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Zili(zo)pendwa: Dance Music and Nostalgia in East Africa

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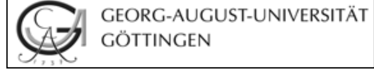

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Tourism and Imagining Musical Traditions on the East African Coast: Harmony and Disharmony

Ivan Vander biesen and Christiaan De Beukelaer

Abstract

This article presents an analysis of the invention of tradition within musics created by and related to Swahili culture. We focus on the ways the local tourist industry deals with musical heritage. Through the analysis of history and praxis of the traditional music of Zanzibar, we will showcase how the musical heritage is dealt with in four cases: 1) the invented tradition of beni *music, 2) the musical heritage of* taarab *(specifically the Music Culture Club of Zanzibar), and 3) the music of the* Sidi Sufis*, the recently re-invented traditional African-Indian mystic music of Gujarat. These traditions were embraced by the local population, yet all for different reasons. This, in contrast to 4), the heritage of Farrokh Bulsara, otherwise known as Freddie Mercury, a Zanzibar born Parsi from India, whose musical heritage is not embraced by the whole local community of Zanzibar and whose legacy recently caused a discussion between the locally-oriented tourist industry and the one oriented more towards the North Atlantic sphere. Our aim is not to merely illustrate the dialectics of tradition, but to link these very dialectics to the problematic position that the resulting cultural difference takes. How are these "traditions" framed? What role do they have? Whom are they enacted for? As such, this article is more than a mere illustration of invented traditions or imagined communities, as it provides compelling examples of the expediency of culture in the transnational cultural market, and the influence of the global demand for traditional experiences, without disregarding its boundedness to its places of origin.*

Invention of Tradition

This article departs from an analysis of the "invention of tradition" within music created by and related to Swahili culture. We focus on the ways the local tourist industry deals with its musical heritage. Through the analysis of history and praxis of the traditional music of Zanzibar, we will showcase how this music is dealt with in four cases: 1) the invented tradition of *beni* music, 2) the musical heritage of *taarab*

(specifically, the Music Culture Club of Zanzibar), and 3) the music of the *Sidi Sufis*, the recently re-invented traditional African-Indian mystic music of Gujarat. These traditions were embraced by the local population, yet all for different reasons. This, in contrast to 4), the heritage of Farrokh Bulsara, otherwise known as Freddie Mercury, a Zanzibar-born Parsi from India, whose musical heritage is not embraced by the whole local community of Zanzibar and whose legacy recently caused a discussion between the locally-oriented tourist industry and the Western-oriented one.

These four examples, related to Zanzibar and Swahili culture, will form the basis for analyzing the relation of music with the tourist industries in Zanzibar. The tradition of *taarab* music and the (invented) tradition of *beni* are locally maintained by musical societies in Zanzibar and Lamu, but unknown to the majority of tourists who visit the East African coast. The repertoire of the *Sidi Sufis,* which draws on ethnological observations, was revived by ethnomusicologists to cater to the "World Music" export market, where it is primarily performed on the stages of Euro-American cultural theaters. Farrokh Bulsara, however, is mainly accepted by tourists from the North Atlantic realm, and is still the cause of controversies in Old Stone Town where many inhabitants dissociate themselves from his music and his way of life.

The basis for this analysis is the seminal work of Terence Ranger. He argued that the invention of tradition has left two ambiguous legacies in the history of the African continent. This very ambiguity is key in the context of our research:

> One is the body of invented traditions imported from Europe which in some parts of Africa still exercises an influence on ruling class culture which it has largely lost in Europe itself. (…) The second ambiguous legacy is that of "traditional" African culture; the whole body of reified "tradition" invented by colonial administrators, missionaries, "progressive traditionalists," elders and anthropologists. (1983:211–262)

In the context of this article, we will primarily focus on the second "ambiguous legacy" to build our work upon. It is clear, however, that Ranger's argument is sufficiently well known and has been amply illustrated throughout the past three decades. It should be noted that the invention of tradition was in no way limited to the colonial enterprise. In Tanzania for example, as Perullo argues, the post-colonial reconstruction during the first years of Tanganyika's and Zanzibar's independence gradually moved away from the vibrant cosmopolitan cultural influences of Latin, jazz and other exogenous music. At the same time, the rather open definition of musical genres became more rigid and became instrumental to the nationalist aspirations of the independence government (Perullo 2011:55). Building on this dynamic understanding, we have thus adopted a more dialectical approach to the use of tradition as a cultural signifier. Building on Edmondson, not only the "invention" of tradition, but equally the "counter-invention" and "re-invention" will be discussed (Edmondson 2001:153–70; Edmondson 2007:65–84).

Our aim is not to merely illustrate the dialectics of tradition, but to link these very dialectics to the problematic position the resulting cultural difference takes. How are these "traditions" framed? What role do they have? Whom are they enacted for?

Discussing the culturally and geographically disparate but conceptually similar issues (in comparison to those in and around Zanzibar) Bolivian musicians encounter while performing Andean music in Japan, Bigenho argues that:

> [T]he late capitalist laboring in cultural difference is fundamentally driven by this juxtaposition between the necessarily deterritorialized work conditions and the ultra-territorialized conceptualization of culture as something spatially bounded and unproblematically authentic. (Bigenho 2006:109–10)

In this context, we will build on the literature on music industries in a global context to explore the use of music in the global market place and through (cultural) tourism. More specifically, we will link these theoretical observations to the four disparate Zanzibari examples outlined above.

