

Full Length Research Paper

# **Ditlhaka music learning and practices through transmission among the Batlokwa and Balete of Botswana**

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Based on ongoing field research into Botswana music and dance, this article deliberates on information found out on *ditlhaka* (river - reeds) traditional music as practiced by the Balete and Batlokwa of South Eastern Botswana. The paper was conceived from tribal collaborations between ethnomusicology music classes' village excursions and the respondents in an effort to understand Balete and Batlokwa of Botswana *ditlhaka* traditional music and its uses in conjunction with their tribal daily lives. The paper does not only pay attention to the music, but also to its traditional ways of oral transmission and values. The subject of traditional learning styles among practiced and proficient musicians, aspirant musicians and participants is discussed. The change of instrumental constructing materials from river-reeds (with the name *ditlhaka* maintained) to copper tubings was also noted. Data were mainly collected by the author during village excursions through oral interviews. The oral interviews were also recorded using an audiotape for the purposes of future reference. In addition to written descriptive accounts of the author's observations, photographs of the practical music performances were also captured. It became evident from the interviews that Balete and Batlokwa of Botswana *ditlhaka* traditional music was traditionally used for initiation graduation ceremonies to welcome graduating initiates into the village. Traditional education included learning their history through praise poems and the teaching of acceptable behavior through games, riddles, puzzles and proverbs. The fundamental of Tswana religious beliefs and cosmology were also learned. While such initiation rites were central to Tswana culture, the practice of male circumcision and the sexual instruction took place. The findings emphasise that *Ditlhaka* music has now changed to be used mainly by men on day to day tribal societal activities for entertainment with the inculcation of women ornamenting through *go thaurisa*. The latter is an activity regarded as a happy game for women. This is when a woman touches and ululates to a man she regards to be more entertaining.

**Key words:** Balete, Batlokwa, Ditlhaka, Dikgosi, Kgotla, Motlhami, Motlhabi, Kopano, Go thaurisa

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to find out information on the *ditlhaka* traditional music of the Balete and Batlokwa of Botswana. The study also aimed at finding out the traditionally accepted norms of performance, modifications, retentions and changes as well as factors that led to the changes in the performance of *Ditlhaka* music. Since music is part of culture and culture influences music, the paper also aims at addressing the mode of music transmission and uses in the societal day

to day activities of these two tribes. Similarly, the study of culture is incomplete without looking at its music. The study will be a significant contribution to Batswana knowledge of the culture of the Balete. Secondly, the results of the study will lead to an increase of the literature of the Balete and their music.

Until recently, there has been relatively little literature on *Ditlhaka* music of the Balete. Documenting, understanding, and representing African culture of the past century is of increasing importance to students, historians, ethnomusicologists, and the recording industry

Barz (2004: 90). Most of the work of the Balete *Ditlhaka* music has been produced by Ballentine and Oehrle obtained from the Botswana Balete miners who were working in the South African mines. Similarly, in generic terms, Levine (2005: 163) observed that, Batswana derived their reed flutes from the Korana Khoi, and they were the first Bantu-speaking people to play reed-pipes in groups. The first Batswana group to adopt the pipes was the Selaotswe, who lived in Mamusa where some of the inhabitants were Khoi Korana. Their reed pipes were called *Ditlhaka*. They were originally made from river-reeds, which was later substituted with materials such as metal tubing. A complete set consists of thirteen pipes of different sizes, although this does not limit an ensemble to thirteen people, as the flutes may be duplicated. The shorter reeds are called *metenyane*, and the longer ones *meporo*. Performers of reed-pipe ensembles are rewarded with food and thus the pipes are usually heard when there is an abundance of cattle.

