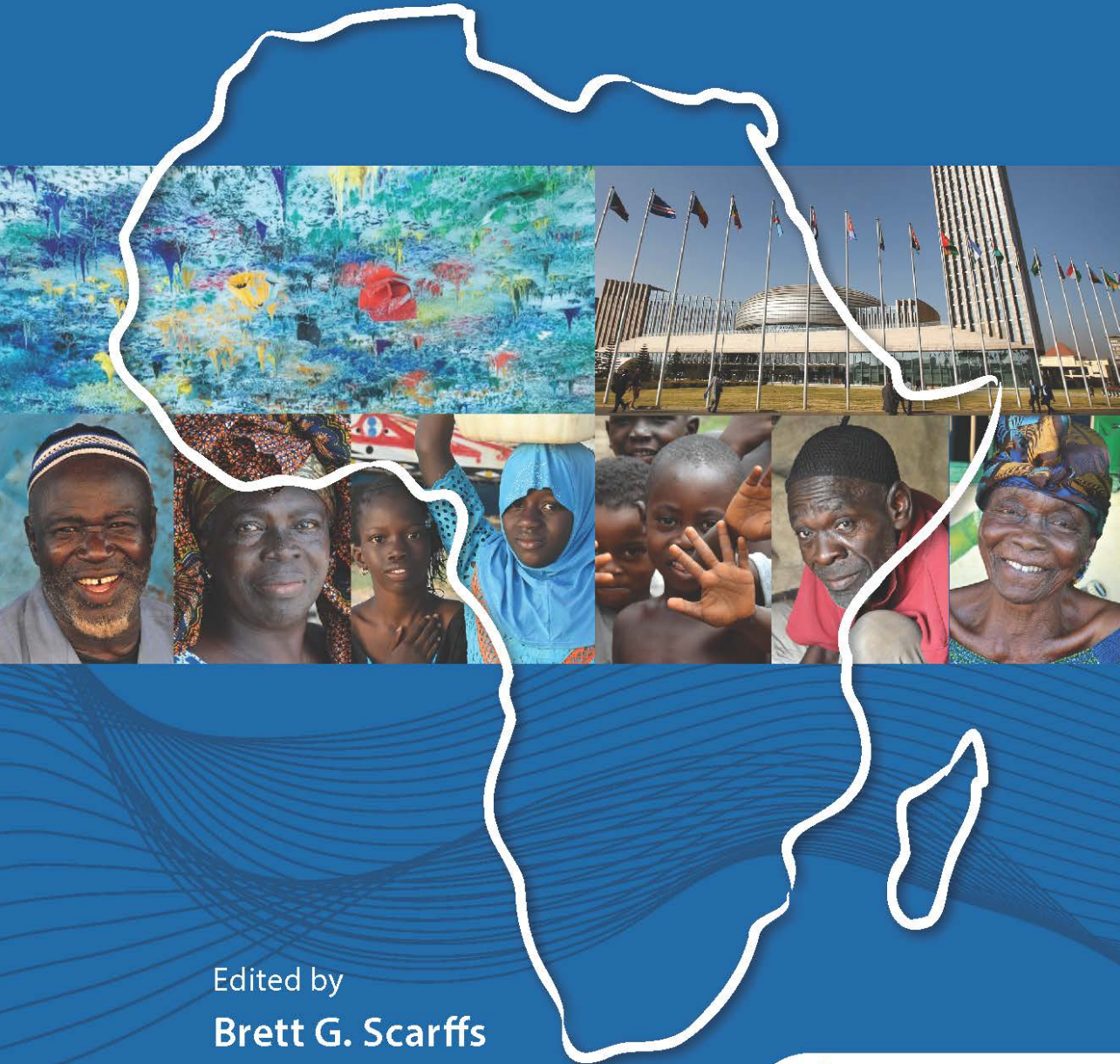


African Conceptions of Human Dignity



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<https://doi.org/10.52779/9781991260253>

3 INDIGENOUS CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN DIGNITY

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INTRODUCTION: THE STORY OF “ZVIGAMBA TAMBANEVANA”

Listening to any one of Oliver Mtukudzi’s songs, one always gleans a theme around the need to respect human dignity as epitomised in folktales often told by elders in the rural areas. One such story is that of a man named “Zvigamba Tambanevana”. The name came from the type of clothes he had: tattered and made from pieces of cloths of different colours. At no particular occasion could anyone tell the colour of his shirt, shorts, trousers or anything he put on because they were made from differently coloured pieces of cloths. Most people in the village would despise him, treating him as an insignificant person. He had no friends except children who would occasionally troop around him, mocking him hilariously. For this reason, most people tagged him “Zvigamba Tambanevana”, literally meaning “one in tattered clothes who plays with children”. True to his fate, the man enjoyed playing with the children.

So was his life for years, until one day he picked a shiny stone, which he took to someone to tell him what type of stone it was. Amazingly, it was a diamond gem! The man helped “Zvigamba Tambanevana” sell the gemstone and it fetched him a huge amount of money. This transformed his life and made him a rich man. He started retail shop businesses and was approached by many people who wanted him to help them by lending them some money to start businesses of their own. “Zvigamba Tambanevana” would always remind the men and women who came to him for help to remember how they used to treat him as a “useless” person. He often reminded them that everyone deserved some respect for *who* they are and not *what* they are because *what one is today* can change at any moment. He told everyone he helped that people should focus on respecting the dignity of other human beings and not the materials that they lack or possess.

This story is commonly shared among informal gold miners popularly known as *makorokoza* (crackers) in Zimbabwe. These are usually young men who come from poor rural backgrounds and rummage places where mining is taking place or used to take place at commercial levels. Their lives revolve around looking for and selling small amounts of gold for survival. Whenever the informal miners do their job, they wear old, soiled and tattered clothes, because they work underground without appropriate equipment. Most of the time the informal miners are unfortunate as they hardly get much gold. Nevertheless, they do not give up, hoping to get the precious gem one day like what “Zvigamba Tambanevana” did.