Beni

In February 2006, an *ngoma* group performed in the Forodhani Gardens in front of Zanzibar's Old Fortress. As most *ngoma* groups, they were composed of a song leader, drummers and instrumentalists, and were referred to as a "local" *beni ya polisi* participating in the *Sauti ya Busara* Festival.[1] It was intriguing because *beni* was known as Terence Ranger's famous example of the "invention of tradition," an example which acted in a competitive and interactive context, not normally staged in front of an audience (Ranger 1975:211–262). Ranger referred to its disappearance due to the changing context of performance, since *beni* "(…) has proved to have been deeply rooted, creative, and versatile (… and was) in fact derived from the long-standing competitive dance traditions of the Swahili coast" (Ranger 1983:164). So it is not surprising to read in the later literature that "*beni ngoma* groups attempted to adapt to changing circumstances, (…) but these [attempts] did not help, and new music and social changes led to the ultimate disappearance of *beni ngomas,*" as they had existed before as an interactive performance with the audience and not as an art performance on stage for a non-Swahili speaking audience (Bender 1991:212). *Beni* should have died out, but apparently it rose again in relation to a festival about world music aimed for tourists, a completely different context. Could both the locally-oriented *beni* and the raised again version of 2006 be connected and integrated in one tradition?

The origins of *beni* (a word derived from the English word "band") are to be found on the East African coast at the end of the nineteenth century (Ranger 1975:9–44; Martin 1991:72–81). It existed during British colonial rule, with which its appearance and esthetics was imbued. *Beni* dancers responded with disciplined precision to *ngoma* music with large military drum and brass instruments, or in the words of an anonymous missionary:

> The Beni Society is a hierarchical and disciplined organization, with social, military and other functions. The society is divided into two rival branches, the Alinoti and the Marini, which differ from each other only in the respective types of members

> recruited. The society has common funds with which to assist its members in certain cases. The social or recreative activities consist of a special dance, performed in a suitable place, such as, for example, the center of the village. (Anonymous 1938:74–75)

The *beni* society was organized on the basis of military rank with a King as leader. Their clothing was appropriate for their rank: a khaki uniform with markers and badges of their European army rank and titles.

The dance was popular in Swahili towns and, while it was perfectly inscribed in local urban traditions, it was visually and artistically new. Did *beni* performers want to adjust to the British and German colonial rulers, was it a mass "Stockholm syndrome" by which they sympathized with the colonizers, or did they want to ridicule the European powers? Or were the creators of Swahili music and dance so creative that they could easily integrate the new influences of their time?[2] Its popularity, and its combination of European military features with Swahili lyrics and tradition, made it an invented tradition, which, however, fit perfectly into the traditional urban and artistic culture of the Swahili town. As we will argue, artistic innovations did not emerge at the Swahili coast purely by incorporating foreign elements, but the political and cultural traditions in town as such were key for the artistic processes.

Beni came into existence in Lamu and Mombasa via circles of young Muslims in the 1890s, at the time European military and naval activities peaked in those regions. It integrated the European military emergence into the expressions of urban Swahili culture, since cultural associations already had their functions within those cities. This process of creativity was embedded in the culture of *upinzani* (literally, the habit of opposition). This principle of competitive opposition could be rhetorically fuelled by anything and in any circumstances (Askew 2003:616–619).[3] A typical Swahili town is historically divided into neighborhoods surrounding the Friday Mosque. The street along the mosque was often the dividing line between the spatially, socially and culturally opposed neighborhoods (Horton and Middleton 2000:115–139; Vander biesen 2006:121–149). The associations standing for one side had their patronage and links in their respective neighborhood. These created networks and oppositions within town (for instance Zena vs. Suudi in Lamu, today Langoni vs. Mkomani) and each neighborhood had their own dance, hierarchy, and patronage, whereby music, poetry and dance were the perfect media by which they could compete.

European military arrivals could easily be integrated in this system. In Malindi a *beni* association was called Kingi and the opposite association Sultani. Both associated with the dress, music and lyrics referring to their name: the Sultani had the flag of Zanzibar and the Kingi the Union Jack. In Lamu, those *beni* associations were called Kingi and Scotchi. Up-to-the-minute smartness was highly appreciated in the oral battle with lyrics,[4] and so were the names, texts, clothing and other features of the *beni* associations.

The First World War enforced this tradition because British and German East Africa were also at war. Lamu tradition, however, was hardly affected; because of their geographical location, they watched from aside (Ranger 1975:45–76). After WWI,

the *beni* phenomenon spread out over eastern Africa, Tanganyika[5] and even reached eastern Congo.[6] In Mombasa the competition between Arabs and Africans was fueled by the presence of the harbor.

Beni was created in the dynamics of expressing oppositions in popular culture. The dynamism as such could be called the tradition within Swahili towns. The form in which it was performed changed constantly but the dynamism remained. So the format of *beni* in this dynamism went out of fashion in the 1950s; the *upinzani*, however, remained. The competitive entertainment was replaced by groups formed in jazz bars in Dar es Salaam which had different dynamics among the musicians, however, battles between jazz bands were no exception.

