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Contesting the Uniform: Archetypal Ambivalence and Militarised Identity in Tanzania's Army Songs

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Abstract

This article examines how Tanzanian army songs and dance performances represent the *Afande* (military personnel) figure. Utilising Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism alongside close-reading procedures, James C. Scott's concept of public versus hidden transcripts, and Stanley Fish's interpretive communities, the study reveals a dialectical tension between the sanitised, heroic image of the soldier projected in public patriotic discourse and the vulnerable, subversive counter-narratives articulated within the enclosure of the barracks. Analysing a purposively sampled corpus of eight military songs retrieved from digital archives—including jogging drills (*mchaka mchaka*) and parade performances—the paper investigates how lyrical tropes, call-and-response dynamics, and kinesthetic choreography simultaneously construct and contest militarised authority. The findings demonstrate that while songs like "*Askari Vitani,*" "*Komando Faita,*" "*Nimpeleleze Nani,*" and "*Kazi za Majeshi*" construct an idealised archetype rooted in phalanx discipline, gender inclusivity, omniscient authority, and gruelling endurance, compositions such as "*Selina*", "*Bayana Bayana*", and "*Leila*" subvert this mythology by exposing officer-recruit sexual misconduct, instructor mockery, animalistic tropes, and fragile masculinity. Ultimately, the study argues that Tanzanian military music functions as both an ideological apparatus of state power and an institutional safety valve enabling recruits and soldiers to negotiate trauma, critique hierarchical excesses, and humanise the soldier behind the uniform.

Keywords:
Afande, Tanzania People's Defence Forces (TPDF), Army Songs (*mchaka mchaka*), Archetypal Criticism, Public vs. Hidden Transcripts, Swahili Oral Literature, Militarised Identity.

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1. Introduction and Historical Context

The honorific 'Afande' in Kiswahili is a culturally specific, highly regulated form of address used in East African military circles. It comes from the colonial military ranking system and has since been incorporated into the post-colonial state structure; although it officially refers to a commissioned military officer, in everyday use it serves as a general term for all soldiers (Perullo 2011; Sone 2018). In the United Republic of Tanzania, the *Afande* position serves as a key symbol of state authority, national defence, and civil unity. In public, the soldier is regarded as personifying civic and physical qualities such as self-discipline, resilience, steadfast patriotism, and moral strength. The state reinforces this elevated image through rituals, official parades, national commemorations, and performance arts, with military music playing a vital institutional role.

The integration of music into Tanzania's armed forces can be traced to state-building efforts after independence in the 1960s. When the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF) was set up in 1964 and the *Jeshi la Kujenga Taifa* (JKT / National Service) was introduced, the government deliberately employed artistic performances as a means of ideological education, nation-building and mass mobilisation (Tsuruta 2000, p. 17). During that time, well-known military jazz ensembles were founded—most prominently the TPDF's Mwenge Jazz Band and the JKT Jazz Band—combining secular dance rhythms with patriotic statements from the state (Tsuruta 2003, p. 198). By the 1970s the state had widened the presence of military music by systematically setting up choir groups and military brass bands in barracks all over the country (Nyoni 2007, p. 242). Alongside these official musical organisations, *mchaka mchaka*—a Kiswahili expression meaning rhythmic songs for military jogging and corporal physical drills—was common practice (Kamutanga 2007, p. 132). Soldiers performed the songs during daily physical training, routines, and periods of exertion, using them to keep the group in step, provide psychological stimulation, build physical endurance, and foster a sense of collective camaraderie among both new recruits and experienced personnel.

A thorough literary and cultural examination of the Tanzanian military shows a continual dialectical tension. On the one hand, public displays such as parades on national holidays and military demonstrations on television promote a clean, heroic view of the armed forces; on the other, songs sung by soldiers in the barracks reveal a more complex, contested reality.