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In essence, the story told by the rural miners is linked to Oliver Mtukudzi's music, particularly the selected songs in this chapter, in two significant ways. Firstly, "Zvigamba Tambanevana" is a poor rural man whose demeanour is despised but enviable as shown by the fact that he entertained children even when most people did not like him. Most of Mtukudzi's songs are about rural life and humility as key elements of personal and community life. Secondly, the story serves to illustrate that, in life, one's poor and desperate situation can change for the better. Above all, Mtukudzi's songs invoke the theme of rural life grounded in the indigenous Shona conception of dignity and humility as demonstrated in this story. Indeed, Mtukudzi was a storyteller, someone with the ability to make deep social connections through storied musical lyrics.

INDIGENOUS HUMAN DIGNITY EPITOMISED IN SELECTED SONGS OF OLIVER MTUKUDZI

It should be mentioned from the outset that Oliver Mtukudzi was involved with expression of indigenous human dignity lyrically during the colonial period and that this became increasingly prominent in his music after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980.² Oliver Mtukudzi (1952-2019), also knowns as "Tuku" and "Samanyanga",³ was one of Zimbabwe's most popular Afro-jazz musicians and he was known for his distinctive and perceptive social commentary deeply imbedded in most of his songs on human dignity. For him, human dignity constituted the mainstay of humanity's critical social cohesion and integrity. In these selected songs, Oliver Mtukudzi emphasised the centrality of dignity to all human efforts to live a good life and he took it upon himself to sing about it and other aspects of social life to the nation of Zimbabwe and beyond. In this chapter, the focus is on the message of human dignity in five of Mtukudzi's songs, namely, "Pss Pss Hallo" (2001), "Ndakuyambira" (2002), "Ngoromera" (2003), "Bopoto" (2008) and "Kuonererwa" (2009). Oliver Mtukudzi delivered these songs while not only entertaining his listeners but also imploring people all over the world to concentrate on preserving human dignity for socio-economic and cultural development.

By invoking the *moral* principles embedded in human dignity as drawn from socio-cultural contexts, this chapter seeks to contend that Mtukudzi's selected songs addressed thorny matters revolving around human integrity, social responsibility and respectability, among a host of other issues. The chapter offers a close exploration of Mtukudzi's selected songs about the need to live a dignified and ethical life in order to be happy. It maintains that Mtukudzi's song lyrics are packed with perceptive advice on good living, particularly about personal integrity,

2 Sensen O. 2022. "Human dignity in historical perspective: The contemporary and traditional paradigms", *European Journal of Political Theory* 10 (1):71-91.

3 "Tuku" is short for "Mtukudzi" and this is one of his official nicknames. His other popular nickname is "Samanyanga", which is derived from his Nzou (elephant) totem. In Zimbabwe, indigenous people express their respect for someone by referring to them by their totem animals.

care for others and the environment. One can argue that, in these selected songs, Mtukudzi is focused on the philosophical concept of human dignity, through which he espouses the idea that a life worth living is hitched on respect for humanity and human dignity as the ultimate goal. In the final analysis, the chapter submits that Mtukudzi's music is a legacy that exudes unparalleled potency to influence, culturally and morally, the whole nation of Zimbabwe and the world at large. His music reflects various indigenous concepts of human dignity such as diligence, honesty, compassion and tolerance. This comes from the fact that Mtukudzi grew up in Zimbabwe and composed most of his songs from his experiences in both the rural and urban settings during the colonial period and after independence. It is from the rural experiences that Mtukudzi drew much of his indigenous conceptions of human dignity and where he learnt a lot from the adults around him. From the songs, one gets the connection between the modern and the past, which makes the songs unique in both conception and expression. This is why nearly all the selected songs in this chapter are in Shona, his indigenous language, which captures the local people's experiences.

Zimbabwe is home to nearly seventeen million people.⁴ This population is constituted from various groups of indigenous people. There is the Shona group, which is the largest collection of groups, including the Zezuru, Kore-Kore, the Karanga and the Manyika, who occupy the central, northern, northeastern and eastern parts of the country, respectively. Other indigenous groups are the Ndebele, who are predominantly located in the northwestern, western and southwestern areas of Zimbabwe. In the southeastern parts of the country are the Ndau people, while the southern and some parts of the southeastern parts are occupied by the Kalanga, Venda, Tsonga and Shangaan people. There are other groups, such as the Nambya, Tswana and Doma, all of whom live in Zimbabwe. In this article, I use the words Shona and Ndebele to refer to all the indigenous peoples of Zimbabwe in their different ethnic settings and ChiShona and IsiNdebele as two of the most common indigenous languages in Zimbabwe respectively.

Oliver Mtukudzi was a musician of great note and ability. He was a member of Zimbabwe's Kore-Kore group and he sang in the nation's dominant ChiShona language along with IsiNdebele and English languages. His music was always focused on what is good for people and how best they could achieve it. In a biography of Oliver Mtukudzi, Craig Harris stated that Mtukudzi's music has been a very instrumental source of strength socially, politically and economically.⁵ Although he started his musical career at a time when local music, particularly township or Afro-jazz music, was regarded as the work of low-life people, Mtukudzi rose to prominence through vivid personal achievements, huge respectability, dignity and the great sense of purpose that he brought to the music industry. Mtukudzi had interest and passion to see people living well in ways that reflected the best of humanity. It was his conviction that people of all ages needed to preserve their

4 "Zimbabwe Population (Live)", *Worldometer*, 16 July 2023.

5 Harris C. 2023. "Oliver Mtukudzi Biography", *AllMusic.com*..

dignity if they were to live good and happy lives. Mtukudzi sang most of his songs in Shona, a language that is understood and spoken by the majority of the people in Zimbabwe. However, his listeners and followers fell far beyond the boundaries of language and his songs had an appeal to different audiences of various language backgrounds across the world.