A brief history by Rametse (1984: 2) affirms that, according to tradition as written by Ellenberger, former Resident Magistrate among Balete, the Balete who were originally Matebele lived at Thoho – ya - Ndou in Transvaal currently known as Limpopo Province. The leader of c. 1570 -75 was Phahle. When the tribe moved to Lefhafung, the tribe was led by Phahle's son Malete. It is from Malete that the tribe took its name. Henceforth they called themselves Balete. The Balete moved to Rabogadi a place near Zeerust. By this time, Malete was already dead. He had been succeeded by his son Maphalaole. It was under the rule of Maphalaole that the Balete settled at the junction of Groot and Klein Marico rivers. The Balete are said to have moved to Botswana under the kingship of Kgomo. In Botswana, they settled in the Valley of Taung River which is between Ramotswa and Mogobane village situated in the South Eastern District of Botswana.

In African societies, participation in music may be a voluntary activity or an obligation imposed by one's membership in a social group. Such a social group may be a descent group (a group of people who trace their ancestry back to the same person), or it may be any group based on the broader societal classifications of age, sex, interest, or occupation, Nketia (1974:35).

To support this notion, Kamien (2008:577) further affirms that, music can serve as both entertainment and an indispensable accompaniment to everyday activities, magic rites and ceremonies marking important phases of life. In addition, music is often used to send messages and relate traditions.

## METHODOLOGY

The collection of data for this study was carried out in two villages in the South Eastern District of Botswana both of which are predominantly Selete - speaking. The two research villages are

Ramotswa and Tlokweg, respectively. A group of about 10-15 individual performers were selected through trust by the village *kgosi* (chief). The informants were assigned to answer oral questions on stipulated dates and specified times by the researcher. The village *kgosi* (chiefs) organized this activity to take place at the *kgotla* (village customary court/village administrative centre).

After explaining the objectives of the research on arrival in villages, the researcher was directed to those people who are traditional dancers or knowledgeable on matters relating to *Ditlhaka* traditional music. Most of the informants were old people whose ages were over fifty. The interviews and songs were audio recorded and practical performances were photographed. Meyers (1992: 22) supports this by stating that, during fieldwork the ethnomusicologist assembles primary sources: observations in field notes, recordings of music and interviews, photographs, film and video materials.

Four annual consecutive visits were made to Ramotswa and Tlokweg villages respectively (2007 – 2010) with regard to *ditlhaka* traditional music. Each year the researcher paid a visit to Ramotswa village to observe practical performances; more information was discovered adding to the subsequent one due to change and addition of informants. Myers (1992: 22) reckons that, field work is a hallmark of many social sciences, including anthropology and ethnomusicology. Gone is acceptance of studies from an "armchair", in which the musicologist transcribed and analyzed material recorded by ethnologists. Today's student is expected to immerse himself/herself in the totality of a foreign culture, usually for a year or more, experience music first - hand in its diverse settings.

## Traditional accepted norms of performance

Music making is generally organized as a social event. Public performances, therefore, take place on social occasions – that is, on occasions when members of a group or a community come together for the enjoyment of leisure, for recreational activities, or for the performance of a rite, ceremony, festival, or any kind of collective activity, Nketia (1974: 21). As stated in Kamien (2008: 577), most musical cultures have repertoire of traditional songs or instrumental pieces. In some cultures, these are relatively fixed and are performed similarly from generation to generation. *Ditlhaka* music is performed like any other music type found in traditional African societies.

As Denbow (2006:16) observed, initiation schools which lasted for many months, taught young people the responsibilities of adulthood, respect for elders and royalty, the virtues of obedience, and their rights and obligations in society. Denbow goes on to point out that, this traditional education included learning the initiates' history through praise poems and the teaching of acceptable behavior through games, riddles, puzzles and proverbs. The fundamental of Tswana religious beliefs and cosmology were also discussed. While such initiation rites were central to Tswana culture, the practice of male circumcision and the sexual instruction took place. In addition, Barz (2004: 123) has a view on the writer's point as he states that, the performance of traditional music is typically used to mark significant moments in the life cycle, to punctuate communal rituals, to underscore social behavior, and to facilitate political and economic education.