Through lyrical metaphors, rhetorical satire, and physical movements, these internal musical expressions convey personal weaknesses, institutional flaws, illicit sexual behaviour, emotional distress, and subtle criticisms of authority. This study asks: How do Tanzanian army songs dialectically construct, celebrate, and undermine the *Afande* stereotype? By tackling this question, the research adds to the field of African oral literature (Barber 2007; Mpofu & Tembo 2015; Sone 2011) by proving that military orature does not simply serve as entertainment or as state propaganda, but functions as an active medium for the formation of institutional ideologies, for peer education, and for critical self-reflection.

2. Theoretical Framework: Archetypal Criticism and Institutional Performance

In order to carefully examine the multidimensional representations of the military figure in songs of the Tanzanian army, this study makes use of three complementary analytical frameworks: Northrop Frye's (1957) theory of Archetypal Criticism, James C. Scott's (1990) socio-political approach concerning Public and Hidden Transcripts, and Stanley Fish's (1980) idea of the Interpretive Community.

2.1 Archetypal Criticism and Dual Symbolic Characters

In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957, pp. 118, 616), Northrop Frye describes archetypal criticism as an analytical method that sees a literary work or performance as an imitation of structural patterns, symbols, and character types that recur throughout cultural history. According to Frye, when we study archetypes, we examine literary symbols that appear so frequently in literature and oral tradition that they become part of a common collective consciousness. In military orature, the *Afande* is a classic literary archetype—a symbolic character who embodies certain institutional and cultural values (Jamshidi et al. 2023). Yet instead of considering the *Afande* as a fixed and unchanging hero, archetypal criticism enables us to detect the character's inherent symbolic duality:

• **The idealised hero type stands for** civic duty, physical invincibility, the discipline of the phalanx, self-sacrifice, and the omniscient authority of the state.

• **The Shadow / Flawed Archetype: a revelation of** human frailty, illicit sexual transgression, emotional desperation, tyranny, and moral failure.

2.2 Public Transcripts vs Hidden Transcripts

To explain the spatial and institutional factors responsible for this typical division, the study uses James C. Scott's (1990) political theory of hidden transcripts. According to Scott, when subordinate groups and military personnel face strict hierarchical surveillance, they produce a 'public transcript'—an open, official form of communication that explicitly confirms, flatters, and reinforces the dominant power structure. In Tanzanian military culture, public performances on the streets among civilians serve as this public transcript, displaying perfect marching, strong patriotic enthusiasm, and a sense of institutional invincibility. On the other hand, Scott defines the 'hidden transcript' as off-stage discourse—material spoken, sung, or performed away from the direct observation of those in power. The military barracks, physical training areas, and internal jogging tracks provide the space where soldiers express their hidden transcript. Using coded lyrical metaphors and humour, soldiers use internal songs to cope with physical suffering, criticise authoritarian instructors, and ridicule the institution's hypocrisy without risking accusations of formal insubordination (Kamutanga, 2007; Mwaura, 2007).

2.3 Interpretive Community and Militarised Codes

Ultimately, Stanley Fish's (1980) idea of the 'interpretive community' provides a linguistic basis for understanding how military songs convey meaning. Fish argues that texts do not have fixed, independent meanings separate from their audiences; rather, the interpretive community creates meaning through shared cultural codes, institutional assumptions, and interpretive strategies. Military personnel in Tanzania form a highly specialised interpretive community linked by collective drill, institutional hierarchy, and militarised Swahili slang ("*Lugha ya kijeshi*") (Perullo 2005, p. 188; Oloo 2007, p. 177). Through artistic defamiliarisation, the songs use military acronyms, coded euphemisms, and double entendres to hide their

more subversive meanings from uninitiated civilians while still transmitting clear educational and critical messages to other recruits.

3. Methodology and Data Corpus

This study uses a qualitative analytical approach that combines digital archival ethnography, literary close reading (as described by Schur, 1998), and performance analysis. The primary data consist of eight Tanzanian army songs recorded during live performances, military training exercises, and ceremonial parades, obtained from public YouTube archives.