In Zanzibar the dynamism of *upinzani* was of course also present, however, it was more expressed in *taarab*. *Beni* never really broke through in the same format as in the Swahili town on the mainland, because *taarab* expressed the game of *upanzani*. So, we hardly had the chance to mention the city where the "local" *beni* performance in 2006 puzzled us. Formally, it was a perfect *beni* performance as mentioned in the literature and it happened in one of the popular gathering places in town, but here it was performed in a different social setting. It was staged for non-locals. As if it was re-invented for the tourists, as a curiosum people might have heard of in writings because the original format, in which interaction with the audience is quintessential, evaporated and was replaced by other musical forms that expressed the tradition of competitive opposition. The *beni* tradition was not picked up by the cultural policies of the post-independent governments, as it did not fit the idea of an unified Tanzanian culture (which mainly focused on mainland *ngoma*), nor was the genre counter-invented by performing groups, supporting the idea of unifying Tanzanian culture through music discussed by Edmondson (2001:153–170), and Perullo (2011).

Linking this practice to the broader cultural politics and logic of the music industries, two remarks can be made. On the one hand, *beni* has been invented at least twice. Initially, it was a musical practice inscribed in the (invented) cultural relations between Zanzibar dwellers and their colonial rulers. More recently, the musical practice has taken up a touristic function since it was performed in an internationally-known festival on the island. As such, this practice refers to the first ambiguous legacy described by Ranger, but it also incorporates the second ambiguous legacy as an additional colonial and post-colonial layer.

Throughout this section, we have already elaborated on how *beni* developed in the colonial era. What follows is a discussion of how this music has undergone significant shifts in its adoption as a visually and sonically attractive commodity for the international tourist market. Music industries are culturally significant in two interlinked ways. Obviously, music itself bears considerable cultural signification as a vehicle of symbolic meaning. This element has been asserted throughout this section, tracing the rich (invented) tradition in which *beni* is inscribed. The way *beni* is presently used in a socio-economic way, on the other hand is cultural too. Whether primarily as *upinzani* or primarily as a basis for economic trade with tourists, the

cultural life of musical practice is in itself meaningful. Within this context, Kopytoff argues that:

> From a cultural perspective, the production of commodities is also a cultural and cognitive process: commodities must be not only produced materially as things, but also culturally marked as being a certain kind of thing. Out of the total range of things available in a society, only some of them are considered appropriate for marking as commodities. Moreover, the same things may be treated as a commodity by one person and as something else by another. Such shifts in and differences in whether and when a thing is a commodity reveal a moral economy that stands behind the objective economy of visible transactions. (1986:64)

In a similar vein, Sahlins contends that:

> [C]onceiving the creation and movement of goods solely from their pecuniary quantities (exchange-value), one ignores the cultural code of concrete properties governing 'utility' and so remains unable to account for what is in fact produced. (1978:166)

As such, the balance between cultural, symbolic, and economic meaning of *beni* has changed over time and continues to do so:

> [T]he world we live in today is characterized by a new role for the imagination in social life. To grasp this new role, we need to bring together the old idea of images, especially mechanically produced images (in the Frankfurt School sense); the idea of the imagined community (in Anderson's sense); and the French idea of the imaginary (imaginaire) as a constructed landscape of collective aspirations […] now mediated through the complex prism of modern media. (Appadurai 1996:31)

The argument here is not that such evolutions should be objected out of hand. Yet understanding that the use of traditions in catering to largely economic aims does transform, or re-invent, those practices at their cultural core at virtually all levels. The understanding of *beni* as central to the imaginary of Swahili local life in the early stages, and as a tourist imaginary of a (lost) tradition on Zanzibar, illustrates the complex and variegated position of musical practice.

Taarab

Taarab can be seen as the traditional musical genre of Zanzibar. Contrary to *beni* it is performed on stage, and still actively created, which makes it easy to perform in cultural centers in and outside Zanzibar, record it on CD, and give the "island of spices" a distinctive sound. However, similar to *beni*, *taarab* is rooted in the creative Swahili tradition of *upinzani,* and it is linked to Sufism. *Taarab* was the first kind of music to be recorded in East Africa in 1928 (Perullo 2011:43). This has generated lasting interest in, and acclaim for music throughout the region. The lyrics are in Kiswahili, and often heavily contextualized in local culture, religion and socio-political events. This makes the external reception of *taarab* difficult. Internally, *taarab* is perceived as a creative, delightful,[7] and dynamic cultural product. Bridging both worlds, the touristic and the local, however, remains hard.[8] Few tourists visiting

the island encounter staged *taarab*. Many leave their beach only for a day to visit Stone Town, where *taarab* is performed at places such as the outdoor theater inside the Old Fortress.

The relations between creative processes, the context in which music survives and is performed, and the audience—in this case the tourist—are complex (Fair 1997:256; Khamis 2005:136; Kirkegaard 2007:1–9). Music is inseparable from human interaction and their identities, because music functions as a mirror of society, and it even creates and shapes it (Bohlman 2003:5–30). Music, and certainly *taarab*, is part of the oral/aural tradition, and reflects Zanzibari life. This makes *taarab* often hermetic and incomprehensible in different contexts. This difficulty to keep the performance and its socio-cultural context together creates the danger to transform *taarab* to a museological artifact on stage, disconnected from its origins and context of creation. The same might go for anthropologists and art historians who only study the artifact and not its underlying socio-cultural functioning:

> They seldom tried to get to the roots of the aesthetic principle on which the art was executed; as a result they generally devised blanket theories that had an exotic appeal but were incapable of giving us an insight into the fundamental creative spirit that brought such art to be. (Okphewo 1979:1)

Understanding the creative spirit of *taarab* is fundamental to understand its relation to tourism (Kirkegaard 2001:59–76). The origins of Zanzibari *taarab* are to be found at the court of sultan Bargash in 1837–88 (Fair 2001:171–174; Khamis 2001:145–56; Topp-Fargion 1994:153–166). Bargash ruled Zanzibar from 1870–88, yet in the ten years before this he traveled throughout Europe, India and the Arab world where he got to know about the political usefulness of patronage in the arts.[9] In Cairo he encountered *taarab,* and introduced it to his court in a context by which he had to reaffirm the power of the Zanzibari sultans. He used *taarab* to make the city and his court a cultural center that glorified his rule. This of course stressed the distinction between the Omani inhabitants and the rest of the population of Zanzibar.

