

Singing Albinism in Global Tanzania: “Demanding” Inclusion through Music

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Medical transnational goods, ideas and conceptions, spread by humanitarian institutions and NGOs, intersect with the production of new local understandings and knowledge of illness and healing and are critically appropriated by local communities (Hahn 2004). Specific outcomes of these cultural processes are, for instance, local responses to malaria treatment and prevention in Abidjan (Granado et al. 2011) or the intertwinements between local biologies and “chemical infrastructure” in the case of two chemical substances – temephos and chlorine-based products – in Nicaragua (Nading 2016). Global health interventions thus influence the lives and practices of individuals in creating new regimes of biomedical knowledge and technologies in many localities in the global South (Prince 2014).

In the case of albinism, the intertwinements between transnational humanitarian actions, media awareness campaigns and global health interventions and local communities have followed a similar pathway. Since around 2007/8, when news reports about the killings of people with albinism in the north-western parts of Tanzania hit the global level, transnational actors have tended to (co-)produce new identities ([Brocco 2015b](#)), redefine concepts of normalcy (Brocco 2015a) and re-conceptualize notions of corporeality and subjectivity in people with albinism as much as in the Tanzanian society at large. Local-global intertwinements and processes of communicability of issues connected to albinism have also triggered the production of new meanings and identities related to albinism in the local population.

In the glocal popular culture and music field (Krings and Reuster-Jahn 2014), such processes manifested themselves in three ways. First, over the last years there has been the emergence of new artists with albinism in Tanzania as well as in other countries all around the world (e.g. Ras Six and RobenX from US). Second, the involvement of already well-known singers with albinism (e.g. Selif Keita from Mali and Yellowman from Jamaica) in human right campaigns on behalf of individuals with the congenital condition have become more evident through songs and public events. Finally, there has been the glocal production of songs and lyrics related to albinism by already well-known Tanzanian musicians (e.g. the song “*Simama Nami* [Stand up with Me]” realized by Keisha, a famous female singer with albinism, together with other Bongo Flava musicians in 2015). A different instance of the latter phenomenon comes from X Plastaz, one of the most famous East-African hip-hop/Bongo Flava music groups. These musicians released a song entitled “*Nini Dhambi kwa Mwenye Dhiki* (Which [is] the sin of those having agony)” in 2004, which metaphorically mentions widespread stigma attached to people with albinism and hints at the trade of albino body parts within the “occult economy” of Tanzania. X Plastaz’s example shows how rumors about the killings of persons with albinism and/or related to stigmatization attached to their social position had circulated locally in Tanzania even before international broadcasting media and charitable organizations began to focus on the murders and underlined the problematic socio-economic situation of people with albinism in the country.

“Even a Human Skin is for Sale”: Approaching Ras Six and his Tunes

***“Simama imara, zunguka kila/ kona, kila anga angaza/ kushoto, kulia, mbele,
nyuma kote pitia/ Na hapo ulipojishikiza/ ng’ang’ania, sikiliza, vumilia/ baadaye
usije jutia/***

*“Hold on firmly, get around/ every corner, take a look/ left, right, front, back, make sure
you look everywhere/ and if you persist/ just grasp, listen and be patient so that/ you
won’t regret later on/*

***Hii ni mahususi na maalum/ kwa watu wangu/ walemavu, vipofu, zeruzeru na/
wendawazimu/ watototo wa mitaani, fukara masikini na wenye akili zao timamu/***

*This special and known (song) is for my people/ the cripple, blind, albinos and/ insane
persons/ street children/ the poor and those who are mentally sane/*

***Hii kamba ngumu/ mjue tunavutana na wenye nguvu/ vitambi na mashavu [...] Kila
kitu, kila mahali/ na hata ngozi ya mtu dili/ wengine wachavi, waganga feki.”***

*This is a thick rope/ you should know it/ that we are pulling it against those who are
powerful/ healthy and big [...] Everything and everywhere/ and even a human skin is for
sale/ there are witches and fake traditional healers.”*

