolution of the Zulu nation and their cultural practices. The focus is only on more recent historical moments that shaped Zulu dancing, or *ingoma*, as we know it today. [3]

Historically, the Zulu dance tradition focusses mainly on dancing that took the form of team performances, considered a highly-skilled sport, by youth. *Ijadu* is one such very early example. Dhlomo, (1936, p. 56) writes: "Kuthe ngelinye ilanga kwamenwa umkhosi weJadu, uzosinela eMgungundlovu, kuzoqhudelwana izinsizwa zaKwaZulu nezaseMaqadini" ("on one specific day, a ceremonial invitation was set for a competitive *Ijadu* between young men of the Zulu and Qadi clan at uMgungundlovu royal palace"). Bryant (1970, p. 225) also confirms that "[...] Zulus conceived the idea of inter-clan Love Dances (ljadu)... the young men and maidens of any clan would accordingly arrange to meet the young men and maidens of another clan on some spot convenient to both and generally on the veld near by a wood, nominally, for the purpose of competing at the dance, but really with the object of becoming mutually acquainted." Krige (1936, p. 340) describes it as a match-making dance activity when he writes "[…] In former days it was customary for love-dancing or dancing competitions to be held in the veld by the young people of the locality."

The concept of team, or group, dancing remains to this day, and solo dancing is almost unheard of. This is not to say that solos do not occur; on the contrary, individuals are given opportunities to display their prowess. This is, however, always done within the controlled and controlling environment of the group dance. It is not spontaneous but is carefully choreographed to occur at a specific moment within the dance, and to last for a predetermined length of time.

The issue of inter-clan rivalry was re-intensified in the early 1920s to 1930s by the advent of the migrant worker system in and around Durban, the biggest city in KwaZulu-Natal. This period saw the emergence of the two main streams of cultural rivalry among the Zulus in the cities, namely between those who were Christianized and those who were not. The Christianized people seemed to lean more towards westernized forms of cultural expression and performance while the non-Christianized leaned more towards rural-traditional performances using ingrained traditional idioms. At the very least, working-class cultures in the city constantly oscillated between two poles; as Erlmann (1991, p. 57) states, "Those workers who were more firmly and securely incorporated into the urban work force identified with and at least partially accepted

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[3] For the purposes of this paper, I have (following my earlier research) categorized all Zulu dancing accompanied by drumming as *indlamu*, while *ingoma* refers to dancing accompanied by simple clapping and singing (NGEMA, 2007). It should be noted here that *ngoma* is the root word for singing, dancing, healing/medicine and drumming among the Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa. Zulu dances are, however, mostly rooted in song/*igama* as, for example, in the singing of *ihubo lesizwe* (national anthem). In *ihubo*, the performance comprises singing and dancing, with clapping and/or beating of sticks and shields if necessary.

western cultural models, while the more vulnerable sectors, the unemployed and the day laborers, rallied around the symbols of the countryside".

But some of the migrant workers decided not to be affected by these sectorial groupings and thus remained in the middle.They were referred to as *ámagxagxa'* (vagrants) standing on both sides or "marginal people, who like the Xhosa *ábaphakathi'* (middle ones) were neither traditional nor Christian, but somewhere in the middle" (Coplan, 1988, p. 65).

The traditional Zulu dance forms were affected by the migrant workers' participation in domestic, industrial, and mine labour (Coplan 1988, p. 64). The migrant labour system had re-introduced the separation of Zulu workers into their respective clans.This limited the contact between the men in workers' hostels, compounds and slum yards, which in turn intensified the competition vital to male inter-clan dancing in traditional society.

In these years "homeboy" dance teams were established in Durban in particular but also in other industrial and mining towns. Coplan (1988) asserts that homeboy dance teams began to develop new dances with clearly defined aesthetic requirements. The competitions encouraged stylistic innovations and consensus could be reached on the quality of traditional dance-performances. New dances based on traditional idioms (like *isikhuze, is'cathulo, ukukhomikha, isizulu, isibhaca, umzansi, isishameni,* and *ingoma*) were developed, while country dances such as *indlamu* were also performed in the industrial yards (Coplan, 1988, p. 65; Erlmann, 1991, p. 95).

The rivalry mentioned was not simply between "homeboys" groups. It grew into rivalry between domestic, factory and dock workers, all fighting for dominance in the dancing arena. In *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (1991), Erlmann describes the development of distinct phenomena within this context: riots and dance; migrants, criminal gangs, and transformation of traditional Zulu dance; the union, the real thing and a Sunday outing; and self-disciplined citizens. The phenomena cited by Erlmann explain not only how migrant workers responded to the possibilities created bytheir working and living conditions at that time, but also how they projected themselves which in turn brought these possibilities to light.Using Heidegger's model, migrant workers therefore demonstrated three characteristics of authenticity, namely *mineness*, which refers to a recognition that individuals can have possibilities of their own that are not shared with others; *resoluteness*, which refers to the courage and tenacity it takes to claim one's possibilities rather than those of others; and the *situation*, which refers to rare experiences in which people find themselves in a unique place in the world, in a unique situation in relation to the connectedness around them.

