

Kujata Jata:Tonga Song Blasts Past Hegemonic Barriers

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Abstract: In a Zimbabwean context, minority languages are marginalised, as a result of the hegemonic influence of Shona and Ndebele. This hegemonic influence is quite visible in various media and cultural texts, including music. Drawing on the Gramscian theory of hegemony, this study analyses the linguistic and cultural impact of Kujata jata, a song that was done in Tonga, which is one of the minority languages. The study gathered data using 10 qualitative in-depth interviews. The study ascertained that the song has played a prominent role in promoting the Tonga language and culture. Despite the achievements of the song, a lot of hegemonic barriers are still intact. In light of the above, a lot still needs to be done to emancipate the Tonga language and culture. This study, therefore, advocates for a multi-pronged approach to the promotion of the Tonga language and culture. This approach must involve the production of more Tonga songs, films, literature and other cultural products, that reflect the Tonga culture.

Keywords: Minority languages, hegemony, barriers

I. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwean music plays an important role in shaping the country's culture and social discourse. Over the years musical compositions of different genres have apart from providing entertainment, provoked debate, educated the nation, provided social commentary and constructed identities. Therefore Zimbabwean music can be characterised as something beyond entertainment, since it carries complex social and moral meanings (Schulz, 2012).

The construction of the Zimbabwean musical identity is however, historically based on favouring the music of dominant ethnic groups, thereby formulating a national musical culture of silencing alternative creative musical projects from minority groups such as the Tonga, on radio and television stations. This exclusion of ethnic minority music from the Zimbabwean broadcasting stations can be construed as part and parcel of the grander scheme of excluding ethnic minority languages from the mainstream media. The language use scenario and ethnic representations in the Zimbabwean media, generally depict the dominance of Shona and Ndebele and the exclusion of ethno-linguistic minorities (Ndhlovu, 2007). The view expressed above resonates well with the Mpofu and Mutasa (2014) assertion that there is glaring absence of a media policy in Zimbabwe which advocates for the development, protection and promotion of minority languages.

When a language is not recognised for a certain function in which space is accorded to other languages within the same linguistic ecology it is marginalised (Ndhlovu, 2007). Suarez

(2002) refers to this state of affairs as linguistic hegemony. In a Zimbabwean context, Shona and Ndebele are hegemonic languages which have resulted in the exclusion and marginalisation of minority languages from the mainstream domains of social life, which include the media (Ndhlovu, 2009). This hegemonic influence of these dominant languages is visible in all media texts, including music. As Maturu (2019) posits, there is indeed a very strong relationship between music and hegemony, it is the vehicle for achieving hegemony through the superimposition of the cultural values of the dominant groups on the weaker groups.

The foregoing analysis has clearly depicted that, minority languages such as Tonga are marginalised in the media sphere and encounter subtle cultural oppression emanating from the hegemonic influence of dominant languages. Therefore Zimbabwe was amazed, when an unknown Tonga artist from remote Binga, Day Tawanda Mudimba (AKA DT BIO MUDIMBA) defied many odds with his debut Tonga song Kujata jata, to literally own the airwaves and the streets of Zimbabwe. The song which was released on the 7th of January 2021 became an instant hit and dominated the charts of major radio stations. It was therefore not a surprise, when the song was voted song of the year (2021) on four major radio stations, Radio Zimbabwe, National FM, Diamond FM and Nyami Nyami FM. This was a historic achievement, as it became the first minority language song to dominate the charts of any Zimbabwean radio station, let alone being voted song of the year. The success of Kujata jata can be likened to that of the catchy Korean song "Gangnam style" which broke many records in the summer of 2012 and became popular throughout the world, despite being sung entirely in Korean, a language that is unfamiliar outside Asia. A study conducted on the song provided a bit of insight into why a regional song gained international success. The study found that music was able to transcend all cultural and lingual barriers and elicit the same emotions in individuals regardless of their background (Egermann et al, 2015). The above finding resonates with views of Rice (2010) who advances that, music is an important practice for negotiating boundaries between ethnic groups and a sphere for creating an identity which is important for minority groups.

From a media and cultural studies perspective, the song Kujata jata is a rare gem, with a significant socio-cultural impact, which makes it a masterpiece that is worthy of study. The song therefore easily captured the interest of this researcher, who emanates from a media and cultural studies background. It is

this interest that, motivated the researcher to dig deeper into the success of the song, not only with the aim of measuring the impact of the song, in the Zimbabwean musical and cultural terrain but also to precisely establish how a Tonga song was able to cross deeply entrenched ethno-linguistic boundaries and dominate the Zimbabwean airwaves. It is envisaged that this study will make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge, since the significance of music has been a peripheral topic of study in Zimbabwe. The few studies in this area have largely focused on songs done by musicians of outstanding repute such as Thomas Mapfumo, the late Oliver Mtukudzi, the late Simon Chimbetu and Lovemore Majavana, who all belong to the dominant ethnic groups, Shona and Ndebele. The main objectives of this study are: 1. To establish the key factors behind the success of the song Kujata jata 2. To examine the role of Kujata jata in promoting the Tonga language 3. To analyse the cultural impact of Kujata jata. The paper will commence by presenting contextual literature, followed by the theoretical perspective. It will then proceed to outline the methodological approach, followed by a presentation of findings of the study and finally the conclusion.