The above rhymes, the endless look of rage on a man’s worried face, his sharp gestures, a crowd of young fellows surrounding him in a poor neighborhood of Arusha, a city located in the north-eastern part of Tanzania. These are only a few elements of an African tune’s music video, realized in 2006. The song, entitled “*Nini dhambi kwa mwenye dhiki*” (literally “Which [is] the sin of those having agony”), is a long complaint of the critical economic conditions and the social issues which scourge Tanzania and its population nowadays (Video n.1). Along the song’s lyrics, the MC^[1] and former X Plastaz front-man, Faza Nelly, denounce the vileness of the Tanzanian government’s welfare policy and societal inequalities, mostly afflicting the life of deprived individuals and groups. Amid the list of deprived people, the singer mentions persons with albinism^[2]. He states that the song is dedicated, among others, to the “blind and albinos” and in so doing he refers to the practice of selling body parts, blood and skin of people with albinism to “fake” traditional healers, as it has been framed by national and international broadcasting media and NGOs in the past few years. The news and awareness campaigns have then brought to world prominence the outbreak of the alleged killings of people with albinism in Tanzania’s north-west mining frontier (Mwanza and Shinyanga regions) as well as its subsequent spread beyond the country’s borders to Congo, Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia.

Video n.1: “Nini Dhambi kwa Mwenye Dhiki (Which [is] the Sin for those having Agony)” by X

After listening to this song many times before starting my fieldwork and while in Tanzania, I developed the idea to investigate, firstly, whether there are in Tanzania singers and/or musicians with albinism and, thereafter, the reasons why and in which ways these musicians use their own skills as a way to address social issues affecting the life of other individuals with the congenital condition. Lucky enough, one day I was walking and chatting with one of my closest friends and informants in one of the crowded streets of Dar es Salaam and asked her whether there were musicians with albinism in Tanzania. She thought a bit and then suddenly suggested that I talk with a young musician with albinism who she had known for quite a long time. His name was Ras Six. I asked for his telephone number and quickly obtained an appointment with him. The first meeting with Ras Six took place two days later in a studio in Mikocheni area, a wealthy neighborhood in Kinondoni district, where he was recording a few songs for his new album. After that meeting, others followed while I was still in Tanzania. Our relationship did not end when I left the country, as we have kept in touch through Facebook.

By describing the life trajectory of Ras Six in brief and analyzing two of his songs related to albinism and disability, this piece intends to shed light on the relationships between two diverse but not disconnected spheres of social life. The first is constituted by the subjectivity of Ras Six and his accounts about the social worlds in which people with albinism live in Tanzania. The second is made up of moral values and humanitarian actions spread in the country by NGOs and international institutions. The enmeshment of these two spheres comprises the changing social and moral worlds in which many of Ras Six's songs have been realized from his youth in Tabora to the present days in which he performs his music in international festivals, such as the *Sauti za Busara* ("Voices of Wisdom") in Zanzibar, and collaborates with international organizations on behalf of the population with albinism in Tanzania.

The present piece is part of my PhD research on the intertwinements between, on the one hand, transnational actors, such as NGOs and international humanitarian institutions, who participate in the global flow of biomedical explanations and human rights conceptions related to albinism and, on the other hand, persons with albinism and other local subjects (e.g. relatives and community members) who actively appropriate these global ideas and mix them with moral/religious conceptions in the making and remaking of their identities and subjectivities. The research data on which the blog piece is based derive from conversations and interviews I had with Ras Six on three occasions while I was in Dar es Salaam during the last part of my fieldwork (August-September 2015). I obtained the rest of the information on his life and music through chats we had on Facebook and by directly listening to his and the Tunaweza band's songs. Since I am not a native Swahili speaker, I kindly asked Ras Six to transcribe in Kiswahili the lyrics of the two songs analyzed below ("Je Ni Nani" and "Mauaji"). The lyrics in Kiswahili of the song "*Nini Dhambi kwa Mwenye Dhiki* (Which [is] the sin for those having agony), realized by X Plastaz, in turn, were available in the internet (<http://www.bongolyrics.com/song-lyrics/nini-dhambi-by-x-plastaz>). Afterwards, I translated all of the lyrics into English.