This chapter seeks to identify and explore one of the key and uniting messages that bind people of different language backgrounds together from a few of his songs that focus on the concept of human dignity. The songs show that music is one of the avenues of communicating values to the people. In traditional Africa communities, music and dance were used as platforms to convey various messages on African values that people needed to conserve in order to live in harmony. This idea comes from the “sankofa” indigenous African perspective which claims that, as a people makes progress in modernising their lives, there is also need to look back and pick the good things that the past or tradition has taught them.⁶ We get the same idea from Oliver Mtukudzi’s songs as shown in this chapter. The chapter presents five of his songs, which are “Pss Pss Hallo” (2001), “Ngoromera” (2003), “Bopoto” (2008), “Kuonererwa” (2009) and “Ndakuyambira” (2002). All of these songs illustrate Tuku’s multifaceted musical prowess in presenting human dignity as an inviolable ingredient to human happiness.

In this chapter, the contention is that the selected songs are specific ethical chides on humanity to pursue a purposeful human life of dignity. The songs show that Mtukudzi placed enormous value on respect and dignity in every facet of life. He drew most of his songs from the indigenous Zimbabwean and Shona philosophy rooted in the philosophy of *Ubuntu/unhu/hunhu*,⁷ which is the basis of African metaphysics, axiology and epistemology. According to philosophers of education Oswald Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Ngoni Makuvaza,⁸ *hunhu* is an indigenous philosophy rooted in the experiences of the indigenous African peoples. It informs the epistemological, axiological and ontological conceptions of being Zimbabwean in particular and being African in general. Mtukudzi, therefore, drew inspiration from *unhu/hunhu* as an aspect of African philosophy which prides in the idea that the benefits and burdens of the community must be shared in such a way that no one is prejudiced but that everything is done to put the interests of the community ahead of the interests of the individual.

6 Sankofa is an African word from the Akan tribe of Ghana. The literal translation of the word is that, as people make progress and move forward, they must constantly look back and take along with them the good things from their past.

7 These words mean the same. The first is a Zulu/ IsiNdebele reference to being human, while the other two are often used interchangeably to refer to the same concept.

8 Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru O and Makuvaza N. 2014. “Hunhu: In Search of an Indigenous Philosophy for the Zimbabwean Education System.” *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 3, (1): 1-15.

IN SEARCH OF THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE: HUMAN DIGNITY IN CONTEXT

One of the most intriguing questions for humanity, for all the time, has been: What is the purpose of human life? This is a metaphysical question with which philosophers have been grappling with from time immemorial. The Greek classical philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) dealt with the ancient question and answered it with credible arguments. First and foremost, Aristotle argued that everything has a purpose or a goal for which it exists and that the purpose is always to achieve some good.⁹ This implies that there are several goods, with different levels of importance. For human beings, Aristotle continued, what he called the “Chief Good” points to what is primary of all human actions that humans perform. He believed that human beings’ highest good refers to *eudaimonia*, commonly understood as “happiness”, which is focused on human flourishing. It is important, however, to emphasise that the “happiness” that Aristotle meant here is different from the feelings or experiences most youths relate to excitable experiences. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines “happiness” as *the state of being happy*. Further, it alludes to happiness as the state of feeling or showing pleasure or contentment.¹⁰

From the definition given above, a few significant points can be taken on board. First, the mind can express excitement, since happiness determines one’s mental state. Similarly, the feeling of joy does not last long because it is a temporary behavioural attribute. Second, pleasurable feelings are often misconstrued as that which human beings seek in all their endeavours. Third, being happy also implies that someone is contented both internally and externally. Fourth, happiness is a personal experience and it differs from person to person.

The four points outlined above indicate that it is necessary to distinguish between “happiness” and “pleasure” in order to extrapolate what Aristotle implied when he suggested that *eudaimonia* is the “Chief Good” for humanity. For example, philosopher Paul Bloomfield, looks at happiness as a state characterised by feelings of contentment and satisfaction with one’s life or current situation, but he views pleasure as a more instinctual, in-the-moment individual experience.¹¹ Apparently, pleasure refers to the positive feelings we get from experiences like eating good food, getting a massage, receiving a compliment or having sex. This means that happiness, while not a permanent state of mind itself, is a more stable state than pleasure. This is the case because happiness generally sticks around for longer than a few moments at a time, whereas pleasure can come and go in seconds.

In an article entitled “Tracking Eudaimonia”, Bloomfield argues that Aristotle referred to happiness as “eudaimonism,” from the Greek word “*eudaimonia*,” which

9 Sotshangane N. 2000. “Aristotle’s Philosophy of Human Life”, *Phronimon* 2 (special edition):321-321.

10 “Happiness”, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, Third Edition, published online in 2015.

11 Bloomfield P. 2018. “Tracking Eudaimonia”, *Philosophy, Theory and Practice in Biology*, 10(2):1-24.

is the ancient Greek philosophers' term for a good human life.¹² Aristotle proposed that happiness must be attained for its own sake and not anything else. Further, Aristotle concluded that happiness refers to the possession of honour or virtue. For this reason, he believed that a "happy life", which only consists of satisfying the bodily passion (pleasure), was a life suitable to a beast. By this, he meant that the function of human beings was to distinguish themselves from other animals through their rational abilities and performing rational activities. Thus, happiness, for him, consists in reasoning well or acting rationally according to virtue. Unlike the experience of pleasure, which is, in fact, an aspect of happiness, a person must rationally act according to virtue for his or her whole life because one moment or day does not make a person happy. This is not to say pleasure should not be part of a human being's experience. On the contrary, the argument is that the purpose of human life is to seek long-lasting happiness through virtue and honour. In my view, the overarching claim by Aristotle is that a virtuous life is also full of pleasure because a lover of virtue, who acts virtuously, will often derive sustainable pleasure (happiness) from his or her life.