The music introduced at the court was played with *nasi* (flute), *qanun* (zither), *tari* (tambourin), *udi* (lute), *dumbak* (drum) and fiddle. The lyrics were sung in Arabic. *Taarab* was, around 1900, connected with the young, male, wealthy and politically-connected families of Stone Town. It was staged in the private quarters of the sultan and kept secret from the population. Non-Omani court members, however, gained power and British brass bands also came to perform in Zanzibar. The first *taarab* bands also began to compete with each other in the *beni-ngoma* tradition (*upanzani*), namely Nadi Ikhwan Saafa (Brothers of Purity, 1905) and Nadi Shuub (1910). Both organized public gatherings such as picnics in which they try to impress the other bands by gaining huge audiences. Nevertheless, *taarab* remained in the beginning an elitist and Arabic genre. It strengthened the social relations between the *taarab* club members, the aristocracy and the ideology of *ustaarabu,* i.e., being like an Arab, civilized and refined (Larsen 2008:32).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Zanzibar was a dynamic and fast-changing African city and island in the Indian Ocean (Sheriff 2001:301–318; Vander biesen

2008:513–530). The slave trade was ended and slavery was abolished, by which many freed slaves were emancipated as a labor force in the city. The booming trade and economy in Zanzibar not only connected the island more firmly with the Indian Ocean and the African continent, but Stone Town also attracted the newly freed slaves, who settled in and developed the Ng'ambo neighborhood next to Stone Town.

In this social context the number of Qadiriyya Sufis grew (Bang 2003:148–150; Fair 2001:90; Khamis 2001:139; Kirkegaard 2007:3; Topp-Fargion 1994:153–160). These Sufi brotherhoods were well received in Ng'ambo, and helped to develop the freed slaves into full participants in the cultural dynamics of Zanzibar. The Omani-dominated *taarab* would soon become a truly Zanzibari medium. The social background of the performers could be Omani or North African, that of freed African slaves, male or female. The freed slaves participated in the cross-fertilization of the cultural landscape of the city. *Taarab* created a medium for the expression of issues that concerned the whole society in which *upinzani* could play and could delight the audience.

In Ng'ambo, *taarab* underwent an Africanization, Swahilization, de-Arabization, or maybe better an *ngoma-ization* due to its entering the *ngoma* scenes (Topan 1994:149–150).

In this context Siti binti Saaidi began her career.[10] She was born in the early 1880s from parents that moved as migrant workers from Tanganyika to Zanzibar. Siti would move to Stone Town in 1910, where she was introduced to music, the Arabic language and Qur'an. Contrary to the Ikhawani Saafa Musical Club, however, she was not directly connected to Sufism, but with the social dynamics of Ng'ambo. She would become a female star in a male-dominated society, and perform both anywhere in town and also at the court.

Living and rehearsing in Ng'ambo, she would sing in Kiswahili as well, first as a kind of interlude but later on as a means to interact with the audience that witnessed the rehearsals of the group. She incorporated African, Swahili, South Asian and *upanzani* into the Arab genre. Mwaalim Shaaban, born in Malawi in 1900, wrote many lyrics.[11] These lyrics contained local and political news, and reflected opinions of the Ng'ambo neighborhood created during the rehearsals.

The subtlety in many of the lyrics made it possible that the songs didn't always flatter sultan Khalifa (1911–1960), even during the performances at his court. Excluded from formal discussions, the lyrics denounced injustice. The lyrics could refer to injustice the band members themselves had experienced such as being forced to throw food at each other like monkeys during the performances at the court. This incident became a trope in the city and as a consequence Siti started to sing *Kigalawa,* a song originating from Lamu but expressing the popular opinions in town. The song allegorically expressed in a subtle and sophisticated way the importance of every human being, poor or rich, all deserving respect, just as the outrigger of a canoe supports the whole boat.

In the case of the song *Kigalawa*, the critiques were expressed allegorically, but sometimes it happened more directly, as in *Wala Hapana Hasara* (There is no Loss).

The lyrics of this song denounced the corrupt behavior of Bwana Mselem, an Arab landowner and colonial official in charge of the permits for bands. *Taarab* stimulated political awareness since the inhabitants of Ng'ambo did not have any formal political influence. The allegoric tendencies made it for the audiences a hermetic genre since not all were aware of the rumors, or familiar with the up-to-the-minute smartness.

Siti became a famous and rather wealthy star in Zanzibar; however, she did not gain any formal political powers. Her powers were the ability to criticize happenings and injustice, as was done in the antiphonal and dialogue lyrics of *"Wewe Paka*" (You, Cat). In the lyrics of this song, the abuse of women is condemned as well as the indolence of the judges.

Swahili	English
Wewe paka kwani waniudhiyani?	You cat, why do you vex me?
Wewe paka unaudhi majirani	You cat, you do harass neighbors
Utapigwa ukalipiwa faini	You'll be beaten and a fine will be paid
Ukalipiwe faini	A fine will be paid
Mimi paka sasa napigiwani?	I, the cat, why am I beaten?
Mimi paka sili cha mtu si nani	I, the cat, I don't eat anybody's food
N'najuta kuingia wibandani	I regret to enter the hut

Fig. 1: Text for "Wewe Paka" (You Cat), by Siti binti Saaidi (Fair 2001:207; Khamis 2004:18–19; Topp-Fargion 2007: Track 3).