*Ditlhaka* music is performed *go le boipelo/Boitumelo* (during happy times). *Ditlhaka di ne di Lela fa go duwa KO thobong*, meaning, *Ditlhaka* were blown when people were from harvesting. Traditionally, at the beginning of the harvesting season, *Ditlhaka* music performance was witnessed during harvesting of the *tshimo ya kgosi* (chief's field) known as *lesotla*. The performance used to last the whole night and *kgosi* would be obliged to slaughter a beast

for the performers/harvesters to feed them the following morning before their departure. It was customarily for all villagers to harvest the *kgosi's* field before they could start harvesting theirs. *Ditlhaka* music was therefore performed *morago ga selalelo* (after supper), at the end of the day's activities. This time was found suitable by all the performers because all participants involved would be through with their daily chores.

*Ditlhaka* music is performed by boys and men of all ages, with women playing the encouraging part known as *go thaurisa* as well as ululating. Normally, boys would be given smaller *Ditlhaka* (*metenyane*) when they start learning since the biggest *meporo* are meant for older experienced men. Traditionally, *Ditlhaka* music of the Batlokwa was accompanied by two drums as it is still maintained Bapedi of South Africa.

Informants at Tlokweneng village clearly stated that, among Batlokwa, *ditlhaka* songs were performed at initiation graduation ceremonies by *mephato* (graduating regiments) since initiation songs were not for public consumption and could only be performed privately at the ceremony. It is worth noting that *Ditlhaka* musical instruments were also performed in ceremonies for overnight rain prayers in plea for sufficient rainfall (not too much and not too little for crops).

*Ditlhaka* music was also performed during the inauguration of the *Kgosi*, receive the initiation graduates into the village from youth to adulthood (giving them guidance), to mark the beginning of the ploughing season, thanksgiving after a successful harvest and traditional beer drinking sessions.

Valuable information on Balete *Ditlhaka* music was also obtained from Oerhle, editor of the "Talking Drum Newsletter (1999)" who conducted a research among the Balete miners in South Africa at Luipaardsvlei Estate and Gold Mining Company near Krugersdorp. It is clearly stated in her research that all the men in this ensemble were of the Balete tribe from Ramotswa in Southern Botswana. Oerhle (1999: 17) further observed that, playing the pipe ensemble was their most social activity. As Barz (2004:89) correctly observed, the maintenance of traditional forms of music and music in general, must be understood as a critical response to shifts of identity, often in response to contact with modernity.

To sum up, Barz (2004:120 – 121) asserts that:

1. Traditional Music Performances communicate within and contribute to the formation of both culture and community.
2. Traditional Music Performances communicate at local, national, and global levels not only what it means to be a member of a particular community (or "tribe" or ethnic group), but also what it means to be a Motswana, as well as what it means to be an African.
3. Traditional Music Performances communicate many of the most important roles and functions of local and regional customs by asserting indigenous ideals of voluntary associations and social indemnity (community support) groups.
4. Traditional Music Performances bring individuals together and hold them together, uniting them by communicating and affirming communally held morals and values.

### Origins of *Ditlhaka* music

Historically, as stated by one Motlokwa (singular of Batlokwa) informant, the origin of *Ditlhaka* (river – reeds) music is believed to be associated with herd boys who discovered playing them when looking after cattle along the river banks where there were lots of *Ditlhaka*. These herd boys would cut and blow *Ditlhaka* when bored without realizing that they were making music. They "experimented"

opening the top and closing the bottom of *Ditlhaka* and found the blown sound interesting and entertaining. They later enjoyed as a group these multiple differently pitched sounds and this was the birth of *Ditlhaka* music. Having been found valuable and entertaining, the *Ditlhaka* blowing activity was adopted for *mephato* (regimental) graduation use by *dikgosi* (chiefs) as a recognized and accepted musical activity among Batlokwa. The music was used to welcome initiates to the village after their training.

An addition from the Balete perspective about the *Ditlhaka* by Tsimane (2004: 1) emphasises that, the early pipe instruments, *Ditlhaka*, played by Balete, were made from a reed known as *mafee* which was used by small boys and associated with them. Another reed that was used less extensively was known as *mokoroisiane*.