Interdisciplinary researcher and social anthropologist Munyaradzi Mawere has observed that every human being has a purpose for which they exist on earth.¹³ The same idea of living for a purpose was further explained by American pastor Rick Warren who argues, particularly from a religious perspective, that human beings exist for five purposes, which are: (1) to serve God (worship), (2) to belong to God's family (fellowship), (3) to be Christ-like (discipleship), (4) to serve God (ministry) and (5) to serve others (mission).¹⁴ In light of this outline, Mawere aptly concludes that Warren's submission is that personal fulfilment, satisfaction and life's meaning can only be found in understanding and doing all what God created a person to do as they live on earth.¹⁵

Clearly, Warren's submission is religious – Christian to be precise. It is apparent that his approach to the purpose of human life leaves out important perspectives, namely, secular views of the purpose of human life. Suffice it to say that, while Warren's outline of the purpose of human existence is worthwhile, it serves to give the impression that human beings exist for transcendent individual religious purposes only. This perspective leaves out other nonspiritual and ephemeral purposes of life which have an equal appeal and play a critical role in human existence as human beings interact with each other and with other non-human beings on earth.

The above Western perspective of the purpose of human existence is not the same as the African indigenous conception of the key tenets of human dignity. The

12 Bloomfield, "Tracking Eudaimonia", 4-6.

13 Mawere M. 2010. "On Pursuit of the Purpose of Life: The Shona Metaphysical Perspective", *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 3(6):269-284.

14 Warren R. 2002. *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* New York: Better World Books, 85-88.

15 Mawere, "On Pursuit of the Purpose of Life", 277.

Western conception of human dignity is brought in here to contrast with the African indigenous conceptions of the idea of human dignity. The African epistemology of communalism that every human being is useful in their own unique way is the mainstay of African indigenous concepts of humanity. For Zimbabwe and the rest of southern Africa, *Ubuntu/hunhu/unhu* is a unique African way of life that emphasises communalism. On this point, Mawere further claims that the Shona people use logic and metaphysics to demonstrate that human beings exist on earth for specific purposes.¹⁶ Indeed, African scholars, such as John Mbiti, have long argued that African human life is meaningless outside communal or collective existence. This is the context within which Mbiti came up with the famous dictum, "I am because we are and since we are therefore I am."¹⁷ Mbiti's pronouncement on African communal existence serves to illustrate that human life derives its purpose and meaning from the moment it is experienced and expressed within the context of community setting. This reference to community confirms that indigenous African conceptions of personhood are "defined by reference to other members of the same community, both the living and the living-dead".¹⁸ However, even this pronouncement itself leaves the purpose of human life open to various interpretations and indicators. For instance, in the context of the Shona people of Zimbabwe, a purposeful life consists in living a dignified life and it is a function of leading and leaving behind a legacy of an exemplary life, a life worth talking about after one is departed. From Mtukudzi's selected songs, one distinct interpretation of the purpose of life is that dignity is not solely regarded as an individual human characteristic, but a concept that involves relationships at family, community, tribe and national levels. In other words, the indigenous conception of human dignity is understood as existing in relationships with others, as will be explained in the sections below. But before getting to the presentation of dignity in Mtukudzi's selected songs, an explanation of what dignity is, as an indigenous African concept, is necessary.

In indigenous African, particularly Zimbabwean, understandings, human dignity (*chiremera chomunhu* in the ChiShona language of Zimbabwe) can be described as self-esteem or self-worth. It is arguably the essence of being human. The concept of dignity (*chiremera*) is as old as humanity itself. Dignity can be understood as a status which places the life of human beings over and above all other lives. Oliver Mtukudzi also regarded human dignity as a critical resource in achieving human happiness. Mtukudzi, being a fan of many revellers and listeners alike, realised that he had a huge role to play in advising most of his followers about the importance of carrying themselves around with dignity (*chiremera*) and delivered his advice through well-thought-out lyrics. In the next section of this chapter, I seek to show that, through his music, Mtukudzi focused on an indigenous African communitarian conception of human dignity.

16 Mawere, "On Pursuit of the Purpose of Life".

17 Mbiti J. 1975. *An Introduction to African Religion*. London: Heinemann, 145.

18 Mawere, "On Pursuit of the Purpose of Life", 270.

INDIGENOUS CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE SONGS OF MTUKUDZI

Various artistic works, including folktales, songs, paintings and dances, often rise above being simply for show business or entertainment purpose, as they can convey multiple meanings, some of which are highly normative. According to the Ugandan poet Okot p'Bitek, "Artists are part of the ... most sensitive and imaginative minds that society has produced ... They respond intuitively to what is happening, what has happened and what will happen."¹⁹ These various art forms reflect social values and musicians such as the late Oliver Mtukudzi employ their outstanding ingenuity to transmit messages around the world. Five of Mtukudzi's songs carry strong themes of the indigenous conception of human dignity.

Mtukudzi was a performer who produced music with passion. His music earned a brand known as "Tuku Music"²⁰ from its distinct Zimbabwean flavour made from deep Shona idioms. He was keen on making a contribution to causes that promoted social change and transformed human behaviour in order to achieve human happiness and flourishing. First and foremost and from an ethical perspective, Mtukudzi demonstrated his commitment to this purpose by becoming an embodiment of the local musical traditions, instrumentation, dance and traditional value of *Ubuntu/hunhu*.²¹ Mtukudzi was not a perfect human being, for no one is, but he made a difference in the lives of many by living a simple and modest life. In the five selected songs under consideration in this chapter, Mtukudzi took it upon himself to sing good ethical advice to his audiences irrespective of age, gender, social status, religion or political affiliation. In the following sections, indigenous concepts of human dignity, as informed by the philosophy of *hunhu*, are gleaned from the selected songs.