Beside the "ideal" Arab *taarab* of the court (the critical songs), there was also the *taarab* for entertainment, played at weddings or religious festivities such as Maulidi.[12] Today, it is those songs that are performed most often. Courtship, urban romanticism and other love songs with a realistic touch were performed as if they were an advice column in a newspaper.

In 1928 Siti would be the first Swahili singer to record her songs (Fair 2001:246–263; Graebner 2004:171–198). In a way, she gave the voiceless a voice, but of course the context of the early twentieth-century Zanzibar gave the lyrics their meaning, so it is more correct to say she recorded the living memory of Ng'ambo. Abdulkarim Hakim Khan of Gramophone Company, the African and Asian arm of His Master's Voice (HMV), convinced Siti to record songs in Bombay. By 1931, she recorded 28 records and HMV introduced through *taarab* the African audiences that awoke from slavery. Other companies would follow. Kiswahili was for them the ideal language. In the European minds, it was more developed and civilized than the up-country cultures, and they opened up a new market. Zanzibaris saw the new technology as an uplifting opportunity. The Swahili poet Shaaban Robert saw her records as "a great light in the darkness" (Robert 1991:15). The dialect of Zanzibar (Kiunguja) was promoted, Ng'ambo felt recognized, and even the *ngoma* and *beni* bands integrated *taarab* in their music. Siti became a symbol of modernity.

The independence and its consecutive integration in Tanzania, and the emergence of cassettes, satellite TV and the CD, made *taarab* evolve (Khamis 2005:154–

155). Modernized versions such as *mipasho* and *taa-rap* became more popular than the ideal or romantic *taarab*. In 1964, many existing bands were put together in the Zanzibar Culture Musical Club on the initiative of the government (Topp-Fargion 1994:161–164).[13] It was promoted as the traditional music of Zanzibar. Their music was less ideal Arab, and underwent a process of re-invention by allowing the influences of *ngoma* and less strophed lyrics. In the mid-eighties, groups such as Ukhwani Saafa counteracted this evolution by using local rhythms and quicker tempos. They had to participate in the musical *upinzani* in the city.

While *taarab* links and connects to a variety of musical traditions, the music doesn't seem to be embraced by tourists or international music markets. To create the same emotional and aesthetic affect for tourists that *taarab* has for local communities seems difficult, mostly because of the language and the necessity to be up-to-date about the happenings in the city and world. These are the main reasons that *taarab* seems to be too hermetic.

Farrokh Bulsara

The case study of Farrokh Bulsara, better known as Freddie Mercury, is rife with controversy. On the one hand the attempt in 2006 to celebrate his sixtieth birthday on the island caused demonstrations and a wave of torching bars, and on the other hand tourists loved to book a prearranged tour in Stone Town to experience the places where their idol spent his childhood.[14]

Farrokh Bulsara was born the child of a typical Zanzibari-Indian family in the Zanzibar Governmental Hospital (Jones 2001:29–62). His birth certificate mentioned he was the son of the British-Indian Bomi and Jer Bulsara of the "Parsee" race. Zanzibar, in 1946 still a British Protectorate, had been connected through trade and migration with India for centuries (Metcalf 2007:165–203; Nair 2008:77–94). British rule made those connections stronger, especially those with Bombay. Many Indians came to East Africa to work in the colonial administration centered in Zanzibar. Farrokh's father Bomi was employed as a cashier at the High Court of Zanzibar. His office was based in the Beit al Ajaib, the House of Wonders, the late-nineteenth century building erected by sultan Bargash bin Said. He and his family were Parsi, the locally-used term for Zoroastrians originating from Bombay.[15] They participated in the cultural mixture in Zanzibar like Zanzibari with other origins.

The Bulsaras had a comfortable life in Zanzibar and could even afford an *ayah* (nanny) for Farrokh and his sister Kashmira. Farrokh was sent to the Anglican Missionary School till he was eight. Then his parents sent him to the St. Peters Church of England School in Panchgani, near Bombay, where Bomi's sister Jer lived. There he had his Navjote ceremony (*Sedreh pushi*), a Zoroastrian ritual that purifies the mind and soul.[16] Near the cosmopolitan city of Bombay, Farrokh explored his musical talents.[17]

He returned to Zanzibar in 1963 in order to complete his education at the Roman Catholic St Joseph Convent School. Shortly after, the family left for London, because of the revolution on 14 January 1964 that followed the independence of Zanzibar the year before.[18] The revolution was hostile towards the Arabian and Asian presence in Zanzibar. During his studies in London, Freddie Mercury, as Farrokh renamed himself, became the front man of the band Queen and started building his fame. He never referred to his roots, nor did he want to become a rock star with African and Asian roots, nevertheless he worshipped Jimi Hendrix. This lack of reference to his roots during his lifetime was one of the criticisms levied at him by many Zanzibaris. He indeed lived a different life, having left the island at a young age.

