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Using Features of Indigenous Poetry and Music in the Oral Performance of Some Praise Psalms in isiZulu

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Abstract

Translation needs to be accessible and acceptable to the receptor community. In the case of the Zulu people, the medium of communication most accessible to the majority is oral performance. Thus biblical text needs to be translated in a way that is prepared for the ear and not the eye. To be acceptable, the translation should sound like "my language," using indigenous forms and contemporary vocabulary. When translating biblical psalms into isiZulu, they should sound like Zulu songs or poems, with all the richness of performance texture that is part of the long history of Zulu oral art. With this goal in mind, and given the tradition of Zulu praise poetry and the passion Zulu youth today have for poetry, a study was conducted in which young Zulu people, taking cognizance of their Zulu traditions in poetry and music, applied these to the translation and performance of some biblical praise psalms. The results show the value of focusing on orality, indigenous poetics, and performance in communicating effectively the message of some praise psalms.

1. Introduction

This study seeks to apply features of indigenous poetry and music, and characteristics of oral communication and performance, to the translation and transmission of selected praise psalms. These different aspects will be considered one at a time, and then applied in the last section to the translation of three praise psalms.

The receptor language used in the study was isiZulu, which might not be considered as a "minority language," but the principles used in the study can be applied to any language, including those which have no written form.[1] One of the advantages of working in isiZulu is that there is an established core of Zulu praise-poetry which can be analysed to delineate the typical features of Zulu poetics. In other languages, this would need to be studied first, but as most oral communities have a rich heritage of oral art, the data should be readily available, in oral form anyway.[2]

2. Indigenous poetry

Oral poetry has played a significant role among the Zulu people throughout their history. Whether it be as war-songs, or to praise the chief, or to bring unity to their bodies pulling a fishing net, songs and poetry are an essential part of Zulu life.

There are several different genres in Zulu poetry. The most relevant when translating praise psalms is *izibongo* (Zulu praise poems), and with regard to performance, the genre of slam poetry is relevant. *Izibongo* are poems praising (or lamenting) various characteristics of a person, animal, or even an object (such as a train or a spear). Very vivid figurative language is used. "Slam poetry" or "spoken word poetry" is a relatively new genre of poetry among isiZulu speakers. Although it is written down, it is performed orally. It is seen as

[1] Possibly my study can encourage others working in Bantu languages to apply this methodology in their work on translating biblical poetry.

[2] It would be expected that oral communities (i.e. those without a printed form of their language) would probably have a greater ease with unconsciously using poetic features (such as repetitions, chiasm, parallelism) as they are inbuilt into their way of communicating performed text.

having its roots in *izibongo* as well as the protest poetry of the anti-apartheid era.[3] Like the other genres of poetry, Spoken Word poetry makes use of word play through repetition and rhyme, and includes vivid metaphors and a pronounced rhythm.

Izibongo is an art form that has long been held in high esteem by the community. As Brown (1998:76) notes: "Praise poetry is regarded as the highest form of literary expression in almost all African societies." Over the years, the genre of *izibongo* has mixed with that of other genre of Zulu poetry; for example, praises of Zulu kings have intermingled with war-songs. Also, over the last century, *izibongo* have shown great flexibility in their application. For example, some of the standard images from *izibongo* (e.g. the royal image of "the viper with a feathered head") have been applied to Zulu kings, then to COSATU,[4] and most recently to Nelson Mandela (Gunner 2003:142). *Izibongo* have also been used to highlight the plight of widows and orphans following the sinking of the *Mendi* troopship in World War I (Webb and Wright 1976), to influence popular music recordings (Gunner 1991:71), to influence songs within some of the independent African churches (Gunner 1982), and since the 1980s, at trade-union meetings (Kromberg 1991:187). The form is seen to have many benefits: as a flexible means to effectively inspire the audience, to allow the audience to actively participate, and to build a sense of community among those present (Kromberg 1991:189).