Human dignity as decency, industriousness and productivity

In the song "Pss Pss Hallo",²² Mtukudzi sings in relation to the need for young men and women to grow up and be productive as society watches and expects that they settle down as responsible adults. In part, the lyrics go as follows:

<i>Haunyari pese pese</i>	You have no shame everywhere
<i>Hallo pese pese (Pss Pss)</i>	Hallo everywhere (Pss Pss)
<i>Haunyari pese pese</i>	You have no shame everywhere

Among the Shona/Ndebele people of Zimbabwe, human dignity is conceived as living a productive life through hard work. A person worth of human dignity does not live a careless and wasteful life. However, Mtukudzi is quite aware of the problems of unemployment that lead to the idleness of many people, especially the

19 p'Bitek, O. 1986. *Artist the ruler: Essays on art, culture and values*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 38.

20 Maguwu, T. 2019. "The Tuku brand: lessons for marketer", LinkedIn.com, 1 February.

21 Dube M. 2019. "Tuku: A thousand years from now", *The Sunday Mail*, 3 February.

22 Mtukudzi O. 2001. "Pss Pss Hallo".

youth. Even under these circumstances, Mtukudzi is reproaching the young men and women from going about all over the place with no purpose, since this makes them lose their dignity. The “Pss Pss” expression is an informal or colloquial way of drawing the attention of another person. In traditional Shona etiquette, it is not proper to draw the attention of someone else in this manner. Anyone who does this is regarded as shameless and uncultured. That is why Mtukudzi is chiding those fond of using “Pss Pss” everywhere, because it takes away their dignity.

Furthermore, Mtukudzi takes the opportunity to make his listening audience do a reality check of themselves. He calls upon them to “calm down” and do a proper reflection on their course of life, after which they will realise that they are grown-ups who need to settle down and be responsible adults. He goes on to sing:

<i>Dzikama!</i>	Calm down!
<i>Dzikamawo wakura</i>	Calm down, you’ve grown up.
<i>Dzikama wee!</i>	Calm down please!
<i>Dzikamawo wapera</i>	Calm down you’re finished.
<i>Uchazowana aniko?</i>	Who will you marry?
<i>Dzikamawo wakura</i>	Calm down you’ve grown up.
<i>Uchazowanikwa naniko?</i>	To whom will you get married?

The above lyrics point out the shame and embarrassment that comes upon many a young man or woman who goes about living a loose life, a life without self-respect. The shame comes from the fact that, among the Shona people, it is expected that when a young man or woman has grown up, he or she must display or exhibit good behaviour (*tsika*) towards others and he or she is liked by others on the basis of his or her good behaviour.²³ This state of having the approval of others, or the quality which causes a person’s presence to be appreciated and to give a feeling of pleasure to others, is referred to as humanness (*hunhu*). Ultimately, good behaviour (*tsika*) builds humanness (*hunhu*) which results in someone achieving human dignity (*chiremera*). Thus, when Mtukudzi beseeches the young men and women to calm down (*kudzikama*), he is warning them against losing their dignity and, consequently, their happiness.

Being a versatile and an international musician that he was, Mtukudzi switches to the English language in the same song, “Pss Pss Hallo”, addressing the same shameless young men and women. He observes that the young “friend” has not been seen around lately, possibly because he or she has been hiding, shying away from the public land iving a wasteful and meaningless life elsewhere. He sings thus:

Hallo, Hallo, Hallo my friend
 Long time, no see
 Hallo, Hallo, Hallo my pal
 How come you look so sad?
 You used to be hot, to be smart, too smart to work

23 Gelfand M. 1992. *The Genuine Shona Survival Values of an African Culture*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

Now that chance is gone
And it's late to recover
Why don't you settle down?²⁴

After explaining that lost time can never be regained, Mtukudzi continues to chide the young men and women to focus on regaining the lost dignity. He repeats the message:

<i>Waita hwaani chisikana?</i>	Who are you imitating, little girl?
<i>Dzikamawo wakura</i>	Calm down you're grown up.
<i>Hauna mari muhomwe</i>	You don't have money in your pocket.
<i>Dzikamawo wopera</i>	Calm down you're finished.
<i>Waita hwaani chikomana?</i>	Who are you imitating, little boy?
<i>Dzikamawo wakura</i>	Calm down you're grown up.
<i>Hauna mari muhomwe</i>	You don't have money in your pocket.
<i>Dzikamawo wopera</i>	Calm down you're finished.

It can be noted that, throughout this song, Mtukudzi is reprimanding the young men and women who wander about everywhere trying to impression everyone. For him, if a young man goes out or a young woman is asked out all the time and they agree, this is a display of lack of human dignity. This is why Mtukudzi is advising the young, who are seemingly adamant to stop parading themselves everywhere because this behaviour takes away their dignity.

Human dignity expressed as peaceful co-existence and nonviolence

In "Ngoromera" (Fighting Charm), Mtukudzi sings against violence.²⁵ The Shona word *ngoromera* defines a form of aid, usually obtained from a *n'anga* (traditional healer), to improve or assist someone's fighting ability.²⁶ Unfortunately, when someone has acquired the fighting charm, they cannot live or lead a decent and peaceful life, because the charm makes the person provoke spontaneous fights with others. This makes the person with the fighting charm lose their dignity, which is followed by the catastrophic character loss as a result of their use of the fighting charm. Thus, Mtukudzi is warning people about the meaningless of acquiring and using the fighting charm as it brings violence. In his view, the fighting charm does not serve any purpose in human endeavours except to bring about unhappiness. In this particular song, Mtukudzi's focus is on the negative impact of using charms in perpetrating violence. The lyrics go as follows:

<i>Ngoromera ingoromera</i>	Fighting charm is fighting charm.
<i>Harina zvarinoshanda, haringabatsire</i>	It does not work, it doesn't help.

²⁴ This portion of the song is one that Mtukudzki sings in English; hence, there is no original language to provide.