Floating into the Tanzanian Soundscape

Before examining Ras Six's life experiences and analyzing his tunes about issues related to albinism, it is important to situate his music within the soundscape of the Tanzanian music scene and to hint at other musicians in Tanzania who addressed social problems related to health and spread educational messages through some of their lyrics.

Bongo Flava is unquestionably the most widespread kind of music in Tanzania and encompasses other music genres such as Zouk, Hip-Hop, R&B, Reggae, Ragga, Takeu, and Bongo Bhangra (Suriano 2011). The Bongo Flava music genre, classified between the late 1980s and the early 1990s as "hip-hop/reggae with a Tanzanian flavor", is the product of an "hybridization through globalization" (Gaztambide-Fernandez 2004), whose name presumably derived from *bongo* (brain), as a term pointing out the alleged smartness of Dar es Salaam citizens (Englert 2003) (Video n.2). Bongo Flava has three main characteristics: lyrics written in Kiswahili and/or street language (*lugha ya mitaani*); music made of backup tracks prepared by producers; and an audience mainly composed of young (urban) generations (Perullo 2005; Englert 2003, 2008; Reuster-Jahn 2008; Suriano 2007, 2011; Ntarengwi 2009).

Video n.2: The Notorious B.I.G., Tupac Shakur and Bob Marley are the most well-known transnational music models imported by wealthy Tanzanian youths during the 1980's and 1990's, i.e. the end of the Nyerere Socialism Era. This posthumous tune, realized in 2006, is a remix of two original songs: "Suicidal Thoughts", by the Notorious B.I.G. and "Johnny Was" by Bob Marley.

Despite this broad definition, the differences between Bongo Flava and other mainstream music genres, such as hip-hop, R&B and reggae, remain fluid in terms of the artists' self-representation and dress code as well as the lyrics' themes and the music style. For instance, many Bongo Flava musicians and fans show influences from the Black-American rap culture mixed with accessories and dreadlock hair styles of Rastafarian origin (Suriano 2011). This is also the case of Ras Six whose dress style is composed of dreadlocks, bracelets displaying the Ethiopian flag or the colors of the Jamaican flag. These accessories refer to the global reinterpretation of Rastafarian culture [3]. Within this process of appropriation, Bongo Flava musicians draw on traditional elements from different autochthonous music styles and/or localize global music styles (Sanga 2011).

As stated above, the definition of Bongo Flava both in terms of a music style and the artists' self-representation is still "challenging". As underlined by Suriano (2011), many "pure" Tanzanian rappers, for instance, distance themselves from this music genre affirming that "real" hip-hop and/or reggae music are committed to denounce social problems and tell the "truth" about life (Video n.3), while Bongo Flava musicians are primarily interested in entertaining their audience with frivolous themes (Video n.4). Despite this critique, many

scholars (Suriano 2011; 2007) prefer to categorize Bongo Flava lyrics into two main fluid groups: songs expressing feelings (apparently the majority) and tunes addressing social, political, and economic problems. The latter is genealogically intertwined with old school American hip-hop and global reggae styles (Alvarez 2008). In general, it may thus be said that not only “pure” rappers but also Bongo Flava artists talk about daily issues affecting urban and unemployed youths and other marginalized groups (Perullo 2005, Stroeken 2005, Suriano 2007). One rule is thereby self-evident: Bongo Flava lyrics as well as proper hip-hop/reggae tunes do not directly criticize the political system (Suriano 2011: 120) and the Tanzanian government.

Video n.3: Song realized by Juma Nature, one of the most engaged and committed music groups since the 1990s called “Inauma Sana (It Hurts a Lot)”. The song talks about social problems faced by the young generation, especially HIV/AIDS (*ngoma*), in poor urban settings.

Video n.4: One of the most played songs by Diamond Platnumz, called “Number One”

Despite the lack of any explicit reference to public figures and political scandals, both these two fluid categories of lyrics within the Bongo Flava music styles (e.g. party songs and lyrics addressing social problems) are nevertheless the expression of Tanzanian urban youths with their ambiguous experiences and their particular understanding of modernity and globalization (Suriano 2011). Although Ras Six’s musical textures are closer to reggae and some of his lyrics incorporate Rastafarian narratives, his music style should be classified as Bongo Flava, as he himself affirmed. This self-categorization anyway does not keep him from insisting that he is able to play any kind of music style from Bongo Flava to Hip-hop, Reggae and Dance music (*musiki ya dansi*) (Video n.5).