II. CONTEXTUAL LITERATURE

2.1 A brief historical background of the Tonga people of Binga

The Tonga people, who are found in north-west of Zimbabwe, near the Zambezi river are one of the country's minority ethnic groups. According to oral tradition the Tonga people were based in Zambezi valley but archaeology contends that Tonga culture was established in Zimbabwe when the western stream of Kangila tradition spread southwards from the northern stream of Batoka plateau between AD 1000 and 1100. On the other hand, some sources state that the Tonga expanded along Gwembe river because they were assured of perennial water supply from Zambezi river. For one to understand the history of Tonga people, it is important to look at the name "Tonga". The word Tonga was an offspring of the verb "Kutonga" meaning to rule or judge (Moreau, 1950). According to Tremmel (1994) the Tonga lived largely without interference from colonial rulers until 1957, when tens of thousands from fifteen chiefdoms who had lived along the Zambezi river were removed, to make way for a huge dam and an electricity generating power station at Kariba.

Historically the Tonga people were an isolated lot who chose a traditional way of life. They were basically isolated from the rest of the people of Southern Rhodesia, in what Tremmel (1994) has termed "splendid isolation". Left alone and basically neglected by the colonial government, there no schools, clinics and hospitals, even as late as 1957. Infant mortality rates were extremely high, partly due to lack of vaccinations. The Tonga relied on traditional herbs for healing illnesses but these were inadequate to respond to some major diseases. The terrible state of the Tonga depicted above is corroborated by Trish Swift and Martin De Garaaf of Save the Child (UK) cited in Tremmel (1994) whose observation was that "the land of milk and honey" had its drawbacks with 60-80 percent of children dying

of malaria and tuberculosis with leprosy and bilharzia also taking their toll on the adult population. The foregoing observation clearly depicts that the Tonga are historically a marginalised ethnic group. This marginalisation to some extent, still persists in present day Zimbabwe. As Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007) illustrate, on a number of occasions community leaders among the Tonga and other minority groups have complained against what they believe is Shona or Ndebele induced marginalisation, enforced through government policies.

2.2 Linguistic hegemony, exclusion and marginalisation of minority ethnic groups in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is characterised by micro social forms of language based exclusions among the diverse ethnolinguistic polities. These exclusions manifest in a number of ways that include biased language use patterns in the public domain, negative perceptions and stereotypes about ethnolinguistic minorities and forced assimilation of minority language speakers into majority language groups (Ndlovu, 2007). Consequently multi-layered ethnolinguistic hegemonies are visible in Zimbabwean public spaces (Mpofu & Mutasa, 2014). Shona and Ndebele are "Killer Languages" which threaten the survival of other indigenous languages (Ndlovu, 2009). The dominance of Shona and Ndebele stretches from the colonial times, when the two languages started to be recognised as languages of media and education as well as languages of upward socio-political and economic mobility (Ndlovu, 2007). This state of affairs, severely marginalised minority languages such as Tonga. Wirth (1945) advances that a marginalised group is, a group of people, who because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in a society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment.

However, in Zimbabwe, the exclusion and marginalisation of citizens on the basis of language and culture are emotive issues (Mpofu & Salawa, 2008). This is worsened by the fact that, in the Zimbabwean context, the people are rooted in smaller communities and their first loyalties are to the ethnic group and region, such that language differences and regionalism are serious problems that militate against national unity and are basic factors in ethnic conflict (Mpofu & Salawa, 2008). In the same vein, Nyamnjoh (2005) advances that, for democracy to succeed in Africa, it must recognise the fact that most Africans are primarily patriotic to their home village to which state and country are secondary. Thus any attempt to impose a particular language on another ethnic group often invites conflict or protest (Mpofu & Salawa, 2018). The bulk of the above cited literature, generally depicts the hegemonic stranglehold of the country's major languages over minority languages and the resultant marginalisation of these languages. It is against this background that this study, seeks to examine the extent to which the popular Tonga song, Kujata jata has been successful in promoting, this marginalised language.

2.3 Linguistic marginalisation and the representation of ethnic minority groups in mainstream Zimbabwean media spaces

Marginalisation, stereotypical (re) representation as well as bias are major concepts underlying the existence of marginalised groups globally (Hall, 1997) and the Tonga of Binga in Zimbabwe are no exception. As Muzondidya and Gatsheni (2014) postulate, while post-independence Zimbabwe has made efforts to come up with policies that encourage the representation of minority groups in the media, there is still serious ethnic polarisation in the country. This view is corroborated by Ndhlovu (2008) who asserts that the Broadcasting policy documents introduced in 2002 helped in promoting minority languages in Zimbabwe. This saw the minority language radio station named National FM being introduced to broadcast in local indigenous languages. He further advances that, while broadcast media is meant to cater for formerly marginalised languages within Zimbabwe, most programmes are dominated by majority languages such as English, Shona and Ndebele, while the minority languages are left out in the country's important issues of national interest. This exclusion or underrepresentation of minority languages dates back to the early years of independence, as Magwa (2008) notes, after independence the government decided to ignore the media representation of minority languages and concentrated on the already dominant languages of Ndebele and Shona. Therefore the Zimbabwean government has failed to use its authority to safeguard the rights of minority linguistic groups to representation (Mabika, 2014). The failure on the part of government is further demonstrated by the fact that government run media outlets use only majority languages, excluding monolingual minority language speakers from accessing vital news and information (Mabika, 2014). To make matters worse, minority language speakers are stereotyped as linguistic oddities who suffer from lack of knowledge of the dominant language. They are also portrayed as backward rather than owners of another language, or multilingual skills (Magwa, 2008).