²⁵ Mtukudzi O. 2003. "Ngoromera" [Fighting Charm].

²⁶ Mtukudzi, "Ngoromera".

<i>Ngoromera ingoromera wona</i>	Fighting charm is fighting charm, look.
<i>Harina zvarinoshanda, haringabatsire</i>	It does not work, it doesn't help.
<i>Ingoromera, ingoromera, wange</i>	It's fighting charm, it's fighting charm, look.
<i>Harina zvarinoshanda, haringabatsire</i>	It does not work, it doesn't help.
<i>Zuva nezuva haritonge matare, ngoromera</i>	Every day it does not solve issues.
<i>Harina zvarinoshanda, haringabatsire</i>	It does not work, it doesn't help.
<i>Zuva nezuva hachitonge matare chibhakera</i>	Every day the fist does not solve issues.
<i>Hachina zvachinoshanda, hachingabatsire</i>	It does not work, it doesn't help.
<i>Zuva nezuva haritonge matare gonan'ombe</i>	Every day magic does not solve issues.

It is clear from the lyrics that the *ngoromera* is only used to cause despondency among the people. The power of the *ngoromera* is seen in someone's reckless use of the fist or excessive power to settle issues. In this song, the *chibhakera* (fist) is a sign of the belief in the use of violence to settle arguments and disagreements. Usually, the fist is resorted to by people who would have lost arguments through proper reasoning processes.

In the political landscape of Zimbabwe, one can easily identify the fist with the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party, which characteristically and passionately uses it to salute its supporters. For ZANU-PF, the fist invariably represents power and patriotism, as the independence of Zimbabwe was won through a protracted war against the White settler regime. While various and diverse interpretations of the fist can be proffered, in “Ngoromera”, Mtukudzi looks at the fist as a symbol of violence and destruction and it is for this reason that he notes that the fist serves no purpose except to cause violence and unhappiness among people. That is why Mtukudzi is quick to point out that those who use the fist (violence) to settle differences lack any trace of dignity and only serve to bring more disunity instead of peace.

Running beneath the whole song is the central theme of self-discipline (*kuzvibata*). Among the Shona peoples, self-discipline is an essential element of maturity. This applies to all people of all ages to control themselves and behave with restraint even in the face of provocation.²⁷ However, in the song, Mtukudzi is quick to note that anyone with a fighting charm is quick to start arguments and war, all in order to unleash violence on others. This is why Mtukudzi further sings thus:

<i>Hatidi hondo, (hondo hatidi)</i>	We don't want war (war we don't want)
<i>Hatidi mhirizhonga (mhirizhonga hatidi)</i>	We don't want violence (violence we don't want)
<i>Ngatiwirirane tiwirirane</i>	Let's agree and agree
<i>Hatidi hondo, (hondo hatidi)</i>	We don't want war (war we don't want)
<i>Hatidi mhirizhonga</i>	We don't want violence
<i>Kutaurirana kuwirirana</i>	Dialoguing is agreeing
<i>Hatidi hondo (hondo hatidi)</i>	We don't want war (war we don't want)
<i>Hatidi hondo</i>	We don't want war

²⁷ Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona Survival Values*.

The message in this song is clear; that everyone wants to live in peace and harmony with others. This song draws from the story of “Zvigamba Tambanavana” presented in the introduction in that it celebrates peaceful coexistence. This is only possible in a society whose members shun violence, war and bitterness. Thus, Mtukudzi, through “Ngoromera”,²⁸ delivers a sharp indictment against the rampant and deliberate use of violence among the general populace.

Human dignity expressed through humility

According to Jacob Mapara, a scholar of indigenous knowledge, living heritage and African languages, “In Africa, music... plays a significant role in different areas in people’s lives. In fact, all sub-Saharan Africans use music to celebrate, to teach, to raise emotions as well as a rite of passage.”²⁹ This is true about most of Mtukudzi’s selected songs in this chapter. The third song, “Wanza Sori” (Say “Sorry” More Often),³⁰ is one in which Mtukudzi teaches about the importance of humility. In this song, Mtukudzi is unapologetic about the need to live a humble and peaceable life. He emphasises the beauty of living a life full of humility, as he claims that decency and respectability do not rest in acquiring academic diplomas and degrees. Instead, Mtukudzi is frank enough to point out that one’s reputation or humility lies in how one carries oneself around.

Apparently, how one carries oneself around is often displayed through one’s behaviour and what one says to others. In this regard, tropical medicine doctor and author Michael Gelfand notes that, according to the Shona, a person may be judged by their manners and the respect that they accord to other people.³¹ While academic achievements in the form of diplomas and degrees are good, they do not contribute much to anybody’s manners. A person may not be happy if they possess academic qualifications but are ill-mannered. Clearly, in a society like that of the Shona, who are so accustomed to living close to each other, it is imperative that everyone carefully observe and practise good behaviour at all times in order to guarantee happiness. Thus, for Mtukudzi, happiness is impossible if people do not accept it when they are wrong and ask for forgiveness. The idea in the song is that every person should be humble, never proud or aggressive to others. This is aptly captured in the song’s lyrics as follows:

<i>Hazvidi ma diploma</i>	It doesn’t require diplomas
<i>Hakudi ma diploma</i>	It doesn’t need diplomas
<i>Kuremekedzwa hakudi ma diploma</i>	To be respected doesn’t require diplomas
<i>Hazvidi ma degree</i>	It doesn’t require degrees

28 Mtukudzi, “Ngoromera”.

29 Mapara J. 2018. “Canonising the Fast Track Land Reform as Crisis: Engaging Thomas Mapfumo’s Post-2000 Songs”, in 110.

30 Mtukudzi O. 2008. “Wanza Sori” [Say “Sorry” More Often].

31 Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona Survival Values*, 12.