### *Ditlhaka* Construction

In Ramotswa, two informants both from Goora Dimpe ward, were in agreement that, *Ditlhaka* instruments were constructed from river reeds called *matsina* and later iron pipes from Johannesburg (currently in Gauteng Province) where men worked as miners. *Ditlhaka* musical instruments are harvested and constructed around August when the reeds are considered ripe and ready. They were cut and sized for low and high pitches taking into consideration different lengths and diameters.

Pulp was removed from the reeds and replaced with pieces of wet clothes to set different pitch levels. In some instances, "*lelodi la mosu*" (acacia tree bark) was ground and placed in the open reed to partly block the reed bottom to obtain the desired pitch. This was replaced by the use of rods through passage of time and considering its durability. Currently, pipers use copper tubing and other alloys. A minimum of at least three men and a maximum of about thirty can put together a *Ditlhaka* song. Balete of Botswana *Ditlhaka* musical instruments are named according to their descending order of their pitch levels:

Balete *Ditlhaka* also had different pitches namely; *motenyane* (highest), *nokwane ya bobedi* (second highest), *nokwane ya boraro* (third highest) and *moporo* (singular) – *meporo* - Plural (lowest in pitch). The Batlokwa *Ditlhaka* naming system was slightly different from that of the Balete

### *Ditlhaka* music costume

Unlike some ritual musical types found among other Batswana tribes, there is no specific costume recommended for *Ditlhaka* music performance. However, in the past, some performers preferred to dress on "*letlalo la namane le le sugilweng*" (calf softened leather) known as *mokobolo* or "*letlalo la phuduhudu*" (steenbok leather) known as *mothibampane*. *Mphaatshane* (ox leather sandals) were also preferred for foot wear.

### *Ditlhaka* songs transmission

According to Kubik (1987:57), the transmission of norms of acceptable social behavior, is a major objective in the teaching of songs. It is also an important goal of many informal activities that combines what, in Western languages, is called "music" with "oral literature". Similarly, the traditional music of Botswana is essentially folk music maintained by oral tradition by each ethnic group and organized and practiced as a basic part of everyday life. In its highest form, it is a communion of minds, where the essence of a tradition is passed on to another generation. This is confirmed by Kamien (2008: 577) by stating that, Nonwestern music is most often transmitted orally from parent to child or from teacher to student.



Figure 1. A man tuning *letlhaka* using *kopano*.

Compositions and performance techniques are learned by rote and imitation. Music notation is far less important in nonwestern than in western culture. Blacking in May (1980:203) affirmed this point by stating that, as a system of socially accepted concepts and conventions, Venda music is obviously a shared experience, no matter how alone a performer may be; and although most music is composed by individuals whose names may not be known, it is modified by the collective during the course of trial performances and subsequent oral transmission.

There is not much evidence of notation system. However, musical scores may be referred to by verbal phrases. Group participation strengthens the social bonds and values that inspire the Batswana's cooperative life. It serves as an avenue for the expression of group sentiments. The selection of music to be performed on any occasion depends on the social event. A musical type may be named after the principal instrument used such as *Dithhaka* of the Balete and Batlokwa which is named after the original instrument river – reeds.

*Dithhaka* traditional music songs are composed by a leader who has been observed and acknowledged by the group to be a good listener. This composer is called *motlhami* in Setswana (literally meaning composer). During the performance, *motlhami* sings the lyrics and the whole group responds through pipe blowing. According to some informants, individual group members can compose *Dithhaka* songs in different ways. Any *Dithhaka* performer who is gifted and can think of a tune he/she can sing, dance and teach the group, is free to do so.

The writer was made to believe through oral interviews that some members catch the song when sleeping in the form of a dream. Some tunes are copied from other places and relevant lyrics are fitted in. Balete and Batlokwa *Dithhaka* music is performed by men

and young boys known as *tshagaengate*. Stokes (1994) further supports this notion by contending that, the child begins to learn the musical style of his culture as he acquires the language and the emotional patterns of his people. So, boys perform with men in order to learn cultural activities as well as performances for future use when growing up. Young boys are also allowed to imitate elderly men during their performances using the smallest pipe called *motenyane* as a process of learning *Dithhaka* songs.