These representation patterns play a central role in shaping the identities of ethnic minority groups, since identity making is a political process that is mediated through imperatives of inclusion and exclusion (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Furthermore, the ethnic identities have serious implications on the value minority ethnic groups place on their ethnic groups as well as their sense of belongingness and inclusion (Verkuyten, 2008).

In light of the historically marginalised media representation of the minority languages as discussed above, the dominance of Kujata jata in media spaces naturally triggered a lot of interest from cultural enthusiasts, this study therefore seeks to establish the extent to which the media success of the song Kujata jata has fundamentally shifted representation patterns of the Tonga in media spaces and assisted in bursting some of the negative stereotypes associated with the Tonga people.

2.4 Zimbabwean music: A brief history and its influence on society

Zimbabwean music includes folk and pop styles, much of it based on the well-known instrument, the mbira. Traditional music always had a message or lesson, and the beauty of the songs comes out through the various traditional music instruments, like the drums, mbira, marimba, congas, and jingles. Some music artists have also diversified into modern music. Zimbabwean musicians of outstanding repute include Thomas Mapfumo, the late Oliver Mutukudzi, the late Simon Chimbetu, and Leonard Zhakata. Various instruments including drums, lamellophones and stringed bows have been used in Zimbabwe, while oratory, poetry, fable telling, praise singing tribal ritual chants are also popular ("History of Music", 2013)

Traditionally inspired music is predominant in the arts and represents cultural continuity with the past. Based on the rhythms and melodies of the *mbira* (finger piano), the instrument associated with the ancestors, traditional music promoted a feeling of solidarity in the struggle for independence. Music groups were formed in urban areas, lyrics contained political messages, and the music scene promoted African rather than European figures. Since 1980, the number of cultural groups has increased and public performances have become common. The ready availability of radios has not replaced playing music (usually the mbira or drums) in the home. Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited group are the most well-known proponents of popular music, heavily influenced by traditional music. Other influences on popular music include church music, gospel, Congolese rumba, South African mbaqanga and mbube. Black Umfolosi exemplifies the mbube tradition of Nguni vocals and harmony sung in acapella. The post-independence era created space for the invention of new genres and the revitalisation of already existing genres (Matiure, 2019).

Sungura music became popular in the early 1980s, pioneered by frontman Ephraim Joe and his band Sungura Boys which counted many notable future hitmakers as members. Their roll included John Chibadura (guitar) Simon Chimbetu (guitar and vocals) Naison Chimbetu, Ronnie Chataika, Michael Jambo (drums), Ephraim Joe (guitar), Moses Marasha (bass), Never Moyo (lead guitar), Bata Sinfirio (rhythm guitar), System Tazvida (guitar and vocals). Khiama Boys emerged as natural successors to the Sungura Boys after their demise during the mid eighties. Members would include System Tazvida (Rhythm guitar), Nicholas Zacharia (Lead guitar), Alick Macheso (Bass), Silas Chakanyuka (Drums) and Zacharia Zacharia (Sub Rhythm guitar). A great number of these artistes have gone on to forge successful careers with their own bands whilst Nicholas Zacharia has remained as the leader of the band and is still active to date. The late James Chimombe was another prolific singer, whose romantic ballads and the influential sungura guitar melody, (consisting of Lead, Rhythm and bass,) made him a favorite of late 80s ("History of Music", 2013).

The 90s was dominated by musicians who include Leonard Dembo, the highly talented Khiama Boys, veteran Simon Chimbetu and up coming artistes Alick Macheso, Tongai Moyo and Soma ndla Ndebele. The star of the decade was none other than Leonard Zhakata whose musical project was a spin off of the double play Maungwe Brothers, an act fronted by Zhakata and his cousin Thomas Makion. Zhakata seems to bemoan the grim state of affairs that characterise the present generation. As anyone can trace through good listening, the rhythm of his lyrics seem to vibrate the ground and also seem to have the capacity to resurrect the dead from the graves. Almost his every song articulates his agony, probably leading to the indiscriminate banning of his songs by some broadcasting stations (“History of Music”, 2013).

During the 2000 era a wrangle for the crown for the kingship of Sungura was between the two great superstars of the decade, Alick Macheso and Tongai Moyo. Having dominated sales, tour and concert attendances, the heckling and counter heckling by the artists at shows and in some recorded material depicted a bitter rivalry. Other artists to come through this decade include Joseph Garakara, Gift Amuli and Daiton Somanje. and Aleck macheso who has risen to become one of the best singers in the music industry, with his popular dance zora butter (“History of Music”, 2013).

The Ndebele-dominated region of the southwest of Zimbabwe, including the city of Bulawayo, has been instrumental in the development of Zimbabwean music. Influential 1950s guitarist George Sibanda had following across Africa, together with Dorothy Masuka. Among the most popular performers of the region, however, was 1980s Ndebele pop sensation, Lovemore Majaivana. Prominent Ndebele musicians included Black Umfolosi, Insingizi, Majahawodwa Ndlovu, Sandra Ndebele, Lwazi Tshabangu, Kuxxman, Go Boyz, Achuzi and Beater Mangethe. The marginalisation of Bulawayo artists in Zimbabwe saw the influence of South African music dominating, hence the emergence of kwaito music in Bulawayo pioneered by Go-Boyz in 1996 and more groups like GTI, Achuzi, Amagangsters, etc., emerged. A brand of Jazz was created in Bulawayo, in the 1940s and 1950s, and was made popular by August Musarurwa with his African Dance Band of the Cold Storage Commission of Southern Rhodesia. He recorded the legendary song Sikokiana which went on to be recorded in USA by Louis Armstrong and many others (“History of Music”, 2013).