3.1 Sampling Criteria and Data Corpus

To select compositions that explicitly represent authority, hierarchy, discipline, gender roles, and personal conduct within the Tanzanian armed forces, purposive sampling was used. Table 1 presents the songs analysed, along with their assigned titles, English translations, and main dialectical categories.

Table 1: Primary Corpus of Analysed Tanzanian Military Songs

Song Title (KiSwahili)	Literal English Title	Primary Thematic Focus	Dialectical Archetype
Mdogo Mdogo	Slowly Slowly	Gradual progression, physical endurance, drill pain	Idealised (Resilience)
Askari Vitani	Soldier on Battlefield	Combat uniform, phalanx hierarchy, equipment	Idealised (Order)
Komando Faita	Commando Fighter	Gender inclusivity, female soldiers, elite combat	Idealised (Inclusivity)
Nimpeleleze Nani	Who to Investigate	Omniscient authority, gospel intertextuality	Idealised (Omniscience)

Kazi za Majeshi	Work of the Army	Mandatory perseverance (gangamala), readiness	Idealised (Duty)
Selina	Celine	Illicit officer-recruit romance, security breach	Subverted (Transgression)
Bayana Bayana	Plainly Plainly	Instructor dormitory sneaking, crow metaphor	Subverted (Mockery)
Leila	Leila	Surrender of uniform (bakabaka), fragile masculinity	Subverted (Naivety)

3.2 Analytical Procedures and Close Reading

The data collection process involved transcribing the Kiswahili lyrics word for word, then conducting an iterative, double-masked translation into English to ensure both contextual and figurative accuracy. The analysis used the close-reading method proposed by Schur (1998, p. 2), focusing on concrete textual evidence, metaphorical language, representational imagery, intertextual references, and repetitive narrative structures. Since African oral performance combines textual and embodied aesthetics (Miruka 1999; Sone 2018), the analysis also included kinesthetic performance elements. Using audiovisual recordings available on YouTube, the study examined physical gestures, call-and-response interactions involving the lead singer (Dickie, 2017), synchronised marching rhythms, and how people were positioned on barracks workout tracks and in public streets.

4. Embodied Performance, Spatiality, and Barracks Culture

In Tanzanian military music, the '*Afande*' figure is achieved through bodily performance, and its meaning emerges from the combination of lyrical delivery, vocal projection, and well-disciplined bodily movement. Unlike Western theatrical traditions, which keep a clear separation between performers and the audience, military song performances call for full participation from everyone present. As Bantu Mwaura (2007, p. 202) notes about political and military performance in East Africa, the audience is never passive, as every recruit and soldier must take an active part in the collective aesthetic and physical exercise.

4.1 Choreography, Cadence, and Kinesthetic Order

The physical performance of *mchaka mchaka* is characterised by strict spatial alignment, synchronised stamping, rhythmic clapping, and coordinated arm movements (Dickie, 2017, p. 3). Recruits arrange themselves in multi-layered rectangular formations or exact single-file lines that move across the training grounds in perfect unison. This kinesthetic alignment symbolises self-control, iron discipline, and the complete subordination of individual will to the collective institutional structure. The performance depends heavily on responsorial singing, a call-and-response pattern in which a leading singer (*kiongozi*) sings the vocal lines. At the same time, the group of recruits reply with loud choruses and in synchronised steps (Olatunji 2012, p. 21). The lead singer determines the song's length and tempo, and it ends suddenly, causing the entire marching formation to stop immediately, 'as if controlled by a robot' (Dickie 2017, p. 8; Odaga 1984, p. 147). This dynamic underscores the hierarchical requirement: the soldier's body moves and stops in absolute obedience to orders.