#### Tuning of *dithhaka* Instruments

According to two selected key informants at the Ramotswa *kgotla* (customary court), historically, "*legwama*" – or (*kobo tsa segwiri* - cover of some tuber-onion looking like wild plant) and "*mabolara*" (locally grown tobacco) were used in tuning *Dithhaka* musical instruments to their different desired pitches before the introduction of *letsela le le metse* (a wet cloth).

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Nowadays, Balete use a piece of cloth to tune *Dithhaka*/pipes in the place of the traditionally used *legwama/legwane* or *leswane* from wild trees (tubers or onions) to tune pipes. In a *dithhaka* ensemble, there is usually somebody knowledgeable in tuning known as *motlhabi*. Tuning of *Dithhaka* by the lead singer or instructor was known as (*go tlhaba Dithhaka*). The tuner used *kgobati/lelodi* (bark) from *mosu* (acacia) tree to set different pitches. The process of tuning *Dithhaka* is called "*go tlhaba Dithhaka*".

What was observed and backed up by documented evidence from Oehrle (1999:17), is that, the leader always carries at least one copper rod about four feet long which is used for changing the position of the plug in each pipe and thereby altering the pitch. This rod is known as *kopano* and is used for tuning *Dithhaka* (Figure 1).

During the process of tuning, a piece of cloth, without any special name would be positioned in a *letlhaka* (singular of *Dithhaka*) to the desired pitch (high or low) by *motlhabi* (the tuner). The piece of cloth was meant to regulate the amount of air blown by the performers. However, this piece of cloth was replaceable with a fresh one as it got worn out. The pitch depended on the amount of space in the *letlhaka*. The smaller the space the higher the pitch and the greater the space the lower the pitch. The pipes (or end blown flutes) are well primed with water before playing and their pitch is determined by a plug of cloth or other convenient material, rammed up or down from either end of the open pipe by a metal ramrod. The variations of pitch which can be produced from the same pipe by slightly differing methods of blowing, and the fact that several players changed the pitch of their pipe during play if it did not quite suit them, do not make a pipe ensemble the perfect basis for assessing Balete and Batlokwa modality.

The Balete and Batlokwa old bicycle pumps "*Dithhaka*" are normally all dipped in fresh water in a *kgamelo* (wooden milking/water container) placed in the middle of the dancing circle for sometime before and during the performance to produce the desired pitch. The dipping is done so that the cloth place in *Dithhaka* for pitch maintaining should expand and be in place throughout the performance. In Figure 2, there was no wooden bowl so the plastic bucket is used instead.

#### General performance and use of *Dithhaka* music

Balete believed that since male performers imitated frogs ho, ho,





**Figure 2.** A man dipping *letlhaka* in a bowel of water for fine tuning.

ho,ho, after the performance rain would fall. Like Batlokwa, there is an element of *Go thaurisa* (vocal sounds produced by women during *Ditlhaka* dances to show appreciation to the men's performance) also among the Balete tribe. Women would ululate and move around the dancing circle behind men in an anti-clockwise direction too rhythmically with the men's dancing steps.

The lead musician has a free hand at improvisation and determining order of variations, sequence of rhythm pattern, and the duration of the piece. Sections of the music may also be determined by the dance routine and instruments collaborate with dancer and master musicians in the unfolding of the dance drama. Children learn the music of their culture from the parents and from listening and participating in the musical activities of the home, community, and general social environment.

The beginnings of the pieces are hesitant and about fifteen seconds elapse before the entire ensemble is playing. A high "A" pipe is always the first to play and the others join in sporadically from highest to lowest. Singing occurs during some pieces but it is never an essential part of the performance, Oehrle (1999: 17). The ends of the pieces are even more unclear as the players simply stop playing when they see the leader raise his hand at different times due are the full concentration in the blowing exercise.