Zimbabwe’s rich music history that dates back to the early fifties, but it was the years before independence from Britain in 1980 when it blossomed, with music and songs being used as a mobilising tool in the war of liberation. (Vava, 2016). War songs played a pivotal role during the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe. The songs provoked people’s thoughts, feelings and mood to fight for the liberation of the country. Music instilled hope in both the liberation fighters and the masses as it gave them strength to continue fighting until the attainment of independence (Matiza & Mutasa, 2020). Zimbabweans refused to remain silent and in the face of oppression and economic

hardships, they have always used music and art to express their anger and sorrow as well as revolutionary aspirations. Musicians are part of society and thus it can be argued that their artistic expressions, sometimes reflect and mirror the feelings and thinking of the society they come from (Vava, 2016).

Popular musicians like Oliver Mtukudzi, Thomas Mapfumo, Chinx, Zexxie Manatsa led from the music front and composed music that not only inspired the liberation war, but the messaging had an influence in recruiting more cadres to join the war (Mugovera 2016, Vava 2016).

Songs like ‘tumira vana kuhondo’ (send the children to war) acted as catalysts and an important mobilising tool for the young cadres to join the war. Music provided inspiration and courage and removed fear in the people; it encouraged communities to be united and support the war. It gave society hope and the zeal to fight oppression and most of the compositions were in the vernacular language, mainly to create a language barrier with the whites because some of the lyrics were insulting. Music and poetry were tools and forms of social commentary that were used to move the masses to act (Vava, 2016).

In the period from the early to mid-1980s after the country attained independence, musicians took a celebratory tone, helping society reflect on the time they had endured the pain of war. The late 80s recorded a different time, it moved from the celebratory tone to a more critical stance to the bad government policies, corruption that sucked in government ministers. Musicians like Thomas Mapfumo composed songs such as ‘Corruption,’ Solomon Skuza had songs like love and scandals, which were in direct response to the Willowgate scandal, a corruption scam implicating government officials (Vava, 2016).

Vambe (2000) argues that Zimbabwean musicians have always been a voice of the voiceless and people who articulated the concerns of masses in their music through political commentary that challenged the government to honour promises it made to its citizens. He elaborates that through some songs, artists continued to respond to the perceived socio-economic crisis that engulfed the country in the late 1990s. More and more compositions which spoke to the daily struggles by Zimbabweans, the economic decline, poverty and bad policies like ESAP became popular hymns and these issues became a rallying point by the masses as evidenced by the food riots that the country witnessed in the late 90s. Songs like mugove (my dues) by Leonard Zhakata, chinyemu by Leonard Dembo became popular tunes at Workers Day rallies and meetings because they spoke to the daily struggles of the working class in the face of an economic collapse and the inequalities that existed between the rich and the poor.

The present day has witnessed the growth of a new music genre called Zimdancehall which has roots in Jamaica. The genre that mainly uses the Shona language is known for its hard-hitting lyrics which often encompass social commentary on issues like poverty, unemployment and drug abuse (Vava, 2016). The Zimdancehall genre embodies deep commentary and

consciousness on topical issues affecting society. It is a form of popular culture that has positioned itself as an alternative medium through which youths, as a subaltern group, speak back to power, pointing out their tribulations, while at the same time deconstructing the hegemony of the elites who wield political and economic authority (Ureke & Washaya, 2016).

The key revelation emerging out of the literature above is that Tonga and other minority ethnic groups are missing from the Zimbabwean music narrative. The pre- and post-independence Zimbabwean music story is dominated by music and musicians associated with mainly the Shona and to a less extent the Ndebele, with minority ethnic groups being the missing chapter in the story. This lends credence to the view of Maturuwa (2019) who opines that music has been used to enhance the dominant groups' supremacy. It is therefore envisaged that this study, which focuses on the music of an upcoming Tonga musician, will add a completely new chapter to the Zimbabwean music story.

2.5 Music and the breaking down of barriers

Throughout our history, music has been a profound way for people to express themselves and give a voice to those who don't have the ability to speak up. We have had many different genres of music that have been popular throughout the years, which different artists explore, that help breakdown racial barriers and try to unite us all as a community of human beings (McNally, 2000).

One of the most prolific music styles that helped break down racial barriers and bring blacks and whites together even before court rulings and before the Civil Rights movement made strides toward equality was Jazz. The black jazz greats Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton were making not just musical but also social and cultural history by playing with Benny Goodman, the enormously popular white band leader and clarinetist known as the King of Swing. Goodman's racial mix worked superbly, and its success struck a significant blow against racism. It didn't take any protesters, politicians, etc. to realize the racial issues going on in our culture, but all it took was a prolific white jazz artist to collaborate with some of the most prolific black jazz artists for people to realize that we needed equality in our culture. These three men took a chance not thinking anything of it, because they were great at what they did for a living, they worked together and produced amazing music. During that era, that type of thinking was rare and it opened the eyes of a lot of people that race is just a colour and doesn't have anything to do with the value of a person. During this era, blacks and whites lived their lives as two separate nations, and jazz provided people with a rare passageway, which many young white musicians and white fans passed on their way to discovering the richness and shared common humanity of black culture (McNally, 2000).