The rivalry between workers' dancinggroups might simultaneously also have created grounds for what Heidegger refers to as the seven characteristics of inauthenticity (1996, p. 118-122) which are:

1.   *Being-among-one-another*: a human tendency to identify with others (in this case, home-boys, domestic, stevedores, factory).

2.   *Distantiality*: the effort people make to artificially distinguish themselves from others with whom they identify, usually by emphasizing their status (urban vs rural, domestic vs factory, etc).

3.   *Averageness*: referring to the lack of distinctiveness and specialness among one's shared possibilities.

4.   *Levelled down*:is a result of averageness which restricts one's choices to the safe, tame things that others might do.

5.   *Publicness*: a person's sense that the world is as others experience it, that the public view is right.

6.   *Disburdening*: the abdication of one's responsibility to interpret the world from one's own perspective, deferring instead to the popular shared view.

7.   *Accommodation*: whereby people deceive themselves that their shared views are their own.

Returning to the discussion about *Ingoma*, let us refer to what Heidegger regards as the inauthentic *Dasein* (self), that follows the norms and takes them for what they are (Belu, 2004, p. 3). In this regard I wish to relate twopersonal experiences. I have several times visited the tourist destination known as "Shakaland", situated south of Eshowe (refer to the map on p. 5). Although this is not the place where King Shaka situated his capital, it is now presented as the place where the tourist canexperience the "real" life and times of the Zulu people during the reign of Shaka, including the mandatory *indlumu* (a ceremonial war dance) dance-performance. This arguably gained its popularity – and the perception that it is the one, true, Zulu dance – through the on-stage performances of Johnny Clegg and the two groups associated with him, Juluka and Savuka. International as well as domestic tourists seem to enjoy the experience thoroughly despite the fact that it in no way can be considered to be an "authentic"reflection either of Zulu history or of Zulu dance-performances. As Ngubane (1976) has documented, Shaka and his mother Nandi, who had suffered humiliation and rejection by their clan, set out to establish a society in which a person could realize the promise of being human regardless of gender or status; a society where

they would be able to make the best possible use of their lives in the light of their choices. From the day that Shaka was born, Nandi had drilled into his mind that he was a man of destiny and that this order came from the spirit of the ancestor. The word Zulu means "Sky" and according to oral history, Zulu was the name of the ancestor who founded the Zulu royal line in about 1670. His destiny was thus to be as high and as vast as the sky itself.

I like to compare the perceived "authentic" tourist attraction of "Shakaland" toa perceived "inauthentic" tourist experience. On a day in 2003 some of my students at the University of Zululand were asked to perform for visitors from the USA. What was presented was a choreographed piece aimed at showing what the contemporary Zulu child regards as his/her experience as far as dancing is concerned. It was a rhythmic piece in modernized dance costumes that presented a fusion of dance moves from the past to the present; it did not explicitly show foot stamping and the ancient regalia ofmaidens. Because it appeared"inauthentic", one senior academic remarked to our visitors,"Don't worry friends, we will take you to Shakaland, and there you will see the real Zulu dances". I was quickly reminded of what Shaka had had to contend with when he changed things which he regarded as obstacles towards an individual's freedom to choose his/her destiny from his/her heritage.

Belu (2004, p. 2) states that, in crafting theories about being, philosophers had to set up a premise for *being* which led to the conclusion that people are often lost in the *'they'* and therefore deny their own being. The question that arises is whether the *ingoma*dance-performers who fulfil only tourists' expectations are lost in the *they* and consequently deny their own being? Indeed, individuals or groups of *ingoma*dance-performers are not separate from the rest of society (*they*) since all live within a broader society. In Heidegger's view, the *they* is everyone, while also being no one. This structural system has been put into place for individuals/groupsof *ingoma* dance-performersby individuals/groups of *ingoma*dance-performers. In dealing and interacting with the *they*, *ingoma* individual/group performers find themselves inauthentically experiencing the world.

Heidegger (1996, p. 158) further suggests that, when people deal with others, they can either "leap in" for them or "leap ahead" of them. He believes that "leaping in" for others is inauthentic, while "leaping ahead"is authentic. In the case of *ingoma* dance-performers and dance-performances, "leaping in" will cause performers to do as expected, and by so doing solve not only their own problems but also that of others. Thus, in the imaginary, ideal "Zulu world" created at "Shakaland", dance-performers "leap in", dancing as expected, and wearing regalia that meet imaginary requirements, to satisfactorily resolve the expectations that have been created both within their own society (to maintain a distant heritage) and beyond it.