The aesthetic effect of military performance has strongly influenced secular African dance traditions. As Muhoro (2007, pp. 67, 70) notes, the well-known Gikuyu Mwomboko dance took its physical arrangements and zigzag postures directly from military drill procedures, showing how military spatial discipline has shaped civilian cultural imagination. In the barracks, the physical surroundings give a sense of authenticity (Miruka 1999, p. 70) and turn physical activity into a collective ritual of militarised identity.

4.2 Metaphor of the Recruit as Insect (*Kuruti ni Mdudu*)

A key metaphor, '*kuruti ni mdudu*' ('a recruit is an insect'), is used in the context of physical training. This metaphor carries a deep symbolic duality and reflects the *Afande* archetype's dialectical character. In one sense, treating the recruit (*kuruti*) as an insect serves a useful educational function by emphasising toughness, persistence, resistance to fatigue, and the capacity to endure harsh environmental conditions. Recruits come to believe that, like insects, they can crawl through mud, endure extreme heat, and survive tough physical training without breaking down.

On the other hand, the metaphor carries a strongly derogatory and dehumanising meaning; it treats a human recruit as a *mdudu* (a small, insignificant bug), symbolically stripping the recruit of their civilian sense of self, individual rights, and personal agency. Symbolically diminishing the recruit ensures total institutional control and reminds the trainee of their complete insignificance as they pass out as a full soldier. The conflicting tension between empowering endurance and subjecting the individual to institutional degradation is at the heart of military socialisation.

4.3 Spatiality: The Sacred Barracks vs The Public Street

Because Draper and Mtata (2012, p. 6) argue that deciphering performance requires looking at where it takes place, this study highlights the key spatial distinction between the military barracks (*kambini*) and civilian public areas. Muhoro (2007, p. 77) argues that the nature of the performance space determines both artistic practices and social meaning. The military barracks is a secure, sacred area kept out of civilians' sight. Inside the barracks, two different kinds of performance take place:

1. **Drill sessions with high morale:** These include jogging clubs and physical exercises which highlight stamina, unity, and patriotic pride in order to improve the collective image of the soldiers.

2. **Disciplinary Punishments (Doso):** Severe physical corrective exercises are carried out on disobedient recruits, together with the singing of songs that stress extreme pain, exhaustion, and institutional punishment.

Most importantly, songs sung as part of *doso* punishments, and those that offer subversive criticism of superior officers, are limited to performances within the barracks. When military units perform in civilian streets or on national television, the institution carefully censors the types of songs it allows. *Doso* punishments and any transgressive songs are never shown to the public. In the streets, the military shows only perfect marching, heroic songs, and synchronised precision, thus carefully guarding the official version of state authority while keeping the hidden version contained beyond the garrison gates.

5. Lyrical Representations: Dialectics of the Afande Archetype

To fully understand the *Afande* archetype, it is necessary to examine the figurative language, military slang (Perullo 2005), double entendres (Oloo 2007), and symbolic imagery in the song texts. The corpus under analysis splits into two dialectical groups: songs that construct the idealised archetype and those that undermine it.

5.1 Building the Idealised Archetype: Order, Inclusivity, and Resilience

The first analytical category consists of works that construct, honour, and provide a legal basis for the *Afande's* image as a heroic guardian of the state.

5.1.1 Rational Combat Order and Phalanx Cohesion: *Askari Vitani*

The song *Askari Vitani* ('A Soldier on the Battlefield') clearly and tangibly illustrates militarised preparedness and the institution's rational structure. It sets out in an organised manner the soldier's combat clothing, weapons, and rank system:

> ***"Anavaa anavaa kombati, buti, kofia ya chuma vitani yoo mama.***
>
> ***Anabeba anabeba bunduki, kibuyu cha maji vitani yoo mama.***
>
> ***Anakwenda koplo, sajenti, platuni kamanda vitani yoo mama."***
>
> Translation: On the battlefield he dons a combat uniform, boots, and a solid iron helmet, oh mother.
>
> On the battlefield he has a rifle and a jar of water, oh mother.
>
> There go the corporal, sergeant, and platoon commander to the battlefield, oh mother." (Excerpt from Askari Vitani)