Music also plays a prominent role in breaking down language barriers. As Victor Hugo once said "Music expresses that which can not be put into words and that which can not remain". In simpler terms, it means that music can bring people together regardless of race, religion or language for that matter. It is

through music that different individuals can communicate thoughts without the need to understand the lyrics of the song. Music is surely a universal language ("How Music Breaks Down Language Barriers", 2018). Lui Fonsi, the genius behind the popular hit "Despacito" once said in an interview "music can be so powerful that it can bind and unite cultures". Sometimes you only need to listen to the beat, feel it, and allow yourself to go with it. Interpretation is best made without the basis of words sometimes ("How Music Breaks Down Language Barriers", 2018).

The common thread running through the above cited literature, is that music plays a significant role in breaking racial, cultural and linguistic barriers. This leaves one with no doubt about the power of music in breaking all manner of societal barriers globally. In light of this, the study seeks to examine the extent to which the song Kujata jata has played a role in breaking down the various hegemonic barriers that prevented music, that is sung in minority languages from making an impact in Zimbabwe.

III. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 The theory of Hegemony

This study is grounded in the Gramscian theory of hegemony. The term "Hegemony" was most likely derived from the Greek *egemonia*, whose root is *egemon*, meaning "leader, ruler, often in the sense of a state other than his own" (Williams, 1985:144). Since the 19th century, "hegemony" commonly has been used to indicate "political predominance, usually of one state over another" (Williams, 1985:144). The Oxford English Dictionary defines hegemony as "leadership, predominance, preponderance, especially in the leadership or predominant authority of one state or confederacy or union over others".

In order to understand Gramsci and the concept of hegemony, one has to focus briefly on the work of Karl Marx. Marxism viewed everything in life as determined by capital. (Williams: 1977). The flow of money affects our relations with other people and the world surrounding us. Marx advanced that everything around us, our activities and way of life is determined by economic content. According to Marxism, men find themselves born in a process independent of their will, they cannot control it, they can seek only to understand it and guide their actions accordingly (Williams, 1977).

The class struggle was an essential part of Marxism. Marxism posited that society can only be understood in terms of a system where the dominant ideas are formulated by the ruling class to achieve its control over the working class (Williams, 1977). Due to exploitation, the working class will eventually try and change this situation through revolution producing its own ideas as well as its own industrial and political organization.

Marx's work is highly influenced by economic reasoning. He divides this economic reasoning into two levels, being the base and superstructure. The base is composed by the material production, money, objects, the relations of production and the

stage of development of productive forces (Williams,1977). The superstructure is where we find the political and ideological institutions, our social relations, set of ideas; our cultures, hopes, dreams and spirit (Williams,1977). Both the base and superstructure are shaped by capital.

While one could say that Marx was primarily concerned with the base and economic issues, Gramsci's work centres on the superstructure and ideologies. For Gramsci, the class struggle must always involve ideas and ideologies. These ideas would lead to a revolution and to change. Gramsci tried to build a theory which recognized the autonomy, independence and importance of culture and ideology (Ransome,1992). Gramsci took the superstructure a step further when he divided it into institutions that were coercive and those that were not. The coercive ones, were basically the public institutions such as the government, police, armed forces and the legal system which he regarded as the state or political society and the non-coercive ones were the others such as the churches, the schools, trade unions, political parties, cultural associations, clubs and family, which he regarded as civil society (Boggs, 1976). Hence according to Gramsci, society was made up of the relations of production as well as the state or political society and civil society.

Gramsci accepted the analysis of capitalism put forward by Marx and accepted that the struggle between the ruling class and the subordinate working class was the driving force that moved society forward (Boggs,1976).However, Gramsci did not agree with the notion put forward by Marx that the ruling class stayed in power solely because they had economic power. He thus introduced his own concept using ideology. Ideology is the shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups (Boggs,1976). Gramsci opined that ideological power kept the ruling class in power because it allowed them to brainwash and manipulate the rest of society.

Subordinate groups tend to accept the ideas and values of the dominant group without physical or mental influence because they know no better or there are no other alternatives. (Ransome, 1992). From Gramsci's view, the bourgeoisie gained and maintained power due to economic domination and intellectual and moral leadership. Here, Gramsci introduced a new concept which he called hegemony. Hegemony is a set of ideas by means of which dominant groups strive to secure the consent of subordinate groups to their leadership (Ransome,1992). It occurs when dominant classes in society maintain their dominance, persuading the other classes of society to accept their moral, political and cultural values. This means that the majority in a population give consent to policies and ideologies implemented by those in power. One must not assume that this consent is always willing. Those in power may combine physical force or coercion with intellectual, moral and cultural persuasion (Ransome,1992). The dominant ideology is thus accepted, practiced and spread. Hegemony emerges out of social and class struggles and serves to shape and influence.

According to Gramsci, hegemony never disappears but is constantly changed. He describes two forms of social control. The first type is coercive control which is achieved through the use of direct force or threat of force (Simon,1992). The second type is consensual control which arises when individuals voluntarily adopt the worldview of the dominant group (Simon, 1992).

Gramsci was of the view that Social hegemony and political government are enforced historically in which the dominant group enjoys its position because of its function in the world of production and legally by state coercive power which enforces discipline on groups that do not consent (Gramsci,1971). This gives rise to a division of labor or specialization and to a whole hierarchy of qualifications.

Hegemony goes beyond culture which is the whole social process in which people define and shape their lives. It is based in ideology which is a system of meanings and values that expresses a particular class interest (Simon,1992). In order to create a class strong enough to have hegemony, one has to first instil a solid ideology based on specific interests that will dominate the rest of society, using the influence of capitalist relations.