In this study, the poetic features in *izibongo* were replicated in selected praise psalms. Among those used were those mentioned in the next section.

2. Poetic devices in isiZulu

The purposes of poetry relate to its emotive power, its mnemonic capability, and its capacity to "express the inexpressible." Toward these ends, poetic devices are carefully used. These fall into two groups, *viz*. at the word level and at the discourse level. In the case of isiZulu, both the semantic content (word-level devices) and the rhythm (structural patterns at discourse level) were considered to be "very complex" by the outstanding linguist Eugene Nida (2003:82). But this is where the power of African poetry lies. As Kunene (1981:xxxii) notes, "The poem persuades through meaning and through its symphonic structure."[5]

2.1.1 Poetic devices at word level

The devices which Zulu poetry utilises at the word level include colourful metaphors and similes, formulas, metonymic expressions, auditory patterning (assonance, alliteration, and sound play), as well as repetition of key words. These all contribute to the sound rhythm of the text,[6] and give aesthetic enjoyment to the audience. Gluck (1971:84) notes that poets are guided by their ears in their usage of sound patterns to create a pleasing rhythm. Similarly, Avorgbedor (1990:223–4) notes that assonance and alliteration facilitate easy reception and recall of the praise-poems.

Metaphors serve to elevate a message, or to demonstrate the eloquence of the speaker (Dorson 1972:184). However, the choice of metaphor should be culturally appropriate and fit the context. For example, Shaka was described as "the axe (*izembe*) of Senzangakhona," and "a young viper (*udlondlwane*) in a great rage," and Phakathwayo was described as "the little stone (*itshana*) that trips up unwary walkers on the pathway." Apart from metaphors, vivid, local similes are also used in *izibongo*. For example, the i*zibongo* of Shaka has the following line repeated 4 times (Grant 1993:95–97): "He is **like** the cluster of stones of Nkandhla." Vilakazi (1993:67) argues that the Zulu poet will often use a metaphor or personification instead of a simile; for example, the English poet might say, "He is like a storm that thunders in open country," but the Zulu poet would say, "Mr Storm who thunders in open country."

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[3] In post-apartheid SA, the youth are "reimagining the art of poetry" (Nova Masango, Goethe-Institut South Africa, June 2013). As a means of protest, spoken word poetry continues in SA, giving the ordinary citizen a voice to express his/her thoughts. However, some poets have felt the need to "move away from the rhetoric and towards the depiction of ordinary" (Ndebele 1986).

[4] COSATU is the Congress of South African Trade Unions.

[5] The analogy of a symphony refers to the metonymic power of poetry, one chord suggesting the whole symphony.

[6] A text has sound rhythm, poetic rhythm (established by the poetic line), rhythmic symmetry (from structural patterns) and meter (often based on the stressed syllables). They are all inter-related. See Dickie 2017:96.

Formulas have been shown to be characteristic of oral art. Formulas are familiar expressions repeated several times through a poem, or from one poem to another. For example, the i*zibongo* of Chief Zondi shows the following expression repeated in various praise-poems: "He urges on the army and then fights himself." The value of using formulas (or "repeated familiar expressions") has been attributed to their mnemonic function, assisting the performer in his delivery, and drawing in the audience to participate vocally (Gunner 1990:199). Moreover, they seem to "confer authenticity and value on the praises" as they carry "immense emotional weight" (Gunner 1990:189,201). They do not normally dominate a praise-poem, but there is usually at least one formula. Formulas also have an important metonymic capacity: an allusion to the "familiar expression" is sufficient to bring a whole reference into play, conjuring up "a richly textured event" (Foley 1995:28). However, as metonymy depends on shared cultural understanding, it can be misunderstood. Most *izibongo* use language that is very idiomatic, often including allusions to archaic terms or rituals no longer well understood. Thus the poem can appear to have "gaps" in meaning (Vilakazi 1993). Apart from formulas, metonymy also functions through the use of metaphors, proverbs, and other expressions embedded in the traditions of the culture. Niditch (1996) claims that these devices serve as "metonymic signifiers that tap into the larger oral tradition, so as to bring it into the hearing of the text." A brief reference can bring to mind an entire story, or can serve as the summation of a story, in a mnemonic way.