Careful analysis of the song shows that the *kombati* (camouflage fatigue) is not just clothing but a sacred institutional garment that gives one a sense of identity, authority, and professional legitimacy (Samanik 2021). The explicit mention of mandatory accessories—combat boots (*buti*), the protective iron helmet (*kofia ya chuma*), the assault rifle (*bunduki*), and the hydration jar (*kibuyu cha maji*)—emphasises the soldiers' functional preparedness and material rationality. Moreover, the lyrics clearly set out the chain of

command: Lance Corporal (koplo), Sergeant (sajenti), and Platoon Commander (*platuni kamanda*). This ordered listing shows what Alvinius and Holmberg (2019, p. 1257) describe as a rationalised military bureaucracy marked by a rigid distribution of responsibility, clear power structures, and close supervision. The soldiers move forward shoulder to shoulder, forming an invincible phalanx, thus demonstrating collective unity and a willingness to die for the nation.

5.1.2 Subverting Civilian Patriarchy: Gender Inclusivity in *Komando Faita*

In popular civilian culture, the *Afande* is mostly seen as a man, reflecting firmly established patriarchal ideas about military combat; however, the song *Komando Faita* ('Commando Fighter') challenges this bias by presenting an egalitarian conception of militarised identity.

> ***"Komando fighter, fighter boy!***
>
> ***Komando fighter, fighter girl!"***
>
> Translation: "Commando fighter, fighter boy!
>
> Commando fighter, fighter girl!" (Refrain from Komando Faita)

In conventional military structures, earning the title of 'commando' is the highest achievement in specialised physical and tactical combat training. The fact that both female recruits ('fighter girl') and male recruits ('fighter boy') are given the esteemed rank of commando shows that elite combat units treat the sexes equally. As Tzoref (2020, p. 13) notes in their analysis of female warrior traditions, emphasising women's combat roles lifts them from passive domesticity to prominence in the country's defence efforts. The piece avoids crude or stereotypical gendered terms (Olatunji, 2012, p. 109), presenting the Tanzanian military as a forward-thinking, inclusive organisation that prioritises operational capability over gender hierarchy.

5.1.3 Institutional Omniscience and Sacred Intertextuality*: Nimpeleleze Nani*

The song, entitled 'Who to Investigate for News of the Army' (*Nimpeleleze Nani Habari za Majeshi*), presents the *Afande* as a fully informed and all-knowing authority figure:

> ***"Nimpeleleze nani habari za majeshi? Afande ndiyo wa kumpeleleza!"***

Translation: Who should I go to in order to find out about the army? Only *Afande* should be asked! (Refrain from Nimpeleleze Nani)

The piece has a fascinating intertextual connection with popular gospel music in Tanzania. In Christian churches all over the country, the melody and the lyrics are sung using sacred phrasing: '*Nimpeleleze nani habari za mbinguni? Yesu ndiye wa kumpeleleza*' ('Who is to be consulted for news from heaven? Jesus is the one to ask'). Replacing Jesus with the *Afande* in the military song creates a strong intertextual reference (Punzi, 2019, p. 54). By sacralising military authority, the composition treats the *Afande* as the final and unchallengeable spokesperson for the defence forces. Just as Jesus has spiritual omniscience concerning matters in heaven, so too does the *Afande* have complete knowledge of the country's security situation and thus demands total trust and reverence from the people.

5.1.4 Mandatory Perseverance and Painful Drill*: Kazi za Majeshi & Mdogo Mdogo*

In *Kazi za Majeshi* ('The Work of the Army') and *Mdogo Mdogo* ('Slowly Slowly') physical stamina and psychological strength are regarded as essential military qualities:

"Kazi za majeshi weee gangamala! Lazima ungangamale!"