Gramsci felt that in order to have hegemony, ideologies have to be instilled by certain people or leaders. Gramsci identified intellectuals as leaders in society. He identified two types of intellectuals. The first is traditional intellectuals who are people that regard themselves as independent of the dominant social group and are regarded as such by the majority of the population (Gramsci,1971). The second type is the organic intellectual. This is the group that grows organically with the ruling class, and is their thinking and organizing element (Gramsci, 1971). They were produced by the educational system to perform a function for the dominant social group in society. It is through this group that the ruling class maintains its hegemony over the rest of society.

The political and practical implications of Gramsci's ideas were far-reaching because he warned of the limited possibilities of direct revolutionary struggle for control of the means of production; this 'war of attack' could only succeed with a prior 'war of position' in the form of struggle over ideas and beliefs, to create a new hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). This idea of a 'counter-hegemonic' struggle – advancing alternatives to dominant ideas of what is normal and legitimate, has had broad appeal in social and political movements. It has also contributed to the idea that 'knowledge' is a social construct that serves to legitimate social structures (Heywood 1994: 101).

In this study, the Gramscian theory of hegemony is employed as a tool for analysing the success of the Tonga song, Kujata jata, in a nation characterised by what Mpofu and Salawu (2008) describe as "The hegemony of other ethno-linguistic representations and disenfranchisement of ethno-linguistic minorities". This is depicted by what Suarez (2002) calls daily forms of linguistic hegemony which comprise among others, language use in media institutions and social

relationships that associate linguistic minorities with inferiority, low self-respect and belittlement. The Gramscian theory of hegemony relates power relations between dominant and minority groups, particularly the means by which, the dominant group secures its position (Suarez, 2002).

In Zimbabwe linguistic hegemony is so entrenched that, the dominant groups (Shona and Ndebele) have managed to convince other ethnic groups to accept their languages as the standard languages, that should be used in producing music, films, dramas and other cultural products. However, this study recognises the agency of ethno-linguistic minorities such as the Tonga to counter domination.

The study therefore, seeks to analyse the extent to which, the song, Kujata jata, has served as a counter-hegemonic force. It examines the extent to which the song enables the Tonga language, which has previously been excluded from dominant discourses to penetrate them. Since music is a universal language, it has the potential to cross linguistic barriers and to form what Dahlberg (2011) refers to as counter-publics which are littered with counter-discourses from marginalised and oppressed groups.

IV. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The study gathered data using 10 qualitative in-depth interviews. One of the respondents was the singer of the song, Kujata jata, Day Tawanda Mudimba, who is popularly known as DT Bio Mudimba (Respondent 1). The researcher also interviewed 3 Tonga Cultural experts, namely Douglas Siatimba (Respondent 2), Andrew Mumpande (Respondent 3) and Milos Mumpande (Respondent 4). The other respondents were the Key informant interviewees, Joe Rodney Phiri, a Radio Presenter (Respondent 5) and Meluleki Moyo, a Media Scholar (Respondent 6). Additionally 4 ordinary members of the Binga community (Respondents 7, 8, 9 & 10) were interviewed on the condition of anonymity. The 10 respondents were mainly selected using purposive sampling, based on their cultural, historical and contemporary knowledge of the topic under study.

Once transcription and collation of data was done, thematic analysis was used to derive insights from the interviews. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun and Clark, 2006).

V. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 The key factors behind the success of the song Kujata jata

The study established that one of the major factors behind the success of the song Kujata jata is its fusion of the Tonga and Shona lyrics. The respondents generally concurred with each other, on the afore stated factor, clearly pointing out that the fusion of Tonga lyrics with Shona boosts the song, since it makes it understandable to the majority of the Zimbabwean population. Apart from that, the respondents noted that the song has a good sound and a message that resonates with the

generality of Zimbabweans. The singer of the song Day Tawanda Mudimba revealed that a number of people say the instrumentation is good and the song sounds new and original. This he said, makes him different from some artists, who play music similar to that of some music giants. The above sentiments were corroborated by the radio presenter, Joe Rodney Phiri who opined that:

The song kujata jata, became so popular because of the rich Sungura beat, the lyrics of the song as well as the good combination of DT Bio Mudimba's voice and his instruments, which makes it a good sing along song (Joe Phiri, Personal Communication, 6 February 2022).

One of the Cultural experts, was of the view that, the song was made popular by the message. He advanced that:

The message made the song popular, since in the African culture, Kujata jata (using juju) is prevalent and impacts negatively on children (Andrew Mumpande, Personal Communication, 11 January 2022).

The above sentiments depict that, the lyrical contents of the song Kujata jata appeal to the various ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, since they touch on practices, African ethnic groups generally identify with. This point was buttressed by the views of Day Tawanda Mudimba, who said the following about his song:

The lyrics of the song do not merely reflect Tonga beliefs but African beliefs in general. They point out that disrespecting parents, may bring bad luck to the child for his or her entire lifetime. They also reflect that it is taboo for a child to summon parents, rather parents should summon the child in our Tonga culture and African culture in general. (Day Tawanda Mudimba, Personal Communication, 7 January 2012).

In the words of one of the respondents:

The song Kujata jata became popular because the message reflected that the Tonga beliefs are the same as those of the Ndebele and Shona (Respondent 8, Personal Communication, 20 January 2022)

The sentiments expressed in the interview transcripts above, apart from aptly summing up the respondents overall opinion on the key factors behind the success of Kujata jata, also depict that the success of the song cannot be analysed outside the context of Shona-Ndebele cultural and linguistic hegemony.