Common auditory patterns that occur in oral discourse are alliteration, assonance, rhyme, exclamations, and nonsense-syllables. The vivid sound imagery draws listeners into the narrative, and contributes significantly to the rhythm of the discourse. A. Trevor Cope (1968:25–27) argues that Zulu poets are very aware of "the euphonic nature of isiZulu"[7] and thus consciously strive after literary effect, manipulating the language to attain a richer artistic creation. Alliteration and assonance are frequent in Zulu poetry as they are inherent in the system of grammatical agreement.[8] However, the natural alliteration is usually enriched by artificial alliteration, resulting in Zulu praise poetry being "intensely alliterative" (Gunner, 1990:195). For example, the *izibongo* of Dingane (Cope 1968:45–46,109) shows both natural alliteration (-*si*-) and artificial alliteration (*-dl*- and -*ndl*-):

*l-**si**-**dl**a-ngu-**dl**a-ngu e-**si**-nje-nge-**ndl**e-be ye-**ndl**o-vu* 'he is rough as the ear of an elephant'

There has been disagreement among scholars (including the Zulu poets Benedict Vilakazi and Herbert Dhlomo) as to whether rhyme is a feature of Zulu poetics or not. A study of *izibongo* shows they do not display rhyme, suggesting that more traditional Zulu poetry does not use this device. Zulu poetry also utilizes exclamations, and what appear to be nonsense-syllables; these latter are often at the end of a sentence, to fill out the rhythm.[9]

A major poetic device at word level is repetition. As Hermanson (2004:56) observes, Zulu praise poetry is "characterised by a piling up of repetitions." Cope (1968:24,38) claims that the use of repetition in various guises makes "poetry … more evocative, emotive, and memorable" than prose. Many of the poetic devices utilise repetition: meter (repeated rhythms), assonance (repeated vowel sounds), parallelism (repeated statements of identical construction), rhyme (repeated final syllables), and alliteration (repeated consonant sounds). Repetition serves two major purposes: for emphasis (and thereby memorability), and to contribute to the poetic rhythm of oral poetry. It involves a redundancy of expression; in African thinking, the effectiveness of imagery is increased if it is repeated. For example, the *izibongo* of Shaka (Cope 1968:96) effectively uses simple repetition to stir the audience's emotions:

Oth' esadl ezinye wadl' ezinye,	He who while devouring some, devoured others,
Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye.	And as he devoured others, he devoured some more.

Much more could be said of Zulu poetic devices at the word level, but space precludes more detail. Next, poetic devices at the discourse level are considered.

[7] This results from the agglutinative, open-vowel syllabification of the language.
[8] In isiZulu there are 13 noun classes, indicated by prefixes. Thus the prefixes, along with concordial agreement patterns involving syntactically related words, can give a natural alliteration.
[9] Instead of a nonsense syllable, the final vowel may be prolonged (Nketia 1974:179).

2.1.2 Poetic devices at discourse level

Poetry often has a well-planned organizational structure, utilizing devices such as parallelism, chiasm, or repeated refrains. This, together with the construction of the poetic line, contributes to the "poetic rhythm" of the text, serving various functions: it provides internal structure to the poem and delineates the boundaries of the text, it helps significantly with memorization, and it enhances the aesthetic enjoyment of the poetry. As a result, the hearer is enabled to understand the text, enjoy it, remember it, and become unified with the other hearers. In predominantly-oral communities (such as the Zulu), the last two functions dominate, that is, the structural patterning evident in their poetry serves to facilitate memorization and communal recitation.