The *Ditlhaka* pitches can be seen as noted by Oehrle (1999) in the Figure 3. She elaborated (through notating of pitches) that, the pipes vary in length from about six inches to more than five feet. They are end-stopped and are made from lengths of metal piping found on the mine. When reeds could not be found, old bicycle pumps, copper pipes/tubings were used to construct *Ditlhaka* musical instruments and the name *Ditlhaka*, referring to river- reeds was still maintained because of its historical origin.

Importantly, notation is simply not helpful in some traditions, where the direct teacher – to – student passage of music – making is the key factor. Nketia (1986) as quoted from Pugh (1998:75) reports that, in Africa music which is integrated with dance, or which stimulates motor response, is far more common than music for contemplation (Figure 4).

The dances which accompany the pipe music are standard and simple. The players form a circle and when the order is given the *motenyane* player (Figure 5) moves off to his right and all the other players follow, so that the circle moves in an anti-clockwise

direction. The players lead with the right foot and move sideways, always facing the centre of the circle. The right foot moves a step sideways on one beat, and on the next the left foot is brought up to join it, at which moment the right foot moves away again to begin a repetition of the procedure.

In this case, *Ditlhaka* music was performed to express happiness in an anti-clockwise rhythmic direction. This music was also performed for entertainment when the harvesting activity was over. This took place, among other community activities, during occasions such as traditional beer drinking sessions and inauguration of the *Kgosi*. *Ditlhaka* music was also performed to transfer knowledge (messages) of life skills from elders to the young generation.

One of the most important activities where Batlokwa performed *Ditlhaka* music was when the resident commissioner (Sir Peter Fawcus) during the Bechuanaland Protectorate rule visited their tribe. Performance of *Ditlhaka* was meant to grace this visit. The gathering for the resident commissioner where *Ditlhaka* music was performed also created an opportunity for fame, popularity and recognition to the performers. It was called *Tlang lo mponeng* (meaning - come and see me). Prior to the commissioner's visit, performing groups would practice in their different wards to prepare for the occasion. All performing groups would come together as one large group at the *kgotla* (village customary court). Balete and Batlokwa recognize the performance of *Ditlhaka* music as a very important symbol of their cultural identity. Stokes (1994:5) contends that, music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and boundaries which separate them.

#### **Women's role during *Ditlhaka* musical performance**

During *Ditlhaka* performance, women would move rhythmically outside the male performers' anti-clockwise circular dance. This process among Balete and Batlokwa is similarly called "*Go thaurisa*". Figure 6 shows a woman (*a thaurisa* and ululating) behind the two performing men.

Men who did not accept being praised indicated by kicking the praising women. Women did this courteously by not moving too close to men. If a man kicked, the woman would know she is not accepted and be ready to quickly jump away to try another one. It should be noted that this touching and responding did not have any other meaning such as love affairs as some people may think except to share happiness during the performance. This was a compliment to the touched performer to indicate that the performance has moved the appreciating woman emotionally.

#### **Factors that have led to the changes in *Ditlhaka* music performance**

Some practices that were accompanying the practice of *Ditlhaka* music in the past are elaborated below. Denbow (2006:41-42) observed that, the principal God, whose name was once thought to be too sacred to speak aloud, is *Modimo*, which is related to the word for ancestral spirits, *Badimo* a term translated in early editions of the bible by Robert Moffat as "devils" who "possessed" people during spiritual and healing ceremonies. Through such biased translations as well as attacks on rites of initiation and rainmaking, missionaries struck at the heart of traditional governance where the power to rule, to make rain, to regulate the planting and harvest seasons, and to conduct rites of passage were seen as being divinely invested in kinship. The cultural importance of rain and those who claimed to control it the *dikgosi* (chiefs) and rainmaking specialists known as *baroka* were viewed as a threat to Christian