5.2 The Linguistic and Cultural impact of Kujata jata

The study ascertained that the song Kujata jata has played a prominent role in promoting the Tonga language and culture. The respondents were generally of the view that the song has greatly assisted in promoting both the Tonga language and culture. The singer argued that:

The song has helped the Tonga language through raising awareness of the existence of the language itself and it has also influenced people from different cultures to learn the

language (Day Tawanda Mudimba, Personal Communication, 7 January 2022)

This view was corroborated by one of the Cultural experts who opined that:

The song Kujata jata has greatly promoted the Tonga language throughout Zimbabwe, therefore in way, it has helped in bringing about the recognition that the indigenous language speakers, have been fighting for over the years (Douglas Siatimba, Personal Communication, 12 January 2022)

The media scholar summed up the cultural and linguistic impact of the song, as follows:

It is a fact that, no other Tonga song has made a greater cultural statement than Kujata jata. Over the years, Tonga cultural activists who have been clamouring for the promotion of Tonga persistently hit brickwalls but it took a mere song by a little known Tonga artist, to get Zimbabweans across the cultural divide to notice the existence of the Tonga language and culture. (Meluleki Moyo, Personal Communication, 4 February 2022)

The study revealed that the cultural impact of Kujata jata is so huge that it has turned into cultural movement. It was established that song which has become the pride of the Tonga tribe, has managed to influence Tonga people, especially the youths to embrace their language, culture and identity. According to the findings, the song has inspired the sprouting of young Tonga musicians, who sing in their mother language. One of the respondents (Respondent 6) disclosed that, the song received so much support in Binga, to the extent that one of the local chiefs mobilised people in his community to vote for the song on national radio stations. The media scholar, commented that, when a song receives that kind of support from chiefs who are custodians of the local tradition, it ceases to be an ordinary song, it would have mutated into a cultural symbol. The cultural impact of Kujata jata was eloquently articulated by one of the Cultural experts, who posited that:

Kujata jata is not merely a song, it is a cultural movement. The song has triggered some kind of cultural re-awakening, it has influenced Tonga people to rally together in support of their language and culture. This is clearly evidenced by the popularity of the Team Kujata jata Facebook page, where a number of Tonga people converge not only to support the song but also promote the Tonga culture and language. The song has also inspired a number of young upcoming Binga musicians to sing in Tonga (Andrew Mumpande, Personal Communication, 11 January 2022).

In light of the above sentiments, the song can be construed as part of a 'counter-hegemonic' struggle, advancing an alternative to the linguistic and cultural dominance of the Shona and Ndebele. In other words the song represents what Dalhberg (2011) refers to as counter-publics which are littered with counter-discourses.

The study, however, ascertained that despite the prominent role that Kujata jata has played in breaking down some linguistic and cultural boundaries, there are a lot of hegemonic boundaries that are still intact. In other words, the success of the song has not resulted in the total emancipation of the Tonga or other minority languages in Zimbabwe. Commenting on the linguistic and cultural impact of Kujata jata, the Media scholar posited that:

It is not yet Uhuru for the Tonga language, the song Kujata jata has undoubtedly assisted in promoting the language but it will take more years and multiple approaches to dismantle the deeply entrenched linguistic and cultural hegemonic structures. (Meluleki Moyo, Personal Communication, 4 February 2022).

The above sentiments are in sync with those of one of the cultural experts, who advanced that:

It is still a long way to go for the Tonga language and culture. The discrimination of the Tonga language still persists, despite the success of Kujata jata, many upcoming Tonga musicians are still finding it hard to penetrate the music industry because some media houses still perceive anything Tonga as inferior. (Douglas Siatimba, Personal Communication, 12 January 2022).

One of the Key Informant interviewees, Joe Phiri, a radio presenter, gave a detailed analysis of the cultural and linguistic impact of the song, which to some extent corroborated with the above views but plunged deeper into the subject. He argued that:

The song Kujata jata has only promoted the Tonga language to a limited extent. The fusion of Tonga and Shona lyrics in the song, shows that the Tonga language still can not make an impact as a stand alone language. Besides it is a good sing along song, so people mostly dance to the beat, without paying attention to the Tonga lyrics (Joe Phiri, Personal Communication, 6 February 2022).

On the cultural impact of the song, Joe Phiri advanced that:

Kujata jata largely does not promote the Tonga culture, since it makes use of the Sungura rhythm, which is mostly a Shona genre. The song could have made a greater cultural impact, if it had employed the Ngoma Buntibe rhythm or the Nyele rhythm, since these two rhythms are the ones that depict the authentic Tonga culture (Joe Phiri, Personal Communication, 6 February 2022).

5.3 The song Kujata jata and Cultural diversity

The other revelation that emerged from the study is that, the song Kujata jata has played an important role in promoting cultural diversity. The respondents generally concurred that the song was a celebration of the country's cultural diversity. The general sentiment was that, the song has helped in ushering cultural diversity to a nation whose linguistic and cultural environment has been dominated by Shona and Ndebele. One of the respondents, Joe Phiri, a radio presenter, advanced that:

The song Kujata jata is a celebration of a culture that has been looked down upon, the fact that, the whole nation is dancing to song from deep down in Binga is a cause for celebration and indeed reflects cultural diversity. This song has changed the cultural narrative, as it has made some people inquisitive, they want to know more about the Tonga culture. This is recognition that Zimbabwe is a diverse nation (Joe Phiri, Personal Communication, 6 February 2022).