Video n.5: “On My Mind” – Ras Six

Despite the heterogeneity of themes picked up by many Bongo Flava musicians in their songs and the fluid categorization of this music style, many artists realized songs which address the social and political problems mainly affecting the young and unemployed generations in the country. In this regard, an important theme picked up by many Bongo Flava songs is related to urban life and health issues. For instance, the spread of HIV/AIDS (*Ukimwi*) has been addressed in the past as well as more recently in many songs (see Higgins 2014). In the street language used by youth, HIV/AIDS is translated with words as *ngoma* (drum), *mgeni* (guest/stranger), *mdudu* (insect) and/or expressions as *-kanyaga miwaya* (crushing the electricity wires – “to get AIDS”) (Suriano 2006).

Well-known Bongo Flava musicians, such as Mr II/Sugu, Professor Jay and Mwanafalsafa, refer to the spread of the virus in the Tanzanian population trying to deliver prevention and educational messages about leading a “moral” life and enhancing the social inclusion of individuals already infected (e.g. as sung by Professor Jay in the song “*Alikufa kwa Ngoma* [He Died Because of the Drum]”). Thus, the narratives about HIV/AIDS, contained in these popular songs, are culturally and historically bound products of a supranational “narrative intervention” then embedded in local experiences of young Tanzanians (Bastien 2009). In the lyrics of “*Starehe* (Repose/Good Times)”, Professor Jay and Ferooz talked about the allegedly rampant and immoral life style of a man who is becoming infected with HIV because, as the protagonist tells, “the devil succeeded in influencing me (*Ibilisi amefanikiwa kunivuta*)” (Video n.6). Another musician, called Dully Sykes, realized a song entitled “*Nyambizi* (Voluptuous Woman)”, which addresses the issue of unprotected sex among the young generations in urban settings. While other Bongo Flava artists such as King Crazy GK, in the song entitled “*Sister Sister*”, and Noorah, in the song “*Ukurasa wa pili* (Page Two)”, critique the licentious behaviors of young urban women (Higgins 2014: 33-37).

Video n. 6: “Starehe (Repose/Good Times)” by Ferooz and Professor Jay

Bongo Flava, Reggae, Hip-hop and Albinism: Ras Six’s own Trajectories

“Watu wengi wamekufa kwa maradhi haya/ Familia zinateseka juu ya maradhi haya/

Lots of people have died because of these diseases/ families are bothered (worried) because of these infirmities/

Ona watu masikini wanavyohangaika kuitafuta rizki/ ona watoto wa mtaani wanavyoitafuta aaah rizki/

Look at poor people restlessly looking for means of subsistence/ look at street children who are searching for ahhhh means of subsistence/

Wanapigana vikumbo na mbwa koko kisa ukoko jalalani/ inauma aaah!//

They elbow their way through with savaged dogs (while dealing with) their business or stories of burnt leftovers in the garbage, this hurts!//

Je ni nani anaweza kusimama na kuitetea haki yao o,o,o oooh?//

Who is it who can stand up and fight for their rights?//

These verses open one of Ras Six's songs titled "*Je Ni Nani? (Who is it?)*" and briefly describe the kind of life experiences related to albinism he went through in the past (Video n.7). Therefore, the lyrics testify which role the musician claims to play for helping the less fortunate people in Tanzania through his music. The song denounces that many individuals and street children (*watoto wa mitaani*) in the country are starving because, in Ras Six's own words, "they do not have nothing, no foods, no proper houses, nothing". Hence, "people of Tanzania have to change the situation in the country", he added later on.