Local people of Zanzibar only got to know Queen through the controversies associated with the band. The fact that he embraced the life of a rock & roll star and was gay[19] was like a red cape to a bull for an Islamic group known as the *Jumuiya ya Uamsho na Mihadhara ya Kiislamu* (the Society for the Propagation and Lectures in Islam).[20] In 2006 they organized demonstrations against the celebrations of his sixtieth birthday that would have taken place on 2 September, and several bars were demolished. Sheikh Azzan Hamdani declared in a press release, that "We (Uamsho) are ready to join forces against the party because we had information that a number of gays from abroad had come to take part," and Abdallah Said Ali explained, "Associating Mercury with Zanzibar degrades our island as a place of Islam."[21]

The clash with tourism could not be bigger. Mercury tours were organized so tourists could visit the house where he grew up, the swimming pool and playground where he spent his leisure time, the restaurants owned by his family and many more curiosities.[22] The local tour agencies motivate their tours by saying that their main agenda is to promote tourism, the fact Freddie Mercury was born in Zanzibar, and that he is part of their history.

It might surprise tourists that Zanzibar is not primarily Islamic, but a rather harmonious mixture of African, Asian, Arabian and European cultures and religions. The relation Queen fans have with Zanzibar, however, rather seems to be a constructed fact in the search for the childhood of their idol. Freddie Mercury never referred to it, or did he? In the song *Seven Seas of Rhye,*[23] he describes a fantasy realm created together with his sister (Jones 2001:37), and the mysteries of Zoroaster can easily be found in the lyrics: the four elements fire (flash), air (sky), earth and water (sea), and references to the soul and mind (Habashi 2000:109–115; Stausberg 2009:217–253).

While Freddie Mercury has clear geographical roots in Zanzibar, his music bears only very limited (implicit) reference to his background. In this context, as a result, the imaginary of music and its provenance is not fuelled by the music itself, but rather by the personal history of the musician. We have shown that Bulsara did not play out his background, even though he is and remains historically connected to the island. The way his persona suits a tourist imaginary is—as a result—of a largely different nature. Within this context, the tourist gaze, as described by Urry, seems quite applicable:

> There is the seeing of particular signs, such as the typical English village, the typical American skyscraper, the typical German beer-garden, the typical French chateau, and so on. This mode of gazing shows how tourists are in a way semioticians, reading the landscape for signifiers of certain pre-established notions or signs, derived from various discourses of travel and tourism. (Urry 1990:12–3)

The major concern for the tourist embarking on a "Mercury tour" is not to revive the spirit of the music or the life of the musician (as is arguably the case for Beatles-fans in Liverpool), but to gaze at the *roots* that bear little connection to the subject of their fandom.

Countering the realm of exogenous "modernity" associated with the music and life-style of Farrokh Bulsara, some Muslims of Zanzibar draw on a counter-invention of their own ideal of a tradition to exclude the front man of Queen—and his fans—from the history of Zanzibar. Both tourists and locals thus create their own imaginary in which Bulsara features prominently, or is merely present on the surface, respectively.

Sidi *Goma*

Since October 2002, a troupe of Sidi musicians and dancers—Sidi being the Afro-Indian members of the African diaspora in India—has been touring and performing in India and the international circuit of traditional and world music venues (Dunning 2004:14). After participating in a participatory action research project[24] under the guidance of ethnomusicologist Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy[25] Sidis[26]toured around the world and in India. Their tour was managed by KAPA productions[27] from London, and their all-India tour of 2005 by the Archives and Research Center of Ethnomusicology of the American Institute for Indian Studies.

The first discussions and preparations for the PAR project on Sidi music dated from 2000 when Sidi music was first "discovered" and explored (Catlin-Jairazbhoy 2008:257–268). Catlin-Jairazbhoy and her staff found a musical practice and dance (*goma*) in Gujarat, which did not have a counterpart anywhere else in India. References to East Africa, however, were obvious and fit perfectly with the known historical origins of the Sidi people. Only about two dozen instruments could be traced. Many of the instruments, to include the *nangás* (lyre) and *malunga* (a one-stringed bow)[28] were found neglected in Sidi shrines.

To encourage the Sidi youth to rediscover the artistic heritage of their ancestors, workshops were organized in Zainabad (2–9 February 2003). Sidis from different parts of Western India came together to learn how to make and play the *malunga.* The knowledge of the elderly instrument makers, as well as old photographs,[29] gave inspiration to rediscover this one-stringed instrument.

Lyrics were added to the reconstructive mix, referring to Sufism and the local saints Gori Pir and Mai Mishra.[30] The songs, with names like *Habshis* or "A Lion has Been Seen,"[31] praised the Prophet. The addition of the *mugarman* (drum) made the

connections to Sufism[32] even stronger, and according to Catlin-Jairazbhoy, "They sincerely believed they were embodying the sacred gifts received from their Sidi Sufi saints as part of their unique spiritual heritage" (Catlin-Jairazbhoy 2008:259). In 2002, some of these songs were recorded and sold on CD (Catlin-Jairazbhoy 2002).

Their costumes referred to Islam and Africa, and were used and designed to reinforce the links to Africa. The bodies of the performers were painted, something that would not happen during performances in the shrines. "African" inspired costumes were created with headdresses made of peacock feathers and colorful skirts. In a later phase, the skirts were replaced by leaf skirts designed at the Institute of Fashion of Ahmedabad. Cowries were added to refer to the Indian Ocean. The musical instruments, songs and costumes came together in one program that also included dance (Dunning 2004; Lusk 2007).

A set on stage was opened with an *azan*, or the call to prayer by the *muezzin*. Sometimes flowers were offered (*Mai Sab Phul*). The first part of their performances referred mainly to Sufism with *qawwalis.* Later on in their performance, an Indian Ocean set was added. Most of the songs were composed in the *tanbol* metre (6-6-6-3-3), and had characteristics of trance dances of East Africa and India, giving the performance a ritualistic touch.