<i>Kuremekedzwa kunobva</i>	To be respected comes from your
<i>mumaitiro ako</i>	behaviour
<i>Hazvidi ma degree</i>	It doesn't require degrees
<i>Washama muromo, mukanwa</i>	When you open your mouth, nothing
<i>makareruka</i>	good comes out
<i>Washama kutaura, mukanwa</i>	When you open your mouth to speak,
<i>makareruka</i>	nothing good comes out

It should be understood that the Shona often and always teach the young, from an early age, to apologise if they do anything wrong. Young boys and girls are taught to say, “*Ndinokumbira ruregerero*” (I ask for forgiveness). The lesson is that, if one commits a wrong, one must accept that they are wrong and go on to apologise or ask for forgiveness by saying, “*Ndine hurombo*” (I am sorry). If one has received anything, be it material or other assistance, one should always be able to say, “*Ndatenda, maita basa*” (I am thankful, you have done a good job).

Mtukudzi realises that all these teachings are quite important, as they remain cardinal in the lives of many indigenous people. This is clear in the song's lyrics below:

<i>Kuzvirereka, kuzvininipisa</i>	Yielding, being humble
<i>Hazvidi madhiploma</i>	It doesn't require diplomas (going to school)
<i>Hakudi madhiploma</i>	It doesn't need diplomas
<i>Kungoti “please”, ndapota</i>	Just saying please, please
<i>Ndatenda, maita basa</i>	Thank you, you have done well
<i>Wanza sori</i>	Say sorry more often
<i>Wanza sori, wanza sori</i>	Say sorry more often, sorry more often

Furthermore, in “*Wanza Sori*” (Say ‘sorry’ more often), Mtukudzi suggests that humility lies in yielding and being humble. In the lyrics, Mtukudzi points out that academic diplomas and degrees in themselves are not important if their owner lacks humility. At the centre of this song is the advice that being simple and humble always make a happy life. This is why he stresses at the end of the song that it takes nothing from anyone to apologise and say “sorry” whenever one has gone or done wrong, because one's academic achievements (diplomas and degrees) cannot take the place of one's good conduct. In Shona culture, respect for others is the hallmark of good behaviour. Mtukudzi draws the song from this theme in order to put across his message to the young generation.

Human dignity epitomised in hard work

In the song “*Kuonererwa*” (Showing Off),³² Mtukudzi is advising that, while wealth brings happiness, there is need to be careful in the way one acquires and uses it. The Shona people believe that honest ways and hard work in the accumulation

32 Mtukudzi O. 2009. “*Kuonererwa*” [Showing Off].

of wealth often bring about a peaceful and happy life.³³ This comes from the personal satisfaction one gets from the knowledge that one's wealth is clean from any imperfections such as corruption and bribery. In "*Kuonererwa*", Mtukudzi observes that some young men are good at showing off their wealth to the public. He is, however, quick to warn the public that, when these young men are showy, it is because they have not worked for that wealth in the first place. Under normal circumstances, Mtukudzi continues, people who have worked hard for their wealth do not expend it recklessly. He sings, thus:

<i>Zvikomana zvemazuwa ano kuonererwa</i>	Today's young men are over-excited
<i>Oooo ... kushamisira</i>	Ohhh ... very showy
<i>Ndaiti kushanda inini</i>	I thought it was through work
<i>Chedikita hachipfachurwe</i>	That from hard work is not wasted
<i>Ndaiti ndezvedikita</i>	I thought it was from hard work
<i>Kugarofumura zvirimudura ravo</i>	Always exposing what's in their granary
<i>Ndaiti kushanda inini</i>	I thought it was through work
<i>Kugaropfachura zvirimuhomwe dzavo</i>	Always wasting what's in their pockets
<i>Ndaiti kushanda inini</i>	I thought it was earned

Furthermore, Mtukudzi points out that those who are reckless or showy with resources often do so because they lack an appreciation of how hard it takes to accumulate or acquire them. More often, those who inherit riches or get rich through stealing are prodigal in the way they use their wealth.

In this song, Mtukudzi expresses the indigenous concept of human dignity by engaging his listeners in a musical discourse grounded in the indigenous Shona concept of *hunhu* (character). His indigenous conception of dignity is based on the principles of mutual respect, self-restraint and tolerance which are key pillars of *hunhu* (character). The song further articulates a sense of dignity grounded upon moral relationships between the self and others, expressed through the common formulation of "being a person among other people" (*kuva munhu pane vanhu*). To stress the point, Mtukudzi sings:

<i>Ukaona achipfachura, ipfuma yenhaka</i>	If you see him being wasteful, it's inherited wealth
<i>Vemanyemwe vatsva vetsambo</i>	The frenzy ones are new to reality
<i>Ukaona achipfachura, zvimwe ndechekuba</i>	If you see him being wasteful, it's stolen wealth
<i>Anga ashanda riiniko?</i>	When had he worked?

All in all, Mtukudzi is only alerting people, through the song "*Kuonererwa*", that true or genuine happiness is not expressed through extravagant lifestyles. It takes hard work to acquire wealth and only when wealth is thus accumulated and used economically do people live and lead a happy life. This is a great ethical lesson for

33 Sipeyiye M and Konyana EG. 2018. "Instant prosperity and the Shona socio-cultural and religious values in Kireni Zulu's song "*Nyaya yekunhonga*", in Muwati, Charamba and Tembo (eds). *Singing Nation and Politics*.

the young generation. The song projects the theme of modesty which runs through the story of “Zvigamba Tambanevana”. The man in the story kept his cool even when he became rich from the precious gem he had discovered.

Human dignity as respect for humanity

True to the spirit of singing ethics to the nation, Oliver Mtukudzi moves on to counsel people of all ages, urging them to take heed or face their own demise. In subtle remarks that are laid deep in Zimbabwe’s Shona proverbs, which are rich in meaning, Mtukudzi releases warnings against paying no attention to advice whenever it is given. In “Ndakuyambira” (I Have Warned You),³⁴ which is the last of the five selected songs for analysis in this chapter, indeed, Mtukudzi offers a masterpiece full of unbridled advice to all who care to listen. The title of the song sums up his mission, as if he was washing his hands after a good job.