The power of the song as tool for promoting cultural diversity, was also clearly articulated by the singer, who advanced that:

What excited me most about this song, is that it was able to bring people from different cultural backgrounds together. I was touched by the overwhelming support that non Tonga speakers gave to the song. It is therefore appropriate to describe the song as a celebration of the country's cultural diversity. (Day Tawanda Mudimba, Personal Communication, 7 January 2022).

The above sentiments resonate with the assertion that, music is an important practice for negotiating boundaries between ethnic groups and a sphere for creating an identity which is important for minority groups (Rice, 2010).

However, despite acknowledging that the song Kujata jata is a celebration of cultural diversity, the radio presenter, Joe Phiri, also had contrary views, he opined that:

Cultural diversity can not be celebrated with one Tonga song. There is still widespread marginalisation of Tonga and other minority languages, since 99% of what is broadcast on the media emanates from dominant languages. Furthermore, we can not celebrate cultural diversity by taking a Sungura beat and putting Tonga lyrics, its celebration of a beat not a culture (Joe Phiri, Personal Communication, 6 February 2022).

5.4 The stereotype bursting role of Kujata jata

The study also clearly established that the song Kujata jata, has been potent in challenging some of the negative stereotypes associated with the Tonga people. The respondents generally concurred that the song has played a big role challenging the negative stereotypes associated with the Tonga, thereby contributing to an improved perception of the Tonga, among other ethnic groups. The singer confessed that, the success of the song took him by surprise, considering the perception people have about his tribe and area of origin. In his exact words, he said that:

I did not expect the song to be popular in Zimbabwe due to the stereotypes associated with the language that I used and also the geographical location of where I hail from, an area that many view as remote and backward (Day Tawanda Mudimba, Personal Communication, 7 January 2022).

The vital role Kujata jata has played in challenging negative stereotypes of the Tonga people is aptly summed up by one of the Cultural experts who posited that:

The song greatly challenged the negative stereotypes about Tonga, since it has shown that Tonga is just a language like any other. It has also shown that the Tonga culture is not very different from other cultures in the country, hence the stereotypes associated with the Tonga are baseless (Andrew Mumpane, Personal Communication, 11 January 2022).

The above sentiments were corroborated by the other Cultural expert, who advanced that:

The song has played a big role in breaking down stereotypes, most people did not believe that the Tonga were capable of producing music that would be able to compete in the national radio stations. However, this song has shown that the Tonga are capable of doing what other tribes do (Milos Mumpane, Personal Communication, 12 January 2022)

The radio presenter, strongly corroborated with above views, arguing that:

The fact that the song competed with Shona songs and outclassed them, changed the narrative and showed that the Tonga are just as capable. This has gone a long way in changing negative perceptions, as well as restoring the dignity of the Tonga (Joe Phiri, Personal Communication, 6 February 2022).

The study, however, also established that despite the role of Kujata jata in breaking down stereotypes, the battle is still far from being won. The persistence of negative stereotypes associated with the Tonga, was aptly summed up by one of the cultural experts who argued that:

Stereotypes are still prevalent, people still look down upon the Tonga tribe. There are learned Tonga people, occupying high offices but a number of people still believe the Tonga are not educated. They try by all means to pull the Tonga down and create an impression that they are second class citizens. With such attitudes, it is difficult for the song to provide a remedy to the stereotypical treatment of the Tonga (Douglas Siatimba, Personal Communication, 12 January 2022).

The foregoing analysis reveals that Zimbabwe has a multi-layered, complex and hegemonic ethno-linguistic ecology. It also resonates with the assertion of (Ndhlovu, 2007) that the hegemonic environment caricatures the Tonga as people, whose linguistic and cultural identities are substandard, inferior and backward.

VI. CONCLUSION

The song Kujata jata has, undoubtedly proved to be the most successful Tonga song, in the history of Zimbabwean music. The song dominated Zimbabwean music charts, in the year 2021 but its impact is likely to be felt for many years to come. The study revealed that the song was popularised by its unique fusion of Tonga and Shona, a potent message as well as a powerful sungura beat. From the findings of the study, the song can be characterised as a potent counter-hegemonic cultural product, that changed the Tonga cultural narrative. It achieved this through challenging ethno-cultural marginalisation as well

as the stereotypical depiction of the Tonga language and culture. The success of the song should, however, be celebrated with caution, since this study revealed that, the Tonga have not yet crossed the boundary fence. In other words, the success of the song has not yet resulted in the total emancipation of the Tonga. A lot of hegemonic barriers are still intact. The study established that, the marginalisation of the Tonga language and culture, as well as the stereotypical treatment of the Tonga, still persists. The foregoing revelations, do not necessarily downplay, the cultural impact of Kujata jata but depict that, the linguistic and cultural narrative of the Tonga, cannot be entirely transformed by one cultural product.

This study, therefore, advocates for a multi-pronged approach to the promotion of the Tonga language and culture. This must involve the production of more Tonga songs, films, documentaries, literature and other cultural products. These should permeate various media platforms such as radio, television and social media. The producers of these cultural products should be creative enough, to tap into traditional Tonga rhythms such as Ngoma Buntibe and Nyele, Tonga proverbs, folktales as well as other rich traditions. This will go a long way in promoting the authentic Tonga language and culture.

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