But when "leaping ahead"of others, *ingoma* dance-performers will take responsibility for themselves and allow others to do the same. In that case everyone will be, or should be, exposed to his/her possibilitiesthus creating space for creativity which allow and encourage others to appreciate performances in their own possible ways, and thus allowed to be"true to one's self".

Conclusion

Inauthentic *ingoma*dance-performers are ones who, for fear that the practise will die out, continue to project it as a non-transforming and unchanging cultural practice. Steiner and Reisinger (2006, p. 308) opine that when talking about "authenticity", it is important to remember that it is always about free choices, not about maintaining traditions or being true to some past concept of an individual, social, or cultural identity. Even those traditional cultures that some people might like to protect and preserve as timeless are entitled to change and evolve in response to their changing circumstances; authenticity always is a self-judgement (STEINER; REISINGER, 2006, p. 311).

Surely, *ingoma* as we know it today has been crafted by changing times and the transformative experiences of the people who created, performed, and appreciated it before, during, and after the migrant labour system. The Zulu people themselves are products of changing and transformative experiences championed by King Shaka, Princess Mkabayi, and Queen Nandi. As negative as its impact might have been in other respects, the migrant labour system became the changing times and transformative experiences for the Zulus. Hegelian thesis and antithesis that characterized these times and experiences between those who wanted to "leap ahead" and those who wanted to "leap in" created a perfect synthesis for the evolution of *ingoma*dance-performances among the Zulus.

As to whether an*ingoma* dance-performanceis authentic or inauthentic, it isthe performers them selves who decide. They are all free to define them selves, determine their own destiny, discover their own meaning, and respond to their own world in their own way, not as others expect. Claiming and exercising that freedom is the ultimate expression of existential authenticity (STEINER; REISINGER, 2006, p. 312).

As mentioned earlier, "Zulu" was the name given to someone as a metaphorical instruction to force a destiny. The word*izulu,* for example, is often translated as "sky". But to the Zulu people, *izulu* is a combination of various parts that make up a whole. Sometimes the whole is reduced into itsparts, and"rain", "thunderstorm", or"weather" which could all individually assume the name *izulu*. The individual parts of *izulu* are the agents of change in the lives or

forms of all that is in and beneath it. Whether we talk of the sun rising and setting, moon full or dark, seasons, cold and hot days, cloudy skies and clear, rainy or sunny days, all tell a story of ever-shifting and ever changing, whether for good or for bad.

What this means is that a true Zulu is the one who is less attached to any description, explanation, dream, or image of being a true Zulu, because he/she knows that all is in constant shift, and that all will change. In fact, he/she should be as distinctiveas those parts of the sky (whole) that represent and emulate change, or a catalyst for change. Stamping or any other kinesthetics in an *ingoma*dance-performance are not what is important; they are part of a bigger whole. Stamping the ground and lifting the feet towards the sky should be viewed as the way of bringing together the "high and low" of the universe; gods in the sky and ancestors below the earth. Stamping and stepping during *ingoma*dance-performances are metaphoric ascents to *izulu*, the sky.TheZulu dance*indlumu*, therefore, encompasses not only the name for a dance done by Zulus, but becomes a metaphor for climbing a rope towards *izulu*. The *imbongi* (court bard) once praised Shaka as follows:

Masiphoth'intamb'ende Menzi kaJama,	Let's weave a cord of destiny, O Menzi, scion of Jama
Siye'mazulwini	That, to heavens beyond the reach of spirit-forms
Lapho nezithutha zingeyukufika;	We may climb (so long must the cord be)
Zobesakhwele, Zephukamazwanyana	The spirit-forms will break their tiny toes if they dare to climb

(Translation Ngubane, 1976)

It should be noted though, that here that the *imbongi* usage of the word *izithutha* (line 3) is not the usual way of referring to the ancestral spirits.Instead, it was his way of referring indirectly to those who were still pushing to retain the old ways (heritage) they had inherited from their fathers, and to which Shaka was opposed. The bard was therefore saying that those who are still holding on to the discredited past are fools who should not be allowed to reach a destiny as high as the sky itself.

The significance of the results from this study tells us that if research in *ingoma*dance-performances wishes to speak about existential authenticity, not only from a Heideggerian perspective but also from a Zulu perspective, it should perhaps be less concerned with "the

forced smiles of cultural village performers and personal narratives. Rather, it should question the world and human existence." (TURNER; MANNING, 1988)

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