Translation: "The work of the army demands that you persevere! You must persevere!" (Excerpt from Kazi za Majeshi)

The phrase *gangamala*, the Kiswahili imperative meaning 'persevere/stand firm despite pain', functions as an ideological slogan when people are carrying out tough workouts (Punzi 2019; Gajda 2019). In "*Mdogo Mdogo*", the recruits sing about making gradual, methodical progress: "mdogo *mdogo ee mwendo*" ("slowly, slowly is how we move"). As Banita (2022, p. 101) notes in her analysis of military style, tactical movement depends on careful pacing rather than on reckless speed. Significantly, "*Mdogo Mdogo*" includes rhythmic onomatopoeia to depict physical suffering.

"Kwi kwi kwi ambaa ee soja ambaa!"

Translation: "Kwi kwi kwi move on, oh soldier, move on!" (Excerpt from Mdogo Mdogo)

The sound, resembling weeping and hiccups, namely *kwi kwi kwi*, mimics the involuntary crying and hiccupping of exhausted recruits subjected to strenuous drills (Dewi et al. 2020). Yet the song tells the soldier (*soja*) to carry on despite his pain. Here, tears are not seen as a sign of cowardice but rather as proof of physical transformation, signifying the tough process by which civilian recruits become *Afande*.

5.2 Subverting the Archetype: Vulnerability, Transgressions, and Critique

Unlike the heroic pieces, another group of internal songs undermines the *Afande* type by revealing moral failure, security breaches, instructor corruption, and fragile masculinity.

5.2.1 Erotic Transgression and Security Breach: *Selina*

The song reveals an illicit sexual relationship between a senior male officer and a female recruit who is subordinate to him—a relationship which is strictly prohibited by the TPDF disciplinary codes. The story centres on the officer's bitter disappointment when the recruit does not turn up for their nocturnal meeting:

"Akalala mlango wazi..."

Translation: "He slept with his door wide open..." (Key phrase from Selina)

The metaphor of the officer sleeping with his door open (*akalala mlango wazi*) has deep symbolic implications (Apriani & Aprilya 2021). Personally, it demonstrates a severe lack of professionalism and emotional weakness. Institutionally, leaving a commander's residence unlocked on a military base is a serious breach of security. Moreover, in Swahili political literature, the word home (*nyumbani*) is used metaphorically to refer to the nation or homeland. By leaving his door open as a result of sexual frustration, the *Afande* thus symbolically exposes the whole nation to enemy infiltration. The song functions as an internal critique of the institution, cautions that officers who compromise their moral standards in order to engage in sexual exploitation endanger national security and damage the public's trust in the armed forces (Alvinius & Holmberg 2019, p. 1257).

5.2.2 Satirising Superior Misconduct and the Crow Metaphor: *Bayana Bayana*

Instructor corruption and unauthorised intrusion into recruit dormitories are directly attacked in *Bayana Bayana* ('Plainly Plainly'):

> ***"Uliona wapi mkufunzi akimwaga mate na kuruti?***
>
> ***Kunguru hafugiki!"***
>
> Translation: "Where have you ever seen an instructor sleeping in the hangar used by the recruits?
>
> A crow cannot be tamed!" (Excerpt from Bayana Bayana)

The song begins with a sharp rhetorical question, a stylistic choice meant to prompt the listener to conduct an internal moral review rather than expect a response (Nkoala 2020, p. 11). It targets corrupt instructors (*mkufunzi*) who enter the recruit hangars at night to exploit the trainees. To strengthen this criticism, the piece uses animal imagery (Ghimire 2021, p. 68), comparing the predatory instructor to a crow (*kunguru*). In East African folklore, the crow is culturally seen as a rogue scavenger—cunning, thief-like, rebellious, dirty, and untamable (*kunguru hafugiki*). By referring to a senior officer as a *kunguru*, the recruits take away from him his professional dignity and reveal the animalistic hypocrisy they have behind their uniforms.