Zulu poetry shows various structural patterns. The most common are parallelism (which can be thought of as linear repetition) and chiasm (with its circular repetition). *Izibongo* show both of these structural patterns as well as a 4-line structure;[10] these all contribute to the poetic rhythm of the *izibongo.*

Parallelism in Zulu poetry shows various forms. The most interesting (for our study of Psalm 93, giving a comparison with Psalm 93:3) is threefold parallelism as seen in the following excerpt from the *Izibongo* of Senzangakhona (Cope 1968:77):

UMlunguzi wezingoje,	Peerer over precipices
Owalunguz' ingoje yomfowabo,	Who peered over the precipice of his brother
Owalunguz' ingoje kaZivalele	Who peered over the precipice of Zivalele.

Another common structural pattern in Zulu poetry is chiasm. Cyclical patterning is evident in various oral art forms,[11] particularly poetry and music (Brown 1998:213). For example, in Mazisi Kunene's (1981) heroic poem of King Bhungane, small things grow into big things, and big things have within them small things. Gunner (1990:195) notes that "ordinary speakers" also often use chiasm, or a "pattern of inversion," for example:

'Chopper down of the *big tree*;
the *little one* falls on its own.'

Chiastic patterns serve several functions: they help to define the boundaries of the text; they contribute to the aesthetic and intellectual beauty of the text; they assist with memorability; and they emphasise the statements that are repeated. Often the main point of the text is positioned at "the turning point" (or centre) of the chiasm (Wendland 1988:39–40).

Both parallelism and chiasm contribute to the poetic rhythm of the text. So too does the way the poetic line is constructed. In isiZulu, stress (or accent) seems to play a role in determining the poetic rhythm, but the nature of *izibongo* requires praises to "pour forth in a continuous … torrent" (Cope 1968:27), enunciated in short phrases, thereby producing a strong rhythm. The rhythm is also impacted by a terseness of style which is typical of most poetry, including Zulu poetry (Berlin 1985). The compactness in poetry contributes to its metonymic character, using the hint of a theme to pull in the whole context. This is semantically rewarding and stimulating for the audience, requiring them to "fill in the gaps."

This brief resume of poetic features in isiZulu provides an example of how one can trawl the cultural heritage of the host language to find forms that can be used in the translation of biblical poetry. Next, since the translated psalms are to be performed as songs, attention must be given to features of Zulu music.

3. Indigenous music

In the Hebrew cult, it seems that music along with song and dance, played an integral role in the communal life of the people. The same is true in the African context. Music is integrated in the ordinary, every-day lives

[10] The 4-line structure is typical of *izibongo*, and consists of a statement, extension, development, and conclusion (with the latter sometimes omitted if the implication is obvious). See Dickie 2017:89.
[11] For example, the poetry of Madingoane, Mbuli, and Qabula (Brown 1998:213), the songs and stories of the Xam people (West, 2003), and the dance hymns of Shembe (Muller 1994:136).

of people (Axelsson 1971:1),[12] and is an essential part of the community-setting and cultural context (Chernoff 1979:36).[13] Certain aspects of Zulu music are particularly pertinent to the translation of biblical poetry. These are summarised below:

- It is generally agreed that the most significant feature of African music is its rhythm (Axelsson 1971:19). Chernoff (1979:23) maintains that rhythm is "the most perceptible" but "least material thing." Rhythm dominates in importance over the words of the song.
- Music and song are usually performed before an audience, and musicians are alert to the social situation and the response of the audience. They will change or extend their lyrics or rhythms to fit the changing situation (Chernoff 1979:66). Thus the audience will find each presentation of a piece of music lively and fresh, no matter how many times they might have heard it before. Each new set of circumstances allows the artist to be creative in a different way (Chernoff 1979:61).
- Audience involvement is a key part of any oral performance, and interjections and participation from the audience is expected (Swartz 1956:29–31). As Lury (1956:34) notes: "The African's musical sense is inside him ... He is a performer rather than a listener." As a result, a Zulu audience cannot remain silent nor immobile during the performance of oral art. The rhythm, if not the words, must be expressed.
- Lyrics and rhythms are repeated, with repetition serving many functions. For example, repetition of a drumming style is a way of maintaining the tension of the beat, in order to get the maximum effect when the style is changed (Chernoff 1979:113).[14]
- Zulu music is a corporate performance. The musicians see their role within that of the larger ensemble (including their timing, point of entry, and provision of "space" for others to play). Chernoff (1979:113–114) suggests that "the music is best considered as an arrangement of gaps where one may add a rhythm, rather than as a dense pattern of sound."
- The purpose of music is to move the emotions of the hearer. Emotion is deeply intertwined with a particular song and melody, and the association remains, even if the words are changed. Thus a new indigenous melody is needed for a new song.
- Vocal music is very important among the Zulu community, and there is less focus on instruments. Nketia (1974:244) suggests that singing provides the greatest opportunity for people to participate in group events. However, rhythm is an integral part of Zulu music and various percussive instruments may occasionally be used as well as clapping or foot-stomping to externalise the meter. Such devices facilitate repetition of the words, and help with memorization.
- Antiphonal singing is common, in which two (or three)[15] parts sing non-identical texts, and begin at different times (Rycroft 1967). The song begins with the chorus,[16] and the melody sung by the chorus identifies the song.[17] The lyrics of the chorus tend to remain unchanged throughout a song, but the soloist may improvise with the words. Rycroft (1967:91,95) posits that the soloist part may be an addition, improvised to add colour.
- Zulu music is derived from language, and thus both rhythms and melodies are constrained by the dimensions of language (Chernoff 1979:75). Moreover, as the isiZulu language is tonal, the melody of a Zulu song must follow the intonation patterns of the words (Chernoff 1979:80).[18]

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[12] Khumalo agrees: "Song and dance have been an integral part of the lived experience of black folk" (in Ballantine 2012:xiv).
[13] A Dan proverb (from Ghana) even says: "The village where there is no musician is not a place where man can stay."
[14] This was found to be the case in my empirical study (Dickie 2017). A performance of Ps 93 (item 5) began with nearly two minutes of drumming and the singing of "hee mama, hee baba", thereby establishing a strong rhythm, and drawing in the audience before the main message was delivered through rap. The change of form was an effective attention-getter.
[15] Nketia (1974:142ff) notes that Zulu choral singing may include a third part.
[16] See Kirby (1923:23–24) and Rycroft (1967:91,95).
[17] Chernoff (1979:56) also argues for the prominence of the chorus relative to the soloist.
[18] Consequently, each verse of a song differs slightly in melody.

4. Orality and performance

When translating for oral performance, it is vital that the text be carefully designed to use features of orality. Most translators are highly literate and thus might not be aware of these differences in order to communicate effectively with oral recipients. As Walter Ong (1982:124) notes: "Thought and expression in oral cultures … calls for organization of a sort unfamiliar to and often uncongenial to the literate mind." Unless the translator specifically utilises oral devices which will assist the listener to organise the text in his/her mind and remember it, communication will not be effective.

Twenty years ago, the Bible Society in South Africa, recognising the need for Scriptures designed for the ear, attempted an experimental translation based on "the actual structure of oral discourse of the culture in which we are translating." It was not a success as the translators struggled to distinguish oral features in the source text (e.g. repetition and cyclicity) and changed them into patterns typical of literate thinking (such as linear sequences) in the receptor language.[19] At the time, Eric Hermanson (2004:58) noted, "Any future translation (must pay) close attention to the oral features of the Hebrew text and to the oral features of Zulu. Doing so … will result in a translation which flows fluently, in language which speaks not only to the Zulu mind, but also to the Zulu heart."