In “Ndakuyambira”, Mtukudzi announces that *shoko rakafamba* (word of advice went around) for everyone to hear. This is a call to all to take heed of the word of advice, as failure to do so may become dangerous in future. The song goes on to proclaim that the information as well as the wisdom about how to live a good life have been made available to whoever cares to take it. Apparently, people now know that good advice leads to a good life in future. Where he says “*Mave kuziva kuti seri kwesadza kunehusavi*” (Now you know that behind the thick porridge there is relish), Mtukudzi is acknowledging that some people have taken heed of the advice about living a good life and now they know the benefits of such a life: happiness. Here is what he sings at the beginning of the song:

<i>Shoko rakafamba</i>	Word of advice went around
<i>Ndokufamba, rikafamba</i>	It went around and went around
<i>Ruzivo rwapararira inga</i>	Information is now prevalent
<i>Njere dzapararira wona</i>	Wisdom is all over, see.
<i>Mave kuziva seri kwesadza kunehusavi</i>	Now you know that behind the thick porridge there is relish
<i>Seri kwemusuva kunehusavi, mudhara</i>	Behind the morsel there’s relish, old man

However, even when he has commended some people for receiving advice, he also notes that there are some who may still want to be warned further.

A close look at the lyrics below is necessary in order to understand the point. Using a metaphor of hot fire (*vhunze remoto*), Mtukudzi is quick to warn that people need to be careful since danger is not out of their lives. Fire represents danger and Mtukudzi is warning people to stay away from danger by avoiding all ways that bring trouble and, consequently, misery. This conception of dignity is premised on the understanding that people live in community with each other and need to support each other at all times. To that effect, Mtukudzi emphasises this theme in the song as he sings:

34 Mtukudzi O. 2002. “Ndakuyambira” [I Have Warned You].

<i>Ukabata vhunze remoto unetsva</i>	If you touch hot fire you get burnt
<i>Iko kutambira muruvhunze unetsva</i>	Even playing around hot fire you get burnt
<i>Ndakuyambiraaa, ndakuyambira ini</i>	I've warned you, I've warned you myself

Realising that some people are hard to take advice, Tuku becomes realistic and points out that advice is not a forced matter. It is, in actual fact, the prerogative of each and every one to make a choice and live a good, happy life. This is to say that ethics is never forced upon anyone. In the same vein, ethicists Rogene Buchholz and Sandra Rosenthal have also noted that "ethics can't be taught, any more than leadership or entrepreneurship can be taught in the classroom."³⁵ In the lyrics below, Mtukudzi is saying that it is up to his listeners take his advice or leave it. If they care to listen to his advice, then he would have achieved his goal. By extrapolation, Mtukudzi is saying that happiness is attached to ethics and it is one's choice to live ethically and be happy. To stress the human free will, Mtukudzi sings thus:

<i>Chaunonzi rega ndechiri mumaoko</i>	What you're told to let go is what is in your hands
<i>Chaunganzi siya ndochawakafumbata</i>	What you're told to leave is what you're holding
<i>Chikava muropa ndechekufa nacho</i>	If it's in your blood you will die with it
<i>Chirimuropa ndechekufa nacho</i>	That which is in your blood, you will die with it
<i>Chemutsinga ndechekufa nacho</i>	That which is in your veins, you will die with it

The song's message is straightforward in that people should take advice whenever it is given. This comes from the indigenous concept of life drawn from the philosophy of *hunhu* which emphasises communal existence.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the concept of human dignity from an indigenous Zimbabwean perspective. The argument has been that indigenous people of Zimbabwe conceive the idea of human dignity and display their understanding through various art forms including music, dance and sculpture around *hunhu* philosophy. Five songs by Oliver Mtukudzi were analysed in this chapter. The songs are replete with indigenous perspectives on human dignity in the sense that they carry the Shona traditional ways of addressing life and its challenges through *hunhu* philosophy. Throughout the songs, Mtukudzi communicates timeless, universal and powerful messages on human dignity. The selected songs aptly represent the indigenous conception of human dignity, as they are drawn from the ordinary rural people's life experiences. As presented in the introductory story of "Zvigamba Tambanevana", the songs show that the Shona people of Zimbabwe rely on their rich culture of *hunhu* to navigate through the challenges of life. It is the

35 Buchholz RA and Rosenthal SB. 1998. *Business Ethics: The Path beyond Principles to Process*. London: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 15.

African philosophy of *hunhu* which informed the songs that Mtukudzi composed as he picked from the people's experiences in their communities and used them to warn, encourage and advise.

By singing about social issues related to respect for human dignity such as peace, love and harmony, Mtukudzi has contributed immensely to nation building and socio-economic development. He concentrated on singing about peace and harmony as demonstrated by one of his songs, titled "Ngoromera" (Fighting Charm), presented in this chapter. The song achieved the goal of discouraging people from engaging in any form of violence and concentrate on being productive. The idea is that when we have peace we have time to develop by focusing on working to improve our lives. Even though Mtukudzi was a subtle and effective social commentator, he was never involved in direct confrontation with the government of Zimbabwe for singing about political dissent.

The songs presented in this chapter highlight self-reliance and tolerance. Mtukudzi was a musician who challenged listeners with songs with lessons on heeding advice and hard work. His music was received by a large population of indigenous society and those abroad. When Mtukudzi died in 2019, Zimbabweans from all walks of life and across the political divide agreed that they had lost a great man and advisor. He was granted the prestigious national hero's status, which had been a preserve for elites and independence veterans from the ZANU-PF ruling party. His funeral was attended by multitudes from different sectors of the community. This was an honour for his contribution towards character building of Zimbabweans since the country's independence in 1980.