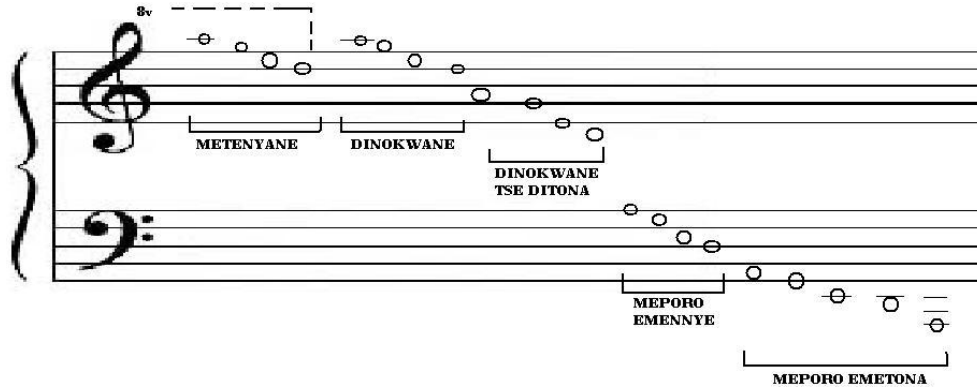


Figure 3. Notation of *Dithaka*: Oerhle (1999:17).



Figure 4. A man blowing *mporo*.



Figure 5. A group of men blowing *Dithaka* and dancing in time anti-clockwise.



Figure 6. Woman (*a thaurisa*) and men blowing *Dithhaka*.

principles by early missionaries. The power of *dingaka*, more “spiritually inspired” traditional doctors was also a matter of contestation by early missionaries. Prayers for rain are now almost universally incorporated into church services, both Christian and traditional, as the dry season ends and the time for planting begins. In many areas, harvest ceremonies (*dikgafela*), traditionally used to thank the ancestors (*badimo*) for the harvest, are still conducted each August as families bring a bit of their harvest in special baskets to the *kgosi*. This grain was often stored centrally near the *kgotla* and was intended for redistribution during times of drought. The grain (usually sorghum) is put into a central granary (*sefalana* – sing. *difalana* – plur.) under his supervision, and a month later the *kgosi* calls the *morafe* to a rainmaking ceremony where he announces that plowing of the fields can begin. Offerings of sorghum also accompany some ancestral “cleansing” (*phekolo*) or “healing” ceremonies as well. Prayers to the ancestors or God usually accompany these rites. There have been periods of pestilence, despair alternating with triumph. But through it all runs a thread of continuity with a recognizable identity.

Respondents from the two tribes were in agreement that nowadays rainfall is erratic and *Dithhaka* music is now popularly performed for entertainment purposes during different societal events such as wedding celebrations, independence celebrations and visits by government officials.

### Modifications, Retentions and Changes

Due to early tribal movements, Balete and Batlokwa *Dithhaka* music is bound to have changed in a way through meeting people of different origins. Stokes (1994:46) quoting Blacking (1977:7) further emphasizes that, the most interesting and characteristically human features of music are not stylistic change and individual variations in performance, but non-change and the repetition of carefully rehearsed passages of music.

The Balete informants (in Ramotswa village) made the researcher believe that *Dithhaka* music is also performed across the Botswana border in South Africa by Bahurutshe around Motswedi in the North West Province near Botswana and Bapedi further North in the Limpopo Province. However, it is worth noting that these groups perform *Dithhaka* music differently but with subtle changes. To further clarify this concept, Stokes (1994: 3) asserts that, amongst the countless ways in which we “relocate” ourselves, music undoubtedly has a vital role to play.

It was rather unfortunate that the church missionaries preached against African cultural practice while promoting Western cultural values. This resulted in abolishing some important societal events such as initiation ceremonies. The influence of Western music and musical instruments appears in new forms of popular and fine art music now being created in Botswana. However, when the Balete miners came back home to Botswana, their performance constituted a renewal of the past in the present when cultural and national identity are shaped and asserted, and feelings of self awareness and participation in shared common experiences reaffirmed.