Many of the poetic features described in section 2 are also features of orality. The following list[20] gives a brief summary of features of oral communication which must be borne in mind when translating for oral performance:

- lexical repetition, often exact rather than synonymous; use of redundancy
- parallel syntactic constructions
- colourful figurative language; alliteration, assonance, and puns
- word choice less specific[21]
- shorter sentences, and other discourse units
- rhythmic speech, often in sequence; shorter syntactic constructions[22]
- insertions and asides by the speaker; use of direct speech
- use of gestures, facial expressions, and other non-verbal communication
- a slower pace of presenting information
- use of intonation, pitch, tempo, tone, pause, and volume to express meaning
- use of colloquial or dialectical speech
- use of intensifiers and hyperbole (e.g. exclamations, ideophones, interjections)
- ellipsis and anacolutha (broken grammatical constructions)
- use of demonstrative words / particles, and additive linkages
- concrete contexts

Apart from paying attention to features of orality, characteristics of performance were also important in this study. Although *izibongo* were central to the work, not all the features of the praise-singer were relevant. For example, the distinctive dress (of skins and cultural ornaments) are not used by "ordinary poets" in performance today, but some characteristics (such as speaking very fast in a high tone and using vigorous body movements) are still evident in slam poetry. Young Zulu poets tend to speak very fast (to arouse emotion) and use movement to complement their words. Also, as in the performance of *izibongo*, the orality of the work continues to be critical (Kromberg 1991:193–197). The poem must be seen as an oral event, without a written text.[23]

[19] Hermanson (2004:51) observes that the translators seemed to confuse orality with culture. They made changes when something was "unknown in Sotho culture."
[20] See Wendland (2006:43), Ong (1982), Olson (1994:298).
[21] Ong (1982) notes that oral learners usually use a limited vocabulary of 1000–1500 words.
[22] Speakers should use simpler syntax than writers. Particularly in poetic speech, one would expect shorter syntactic constructions, to compensate for the more complex morphological and phonic elements.
[23] The Tsonga praise poet Chabalala said: "If you perform with a paper in your hand, it is not right … the poem must be in your head" (Bill 1991:155).

With regard to performance, there are four major facets that play into the translation process.[24] These are:

- The importance of paralinguistic and extralinguistic cues in oral performance.
- The particular meaning assigned to words in performance.
- The impact of the audience on the content of the performance-text, and its evaluation.
- The uniqueness of each performance. Consequently the question arises as to whether there is an "original text," and if not, where does meaning inhere, and how can "faithfulness to the source text" be assessed?

The value of communicating biblical text through multimedia is attested by many scholars. Soukup (1997:221) observes that throughout history, music has interacted with text and other media to provide a rich experience which gives pleasure and facilitates memory. Werner (1997:221–227) calls for a return to the unity (and balance)[25] of the text, music, and gesture in the representation of biblical material. Fry (1999:19) also encourages translation beyond the printed page, saying: "I do believe that Scripture presentations which maintain an acceptable standard of faithfulness to the Bible originals are possible in a great many situations." Below a few examples illustrate the exegetical insights and richness of literary and rhetorical impact that can be achieved in a performance experience.

5. Application to praise psalms

The principles of orality and performance, as well as poetics and musicality, were applied to three praise psalms (134, 93, and 145:1–7) by "ordinary" (i.e. previously untrained) Zulu poet-translators. A couple of examples from the isiZulu translations reveal some insights which the poets brought to the text, as well as valuable characteristics of the performance which conveyed part of the full meaning of the psalm.

The example below is an isiZulu translation of Psalm 134.

1a. *Nakani nidumise uSimakade,*	Attention! Praise the LORD,
1b. *nina nonke zinceku zikaSimakade,*	you all servants of the LORD,
1c. *nina enibambelele kuSimakade kunzima*.	you who hold on to the LORD in difficulties
2a. *Phakamiselani izandla*	Lift up hands,
2b. *nidumise uSimakade*	praise the LORD.
3a. *Makanibusise uSimakade*	May the LORD bless you,
3b. *uSimakade owenze umhlaba nezulu.*	the LORD who made earth and heaven.