Video n.7: "Je Ni Nani (Who is it)" – Ras Six

When Ras Six pronounced these lines and explained his way of making music to me, we were sitting in a small bar in Mbezi Beach while drinking sodas. I started to take notes on his life story, daily experiences, understandings of albinism and taste of music since August 2015. The second conversation we had took place inside a two-rooms soundproofed house furnished with computers and microphones, in the middle of a garden and close to another small abode. On that occasion, the first thing Ras Six made was to show me his newly released album "*Taa Bora (The Right Time)*" and talked briefly about which songs it was made of. Afterwards he started answering questions about his life history and music trajectory.

Sixmond Ndeka, Ras' birth name, was born in Tabora thirty-nine years ago. From Tabora, he moved to Dar es Salaam in 1996 and tried to follow his dream to become a musician. At the beginning, even though he won one important music contest at the national level, it was difficult for him to make money with music. Without a stable income, he could not afford to rent a room and became a street boy (*kijana wa mtaani*). By playing music in camps (parties organized especially by boys and girls of a higher socio-economic background) and doing small business (*biashara ndogo ndogo*) in the street, Ras Six eventually made enough money to record his first album titled "*Sina Pamba (Without Cotton Dress)*". When I asked him why he opted for this title, he replied:

"Because not all the people are poor but in my case I was a kid of the streets (*kijana wa mitaani*) and because of that I did not have beautiful dress and when I went to club many persons asked me 'hey you, where do you come from? To whom (do) you belong?' They asked that because I did not have so many clothes and I always put on shorts, T-shirt, hats. I always answered to these question saying that 'I am an artist (*mtu wa sanii*), so do not look at my appearance but listen to my music'."

After having played music in different camps in various areas of Dar es Salaam, Ras moved to Zanzibar in the hope to find a suitable job. There, he worked in a hotel for three years while studying voice, ensemble, *ngoma*, drum kit and improvisation at the Dhow Countries Music Academy (DCMA), a music school established on the top floor of the Old Customs House on the seafront of Stone Town in 2001. Ras Six returned to Dar es Salaam in 2010 where he formed the Tunaweza Band with other musicians with physical disabilities whom he had got to

know in Zanzibar. One of these artists later became his second wife. At the beginning Ras Six and the Tunaweza Band (“We Can” in Kiswahili, a reference to the Obama’s political campaign in 2008) played only traditional music but later on he convinced the other group members to take into consideration other styles of music such as Bolingo (music from Congo sung in Kiswahili) and Reggae. This advancement in his own music career was also triggered by collaborations with international NGOs involved in aid programs on behalf of people with albinism and disability such as Under the Same Sun, Come Together (from Sweden) and CEFA (from Italy). These organizations organized events and financed some of his performances with the Tunaweza band.

Differently from the majority of so called Bongo Flava musicians, Ras Six claimed that the themes of his music were various. In his last album “*Sina Pamba*”, besides songs talking about love and feelings (e.g. *Mbilimbi*), there are other tunes which address issues such as poverty, social inequality, political corruption, stigma, albinism and disability. He explained:

“I talked about *watu wa chini na masikini* (poor persons) because the life for them was really strong and I am not able to talk about themes for rich people because I always lived in poverty and do not know anything about the life of those rich (*maisha ya juu*). I also used to talk about *matatizo ya maisha ya watu wenye ulemaavu na ualbino* (problems of persons with albinism and disability), I talked about *watoto wa mtaani* (street children), I talked about HIV and education and the importance of education for every individual.”

This statement is an instance of Ras Six’s commitment to social themes in some of his songs (Video n.8). Apart from the direct reference to his life in a vulnerable position, Ras Six’s music lyrics are also directly related to two other reasons. On the one hand, his social commitment and desire to tell the “truth” was connected to multiple music influences, namely roots reggae and hip-hop – previously covering issues ranging from the rejection of any class and racial inequality (especially the discrimination of black people in the US) to the positive evaluation of post-colonial criticism and fights for equity. On the other hand, Ras Six’s involvement with social issues can be interpreted as an outcome of his working relationships with international actors (especially NGOs), which convey the political message – informed by (bio)medical and humanitarian models of disability, moral values and human rights – that albinism and any other disability are global categories of human diversity and should not be taken as forms of inability.