The aims of the PAR project were to share Sidi sacred songs with an international audience and give the Sidi people involved a chance to benefit economically (Catlin-Jairazbhoy 2008:257–258). For their first shows, they did not mind being booked as "Zulu folk dancers from Africa." Many of the musicians were motivated to join these workshops by the possibility to travel abroad.

The non-economical benefits were stressed by Catlin-Jairazbhoy in the sense that the Sidis showed their audiences the diversity within Islam, and it made the audience aware there is also an Afro-Indian diaspora. Of course it was weird for the Sidis to perform on stage in front of a large audience, and sometimes a large crowd was present at their performances in their local shrines. The benefits of such performances helped to maintain their local shrines, which became more popular themselves and attracted more tourists and vendors. Touring was also educational, and Sidis met members of other African diasporas. They started to see themselves as a kind of Sufi brotherhood, a heritage they had almost forgotten.[33]

Conclusion

Drawing on the writings of Ranger, we explored the current context and meaning of cultural production in Zanzibar. We then followed Edmondson in the approach to the *invention of tradition* as a dialectical construct in which the counter-invention and reinvention are of great importance.

Beni is not the result of merely "one" layer of invention of tradition. Rather, it was initially linked to the replication of ruling class structures and practices relating to colonial rule, while incorporating local practices. As *beni* is now presented as a

local tradition at the *Sauti za Busara* Festival, largely catering to foreign audiences, another—arguable post-colonial—layer is added to the practice.

Taarab can be seen as the traditional music of Zanzibar *par excellence*. Yet in this case, the invention of the tradition just goes back rather far in time. Brought to the island in the late nineteenth century by sultan Bargash, the music was established at the court with the primary aim to assert and glorify his rule. Given the extended period *taarab* featured cultural and political life, the music transformed in role and form. Even though *taarab* bears a traditional imprint and remains strongly embedded in contemporary cultural life, it remains little appreciated by tourists due to its rather hermetic nature.

The music of Farrokh Bulsara is probably the most problematic example discussed in the eyes of many Zanzibari. The allegedly un-Zanzibari lifestyle and music of Freddie Mercury make many locals argue against the inclusion of his music in the proverbial musical canon of the island, claiming that his history should not be linked back to the island, as his lifestyle is at odds with that of the many devout Muslims on Zanzibar.

Sidi Goma was (re-)developed and invented by ethnomusicologist Catlin-Jairazbhoy in the early 2000s. By means of music, pre-existing links between India and Zanzibar were explored and supposedly strengthened. A "forgotten" musical link served to showcase not only the link between the countries across the Indian Ocean, but equally to illustrate the "diversity" of Islam throughout the world to a largely international audience. These aims notwithstanding, many of the Sidis participating in this re-invention of "their" traditions had greater interest in financial gain and travel opportunities than the strictly cultural nature of this venture.

Overall, the four examples developed throughout this article are in some ways "inventions of traditions." They are also more layered and complex than what may seem at first glance. By showcasing the different links these examples have with tourist audiences and export markets, we have briefly illustrated the dialectics of inventions of traditions on the island of Zanzibar. A tradition may be (un)consciously invented, counter-invented, or reinvented; yet it will (re)form itself through contact with—among others—tourists and markets.

Notes

1 "*Sauti za Busara* 2006." http://www.busaramusic.org/festivals/2006/Eyewitnessreport.htm.

2 Ranger thoroughly deals with all of these questions (1975: 9–44).

3 This principle of competitive opposition can also be found at soccer games (Fair 1997: 224–51).

4 An example of such a battle is the one between the Marini and the Alinoti. First the Marini (in this case female) singers laugh at the Alinoti: "*Mama kwaka herini! Tumekwenda Ndanda. Alinoti wanalia, wanashikwa tamma, watuona Wamarini, watu bora sana. (...) Sisi Marini ni watu wa pwani! Washenzi wa bara, A Hamtaiweza!*" (Goodbye mother! We have gone to Nanda.

Alinoti weep. They are envious, because they see that the Marini are the better. (…) We Marini are coastal people! Savages from up-country, Ah, you are not able). The Alinoti answered with: "*Funua macho, dada Mwajuma. Funua macho. Ushahada uuache. Ya pili ni kaka yako: amekulalaje? Mwajuma ache ukawale. (...) Wanawake wa regiment: Waembe dodo, ondokeni Wamarini. Tukawatazame wanawake. Wenye maziwa kama viatu vya hela.*" (Open the eyes, sister of Juma. Open the eyes. Leave aside incest. The other is your brother: how has he been with you? Juma stop this business (…) Women of the regiment: be in contact with the breasts, get out Marini. That we may see the women with breasts so precious). *Dodo* might refer to any female organ (Anonymous 1938: 77–78).

5 The *beni* networks in Tanga became the first seed of the Tanganyika Territory African Civil Servants Association (ATTACSA), which would evolve into the TANU party (Tanganyika African National Union) (see Askew 2003: 628; Ranger 1975: 92–96).

6 The Belgians were not pleased with the arrival of any satirical attitude towards them, such as what was expressed in *beni*. The Belgians threatened to jail *beni* performers that protested against unpleasant conditions in the Belgian Congo (Ranger 1975: 74).

7 The Kiswahili word *taarab* is derived from the Arabic "طرب" ("tarab"), which means joy, pleasure, delight, amusement, entertainment, etc.