Nowadays, due to a shortage of river reeds, old bicycle pumps and pipes from other metals like copper are used to manufacture *Dithhaka*. Despite the material which is used to construct this instrument, the name *Dithhaka* is still maintained because of its historical discovery from river reeds. *Dithhaka* music is currently mostly performed by elderly people. The youth are less involved since they feel there are some activities which they prefer to the performance of *Dithhaka*. This poses a threat to the future of *Dithhaka* performances. *Dithhaka* music has also proved not to be fashionable today since it has mainly favoured a single gender of males. It has made very little contribution to the development of women since their participation is minimal.

### *Dithhaka* instruments storage

After the year’s performance, *Dithhaka* were traditionally stored in a round grass thatched mud hut to protect them from being attacked by termites. The belief being that since this hut is used as a kitchen; the termites do not withstand the heat and smoke from the cooking fire used daily in the kitchen. Nowadays at Ramotswa, they are kept by the band leader (with the assistance of one of the court clerks) who happens to be staying near the *kgotla*. This is to have the *Dithhaka* reachable to the *kgotla* whenever guests come to the village and request for a performance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During this research, it was discovered that *Dithhaka* music in South Eastern Botswana is practiced by Balete and Batlokwa tribes respectively. Music from these two tribes was noted to have subtle differences. However, Balete proved to be currently more practical than Batlokwa in the performance of *Dithhaka* music. This tribe was rescued by former South African miners who revived the music on their return home. Another important fact noted is *Dithhaka* music is also performed by other tribes in South Africa such as Bahurutshe and Bapedi.

*Dithhaka* instruments were historically constructed from river reeds. With the passage of time and unavailability of river- reeds, construction of *Dithhaka* changed to bicycle pumps and later copper tubings. The change of instrumental constructing materials from river – reeds to

copper tubings with the historical name *Ditlhaka* maintained was also noted. The composer of *Ditlhaka* known as *motlhami* is also expected to be a good listener. There is also someone who is responsible for tuning among *Ditlhaka* performers known as *motlhabi*. During *Ditlhaka* performance, the leader would sing lyrics with the group responding through pipe blowing. The instrument used for tuning *Ditlhaka* is known as *kopano* (Baletse) or *thudi* (Batlokwa).

*Ditlhaka* costume was also noted to have changed. Men used to put on calf softened leather known as *mokobolo*. In some cases depending on availability, they put on steenbok leather known as *mothibampane* and sandals called *mphaatshane* (from ox leather). All these have disappeared and performers put on ordinary clothes or overalls for uniform.

Baletse and Batlokwa of Botswana *Ditlhaka* music was traditionally used for initiation graduation ceremonies to welcome graduating initiates into the village. However, initiation songs were not sung during this graduation since they are not meant for public consumption. *Ditlhaka* music has proved to be a male dominated activity used on day to day tribal entertainment events.

Nowadays, *Ditlhaka* musical performances normally occur during happy ceremonies especially after the harvesting period for entertainment. *Ditlhaka* is performed in four basic (*motenyane*, *nokwane ya ntlha*, *nokwane ya bobedi* and *mopororo*) parts with slightly different names by each tribes. *Ditlhaka* music is basically performed on four notes (D, E, D, A) at different pitches divided into five sections on the Great Staff (three on treble and two on the bass) as illustrated by Oerhle (1999: 17) in Figure 3.

At the end of the performance, *Ditlhaka* instruments are stored in one place by one person (in most cases the band leader). Traditionally, the instruments were kept in a grass thatched mud hut used as a kitchen. Nowadays, *Ditlhaka* instruments are kept by the band leader who happens to be staying near the *kgotla*. This is to make the instruments reachable whenever needed for performances at the *kgotla*.

Lastly, there has been a fear that the old indigenous traditional music which still forms the bulk of the music of Botswana might become obsolete. National consciousness, however, has begun to foster a new pride in African cultural heritage and encouragement of traditional and modern African music through the annual President's Day festivals and competitions.

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