5.2.3 Naive Masculinity and Misuse of Uniform: *Leila*

The song Leila provides a poignant critique of fragile militarised masculinity and the misuse of state property for romantic validation:

> ***"Afande kasalimisha bakabaka kwa Leila..."***
>
> Translation: "The Afande surrendered his camouflage uniform to Leila..." (Core narrative arc in Leila)

In Leila, an *Afande* gives up his official camouflage uniform (*bakabaka*)—the main symbol of state authority and military identity—to his civilian lover, Leila, in the hope of winning her affection. Unfortunately, Leila then passes the uniform to another civilian lover, exposing the officer to ridicule and disciplinary action. Although civilians might see the song as telling the

story of a woman's betrayal, a careful analysis reveals a sharp criticism of the *Afande's* naive masculinity. The officer wrongly believes that the power and status his uniform represents can secure genuine love. Instead of showing emotional control and strategic intelligence, the *Afande* comes across as desperate, insecure, and incapable of handling relationships with civilians. By surrendering the *bakabaka* he is thereby carrying out the complete abandonment of his professional duties, thus demonstrating how personal insecurities can undermine militarised authority.

6. Discussion: Managing the Public and Hidden Transcripts

The dialectical synthesis of the analysed corpus indicates that the Tanzanian military operates within a sophisticated dual-performance system. Figure 1 demonstrates how the institution strategically manages its public image by dividing performance spaces and artistic content:

Institutional Performance Continuum in Tanzania's Armed Forces

PUBLIC TRANSCRIPT (Civilian Parade Ground / State TV)
└ Content: Heroic discipline, complete combat gear, gender parity, omniscient state defence.
└ Songs: 'Askari Vitani,' 'Komando Faita,' 'Nimpeleleze Nani,' 'Kazi za Majeshi.'
└ Function: State legitimation, public veneration, recruitment, deterrence.

HIDDEN TRANSCRIPT (Barracks Enclosure / Workout Tracks)
└ Content: Doso punishment pain, instructor corruption, illicit romance, fragile masculinity.
└ Songs: 'Selina,' 'Bayana Bayana,' 'Leila,' 'Mdogo Mdogo' (*kwi kwi kwi*).
└ Function: Psychological safety valve, peer critique, stress relief, internal socialisation.

As illustrated thus far, military songs have a dual socio-political role in the armed forces. Outside the military, they project a firm, unshakeable public image of order, state power, and patriotic commitment. Inside the military, however, subversive songs serve as an important psychological safety valve (Scott 1990; Sone 2011). Because military discipline is very strict, new recruits and junior officers cannot stage formal political protests or openly insubordinate. They can therefore express themselves through lyrical satire, animal metaphors (*kunguru*), and coded double meanings, allowing them to process trauma, criticise predatory superiors, and relieve frustration without endangering the command structure's stability.

7. Conclusion

The study examined the complex ways the *Afande* figure is represented in Tanzanian military songs and embodied performance. Using Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism, close reading, Scott's distinction between public and hidden transcripts, and Fish's idea of interpretive communities, the analysis shows that the *Afande* is not a fixed symbol of unreflective heroism or authoritarian dominance. Instead, the *Afande* appears as a dynamic, dialectical archetype shaped by opposing institutional demands and human realities. In public settings, the emphasis is placed on phalanx cohesion, gender inclusivity, omniscient authority, and endurance, while the music produced in the internal barracks undermines this clean version of the story by exposing instances of sexual misconduct, the hypocrisy of the instructors, emotional vulnerability, and the fragility of masculine identity. To maintain its social legitimacy, the military institution keeps transgressive alternative narratives within the barracks while presenting an image of disciplined perfection in public civilian contexts. Thus, Tanzanian military music serves as an educational tool and ideological framework, a double-edged oral medium that honours, humanises, and criticises military identity.

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