8 Bridging gaps between Islam and mass culture through music, is possible, according Youssou N'Dour. "*Egypt* is an album which praises the tolerance of my religion, which has been badly misused by a certain ideology. At a time when there is a debate on Islam, the world needs to know how people are taking over this religion. Our religion has nothing to do with the violence, with terrorism." "Youssou N'Dour," http://www.nonesuch.com/artists/youssou-n-dour.

9 Bargash experienced a forced exile of ten years, after he failed to overthrow his brother sultan Majid, who succeeded their father Sayyid Said bin Sultan. Sayyid Said (1797–1856) moved the Busaidi court from Masqat to Zanzibar in the late 1830s to become the first al Busaidi sultan residing in Zanzibar. The stories of the Zanzibari court are colorfully described by Majid's and Bargashes sister Salima bint Sayyid (Reute 1992: 237–38 and 336–55).

10 Her name of birth was Mtumwa (bound servant) which was then a common name. It was changed to Siti (Lady) (Fair 2001; Kirkegaard 2007; Robert 1991: 2). For her full biography see Robert 1991; Hilal 2007).

11 Mwaalim Shaaban came to Zanzibar when he was four because his parents were migrant workers. He had been a teacher in the Madrassa (Qur'anic school), which clarifies his name Mwaalim.

12 E. g. Graebner, Werner, ed. 1990. *Mombasa Wedding Special. Maulidi & Musical Party*, GlobeStyle Records.

13 E. g. Culture Musical Club. 1988. *The Music of Zanzibar,* GlobeStyle Recording.

14 For a broader view on violence and cultural heritage since the post-colonial period in relation to cultural heritage, see: Bowell (2008: 55–70).

15 Parsi or Indian Zoroastrians were descendants of Zoroastrians that had been migrating from Persia to India since the eight century. Bombay became their major center in India. In 1941, the Bombay census recorded 114,490 Zoroastrians (Hinnels 2005: 33–137).

16 "Nav-jote" (Parsi) means the "new reciter" (of prayers). In Zoroastrianism, Ahzura Mazda is worshipped. The universal struggle between the forces of light and darkness are prominently present in their sacred text, the *Avesta.*

17 He changed the spelling of his name to fit better the Parsi pronunciation. In Bombay he also started to use the name "Freddie."

18 During that revolution Sheikh Abeid Amani Kamura of the Afro-Shirazi Party became president after the disposition of the Omani Sultan Jamshid bin Abdulla (Babu 1991: 220–46; Loimeier 2006: 175–97; Sheriff 1987: 301–18).

19 When Freddie Mercury died on 24 November 1991 of bronchopneumonia affected by AIDS, he only made his disease public the day before his death, probably in order to protect his family.

20 "Uamsho Zanzibar." http://uamshozanzibar.wordpress.com/ Their mission statement is: "*Kulingania kwa hekima na hoja za wazi* "—"Harmonize yourself with wisdom and clear affairs" and their objective is preaching Islam.

21 Similar statements can be found in the press statement by Uamsho: "Allowing such a function for a person known outside Zanzibar as a homosexual tarnishes the name of Zanzibar," Azan Khalid: "Mercury, who died of AIDS in 1991, violated Islam with his flamboyant lifestyle," and Abdallah Said Ali again: "We have a religious obligation to protect morals in society and anyone who corrupts Islamic morals should be stopped." (Ali Sultan 2006; AFP 2006).

22 "Freddie Mercury Tour." http://www.city-discovery.com/zanzibar/tour.php?id=4701.

23 "Fear me you loathsome, lazy creatures / I descend upon your earth from the skies / I command your very souls you unbelievers (…) I stand before you naked to the eyes / I will destroy any man who dares abuse my trust / Sister I live and lie for you (…) Storm the master marathon I'll fly through / By flash and thunder fire I'll survive (…) Then I'll defy the laws of nature / And come out alive (…) Give out the good, leave out the bad evil cries / I challenge the mighty titan and his troubadours / And with a smile / I'll take you to the seven seas of Rhye."

24 Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a methodological approach in which researchers try to improve their social practices by changing it during their research. With authentic participation and in collaboration with their participants, they hope to establish a self-critical community. Combined with theorizing about their practices and systematic learning process, the results are put into practice, in this case by performing around the world (Wallace 2005; Carmen and Sobrado 2000).

25 Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy's PAR caused some discussion at the TADIA conference and workshops (Goa 2006). The different opinions presented are integrated in this text (Catlin-Jairazbhoy 2008: 257–68).

26 Most of the Sidis are descendants of African slaves, originating from East Africa. Many came from to India via Zanzibar. For more information on the Sidis, see also the contributions of the TADIA conference and workshop (Vander biesen 2008: 513–30; da Silva Jayasuriya 2008: 7–36).

27 "Sidi Goma." http://www.kapa-productions.com/sidigoma/

28 The *malunga* is also known in the Afro-Brazilian community as *birimbao* (see also Catlin-Jairazbhoy 2004).

29 E.g. Lal Mohammad Juma. 1887. *Sidi Damal.* Bhuj. Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan Museum, Bhuj (Kacch).

30 Mai is the symbolic mother who travelled from Egypt (*Misr*) to help her brother Gori Pir to defeat the demoness.

31 *Habshis* refers to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and as is well known, India is not the natural habitat of lions.

32 Sufism is found throughout East Africa and Swahili culture. In Lamu, drums and Sufi songs are performed inside the mosque during Maulidi celebrations (Bang 2003: 148–50).

33 It is doubtful that the Sidi knew Sufism in East Africa before they were brought to India, because Sufism flourished only from the end of the nineteenth century in East Africa at the Swahili towns, and the slaves transported during the slave trade might have originated from regions untouched by Islam.

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