Video n.8: “Greetings for you” – Ras Six

Further examples of the social themes present in some of his songs are summarized in the verses contained in the tune “*Je Ni Nani? (Who is it?)*”. The lyrics list social issues affecting young unemployed and less educated generations in Tanzania. These are, for instance: individualism, social and economic inequality, corruption, skin color and religious diversity, management of chronic diseases and lack of inclusion for people with disability at large. In this

regard, Ras Six sings:

“Kila mmoja amegubikwa na ubinafsi, Chozi la mnyonge linatiririka pasipo na hatia, Mahakama zinanuka rushwa!!

Everyone has been showered with individualism, a tear of an humble person is dropping without guilt, the courts stink of corruption

Haya, mnyonge mnyongeni haki yake mpeni, Haya, tofauti za dini weka pembeni/ Haya tofauti za rangi weka pembeni na tofauti zetu zisitufanye tuwe na matabaka kwani sisi sote ni watoto wa mama mmoja aah Afrika,

Ok, you give the rights to (this) humble person. Come on, put aside religious difference/ Come on, put aside the difference of skin color and do not let our differences divide one another/ let classes be there because we are all children of the same mother aah Africa,

Tuungane pamoja kupigana na umaskini, ujinga na maradhi, twataka maji, chakula, umeme na elimu ukatili ukomeshwe eeh, Ukimwi utakwisha lini? Malaria vipi mta win iih? Nooo!!

Let's unite together to fight against poverty, ignorance and diseases, we want water, food, electricity and education and violence must be stopped, when will AIDS disappear? And about Malaria when will we win against it?

Tb, kansa ndio chanzo cha matatizo, Loliondo je kuna ufumbuzi wa matatizo? Nenda Ocean road, KCMC na Muhimbili ukaone kwa macho yako.

Tb, cancer are the source of problems/ Loliondo, is there a solution for the problems? Go to Ocean road, KCMC and Muhimbili and will see with your eyes.”

Hear the Voice of Disability, Disability is not Inability: Exploring Albinism in Verses

The actions of NGOs and international institutions on behalf of people with albinism have aimed at transforming ideas about albinism at both rural and urban level and creating “alternative futures” (Weiss 2004) for the individuals with the congenital condition in the Tanzanian society. Visible influences from these international actors on wide-spread conceptions of albinism are present in the multiple labels for albinism circulating in Tanzania today ([Brocco 2015b](#)). The campaigns carried out by NGOs and international institutions have triggered the formation of new identities and subjectivities among people with albinism. A strong group identity and attitudes of deservingness are a few instances of the enmeshment of the condition’s local moral-religious meanings with the global flow of (bio)medical explanations, moral values, and the human rights perspective on social issues related to albinism (Brocco 2015a). For instance, a similar pathway could be traced in the diverse healing domains (biomedical, herbal and

spiritual/religious) in the case of the “Wonder of Loliondo”[\[4\]](#) and the spread of ART in Tanzania, highlighted in the lyrics written by Ras Six.

The subjectivity of people with albinism in the country has also been informed by the interactions between global ideas and local conceptions about the congenital condition to the extent that people with albinism have started to employ different coping strategies and human rights discourses to enhance their social inclusion in the communities (Brocco 2016). Moral-religious discourses and humanitarian actions have targeted the ritual murders of people with albinism in the northern regions of Tanzania (Bryceson *et al.* 2010; Schühle 2013). Such values and ideas have been spread in the country through (bio)medical interventions (i.e. delivering of sunscreens, free surgical operations and mobile clinics for ophthalmological and dermatological check-ups) and awareness campaigns carried out by NGOs (e.g. Under The Same Sun, Standing Voice, Tanzania Albinism Society), international governmental institutions (e.g. EU, UN, Tanzanian government) and broadcasting media (e.g. national and international newspapers, TV and radio programmes). The arousal of new rights and safeguards for people with albinism, claimed by national and international actors, shaped new political identities and renewed existing ones in the national political arena. For instance, a strong group identity, based on the biosociality of the congenital condition and built on discourses of victimhood and deservingness, has been strengthened by the political turmoil caused by the killings, the supposed stigma attached to people with albinism and references to human rights ([Brocco 2015b](#)).