The poem uses an array of oral and poetic features (e.g. alliteration, assonance, repetition, parallelism, inclusio, tail-head linkage, terse language, and rhythm). In the performance, verse 3 was highlighted as being in focus, with the singer significantly increasing the beat before colon 3a, and slowing down the pace as he sang the final words in colon 3b. These paralinguistic devices were part of the meaning conveyed.

Another example, a translation of Psalm 93, shows the use of colourful metaphors (lion and wind) instead of the image of "floods" as in the Hebrew. Again there is a lot of repetition, three-fold parallelism, and assonance.

3a *Nakuba isitha sibhodla okwebhubesi,*	Even tho' the enemy roars like a lion,
3b *Nakuba **izivunguvungu** zisihlasela ngamandla,*	Even tho' **strong winds** attack us with force,
3c *Nakuba umoya uvunguza ngamandla,*	Even tho' the wind is blowing strongly with power,
4a *inamandla Inkosi ngaphezu kwebhubesi,*	the LORD is more powerful than the lion,
4b *inamandla Inkosi ngaphezu kwe**zivunguvungu**,*	the LORD is more powerful than the **strong wind**,
4c *inamandla Inkosi ngaphezu kwe**zivungu-vungu** ezivunguza ngamandla.*	the LORD is more powerful than the **strong wind** that is blowing with power.

[24] See also Rhoads 2012:22–26.
[25] LaRue (1970:204) calls for a balance between the unity of the total media experience and sufficient variety to sustain interest.

Another translation of Ps 93[26] introduced the metaphor of a "lion" into the inclusio frame where the Hebrew used the image of being "girded with strength." Then the poet re-used the same image (with a twist) in colon 3c: the first word for 'lion' is linked with royalty and the Zulu chief, the second is the common word:

1c. *Jehova, uyingonyama*	LORD, you are the royal lion
3c. *sihlasela kuhle kwebhubesi,*	(the enemy) attacks like a (common) lion,

This suggests that the enemy may try to *appear* strong, but the real lion (or strong one) is the LORD. This seems to be a powerful insight.

Another group, in a performance of Psalm 93, began with an emotive rendering of v.4 by one of the members. Then the group switched to song, and alternated between singing by the group and spoken poetry by one person, with the chorus (based on v.4) being sung at regular intervals. In this way, they emphasised the key message of the psalm (v.4), using different media and repetition through the chorus.

6. Conclusions

Translation for oral performance (and translation in performance) presents the biblical message in a way that is accessible and acceptable to the audience, the Zulu community. The performed items (songs, rap, spoken poetry, and a mix thereof) were enjoyed for their poetic, rhythmic, and melodic beauty as well as emotional power. The audience perceived the texts as being "biblical,"[27] and appreciated the clear messages conveyed in a culturally-relevant way.

In this study, the translators were not professionals, but "ordinary speakers" interested in poetry and music. With some initial training, they were able to apply principles of translation, orality, and performance by paying attention to features of their own traditional poetry and music. The resulting psalms presented a strong, clear message which was memorable and enjoyable. There is much to be gained by using forms and media of communication that the community prefers. Even if such translations may not be suitable for everyone and every situation, there is a need for more experimentation in the direction of cultural relevance, especially for young people. This study shows that Zulu youth have an interest in greater engagement with the Scriptures, and have a capacity to express biblical text in powerful, culturally-appropriate, new ways. The treasure of a community's oral art is waiting to be mined for translations that will sing and stir the heart.

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[26] Dickie 2017:277 (item 6).

[27] In line with Reception Theory, the audience determines the boundaries of acceptability of the text in terms of "biblical faithfulness." The texts were also assessed for artistry and aurality, as well as the traditional criteria of exegetical accuracy, naturalness, and clarity.

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