In Ras Six’s musical narratives about stigma and marginalization, conditions which have a strong impact on the daily life of many individuals with albinism, one comes upon similar discursive trajectories. This is not to imply that subjectivity and self-representation of social horizons of existence are not co-shaped by real experiences of stigma that Ras Six described to me during our meetings and narrated through his music. One time, for instance, he gave me an account of the kind of feelings he experienced during his youth and the way he articulated them in songs packed with meaningful words of denunciation and hope:

“In the school I suffered from stigma because people looked at me as a different person in Tabora. I all the time was asking myself ‘why people looked at me in that way? Why am I so strange to them?’. And also for that I started singing for people with albinism. I realized a song for people with albinism called ‘*Mauaji* (Killings)’. The story in *Mauaji* is a true story is about a friend of mine who was killed.”

The primary scope of this song – from which extracts are translated below – is to create alternative futures and re-animate the regenerating power of transforming reality through denouncing broken states of living (Biehl and Locke 2010). While Ras Six’s verses seem to express the spirit of becoming, they also reproduce global-local discursive dynamics where, for instance, calls for humanitarian action are enmeshed with local moral and religious worlds.

Intro

“*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, your kingdom come, your will be*

done, as in heaven as it is on earth, conquering the lion of Judah. Rastafari I, Where are the United Nations? Where are the Human rights watch? We come to tell them/

Verse 1

Alfajiri naamka nashtushwa na sauti ya radio/ Juma Mkamia ndio msomaji taarifa habari ya Leo/ Habari zinasema limetukia tukio ooh/ Mkoani Tabora amechinjwa albino ooh, Jina lake maarufu aliitwa.../ (Zeruzeru)/

I get up at dawn and I am shocked listening to the news from the radio/ exactly Juma Mkamia the journalist [reporting] the news of today/ The news say that an incident happened ooh/ In Tabora region an albino was killed ooh, his name was ... / albino/

Wamemchinja kinyama kibanda chake kidogo wamekigeuza bucha/ Tanzania aah/ Nchi ya amani kwa nini mnaitia laana/ Chungeni sana nanananaa naaah/ Serikali iko macho inawatafuta watu hao ooh/ Harambee harambee wananchi tuwataje wauwaji/

They have slaughtered him like an animal turned to his little side as butchers/ Tanzania aah/ Country of peace why do you call [them] curse/ Take care of people/ The government is active to find the people who did this/ Come on citizens wake up and denounce the killers/

Chorus

Zuia mauaji dhidi ya walemavu wa ngozi, sikia.../ Kama unawapenda Mungu anakuona aah/ Dunia tunapita haifai Mungu kumuudhi/ We mama tumia cheo chako albino kuwaokoa aeeh/

Prevent killings against people with the disability of the skin, listen.../ If you love God He sees you/ We are just passing by in this earth and we should not upset God/ Hey Mom use your [social] position for rescuing albinos/

Verse 2

Haya sasa stop stop muda umefika albino najitetea/ Hatutaki siasa, stop dhambi ya mauaji mnayotenda itawarudia/ Nyerere alisema 'ukila nyama ya mwanadamu kamwe huwezi kuacha'/ Mola tunusuru ooh oh,oh,oh/

Okay now stop stop, time has come I defend myself/ We do not want politics, stop the sins of the killings you commit to they will turn to you/ Nyerere said 'if you eat flesh of human being you cannot stop doing it'/ Lord help us ooh oh, oh, oh/

Verse 3

Vyombo vya habari vinajitahidi kuelimisha lakini ni sawa na kumpigia mbuzi uluzi

au kumpigia mbuzi gitaa aaah/ Ushirikina umekithiri mnaabudu uchawi kutuua sisi maalbino faida gani mnapata aaah,

Media are trying to educate but it is always the same like whistling goat or like playing guitar for goat [expecting to dance] aaah/ you worship superstitions and people are adoring them and kill us albino, which benefits you get Aaah/

Hear the voice of disability, disability is not inability.”

The closing words of the song synthesize the many moral conceptions surrounding albinism in global Tanzania. In the verses, moral-religious values have been enmeshed with the aims of humanitarian interventions. In so doing, God punishes the murderers of people with albinism before the law in Tanzania and his judgment is more tremendous than that delivered by human beings. At the same time, the reference to Nyerere and his sentence, reprimanding those who stained themselves with crimes against people with albinism, seems to be more incisive than the measures taken by the Tanzanian government, whose actions are perceived as useless. *Mauaji* also expresses the process of communicability surrounding the killings against people with albinism and their life experience. Such a process brings the solutions to this issue as well. During one of our discussions Ras Six told me:

“When I do awareness campaign I want to tell other people that they do not have to look at us as a problem (*shida*) and also first thing is acceptance (*kitu cha kwanza ni kukubali*). Second point is that albinism is a normal thing (*kitu cha kawaida*) and not a mistake (*kosa*). Thirdly, I focus on the problem of vision (*malengo*) because albinos cannot do things which normal individuals can. Anyway the most important message is for parents of children with disability and albinism: they do not have to hide their children with disability. They have to send them to school and stay with other children.”

Ras Six’s statement features the values spread by the humanitarian reasons, re-made perceptions of albinism and transformed conceptions of the congenital condition. New ideas of normalcy which entail the re-definition of horizons of meaning in which albinism does not mean inability, although it is simultaneously being reshaped as a form of disability.

Outro: Concluding Remarks

Music is a powerful means by which social issues are pointedly addressed in a few verses and moral values are spread within a society. By describing one musician’s life trajectory and his life experiences, this blog piece pointed out the many ways the subjectivity of individuals with albinism is influenced and re-modulated by the intertwinements between local moral and social worlds and global humanitarian reasoning. The lyrics of the two songs “*Je Ni Nani*” and “*Mauaji*” show how particular versions of reality about stigma and marginalization in the life of people with albinism can consolidate themselves through actions and awareness campaigns

carried out by international actors. Although Ras Six has realized both songs with a serious message and tunes evoking emotions and feelings, the above-mentioned lyrics are committed to address stigma and social suffering affecting people with albinism and also call for the end of assaults against the individuals with the congenital condition.

Ras Six's lyrics and comments vividly describe social issues about albinism already spread by broadcasting media, NGOs and international institutions over the past years and relate them to wider problems affecting the Tanzanian society and political arena. Of particular interest are the critical stances about neo-capitalist ways of life and the counter argument informed by moral values about enhancing discourses on social inclusion of people with disability. Humanitarian and Christian/Muslim values of acceptance and equality are also called for. All of these stances represent the ways through which Ras Six intends to respond to the problems of individualism and lack of interest hitting the society at large. Further, the songs embody the biosociality of people with albinism and show the group identity built on albinism as Ras Six seems to speak for *all* individuals with the congenital condition and implicitly presents himself as a member of this community.

Footnotes

[1] Literally, master of ceremony.

[2] In Tanzania, people with albinism are often called zeruzeru, especially in rural areas. This term is generally translated as “ghost” or/and “albino”, even though the original meaning of this label still remains problematic to trace (see Brocco 2015a for further analysis).

[3] According to Foster (1999), Rastafarians were those who developed reggae music from ska and rock steady in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

[4] The “Wonder of Loliondo” refers to the healing practices of a 76-year-old retired pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT), Ambilikile Mwasapile, from Samunge (Loliondo Divison) in the Sonjo plans. Around 2011, Mwasapile became famous and attracted thousands of patients from every part of Tanzania as he claimed to be able to prepare a concoction from some tree's roots, suggested by God during a dream, to cure major chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer and HIV/AIDS (Mattes 2014).

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Bio statement

Giorgio Brocco is a PhD candidate at the Freie Universität Berlin. His doctoral research entitled „*Zeruzeru and Diverse Shades of Difference: A Study of People with Albinism in Kilolo District, Tanzania*“ examines the life situations and everyday experiences of people with albinism in Tanzania. The main goal of the study is pursued through an investigation that deals with the social, political and moral discourses and ideas about albinism in Tanzania, as they are articulated by diverse actors between local and global settings. Since 2012, Giorgio Brocco has also worked for the NGO Tulime Onlus.

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