

THEORY OF

**AFRICAN
MUSIC**

VOLUME II

**GERHARD
KUBIK**

Theory of African Music

VOLUME II

Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology

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Theory of African Music

VOLUME II

Gerhard Kubik

The University of Chicago Press

Chicago and London

Gerhard Kubik is a cultural anthropologist, ethnomusicologist, and psychoanalyst. A professor of ethnology and African studies at the Universities of Vienna and Klagenfurt, he also teaches at Sigmund Freud University, Vienna. Professor Kubik is affiliated with the Oral Literature Research Programme, Chileka, Malaŵi, and is a permanent member of the Center for Black Music Research in Chicago as well as an honorary fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. His recent books include *Africa and the Blues* and *Tusona—Luchazi Ideographs*.

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London
© 2010 by Gerhard Kubik
All rights reserved. Published 2010
Printed in the United States of America
19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-45693-5 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-45694-2 (paper)
ISBN-10: 0-226-45693-5 (cloth)
ISBN-10: 0-226-45694-3 (paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Kubik, Gerhard, 1934–

Theory of African music / Gerhard Kubik.
p. cm. — (Chicago studies in ethnomusicology)
Vol. 1 previously published in 1994 by F. Noetzel.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-45690-4 (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-45691-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-226-45690-0 (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-226-45691-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)
[etc.]

1. Music—Africa—History and criticism. 2. Music theory—
Africa. I. Title. II. Series: Chicago studies in ethnomusicology.
ML350.K83 2010
780.96—dc22

2009042892

© The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

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Preface to Volume II

Essentially, the chapters forming Volume II were already completed by me at the end of 1988. What are now Chapters VI (“The Cognitive Study of African Musical ‘Rhythm’”), VII (“African Music and Auditory Perception”) and IX (“Genealogy of a Malawian Musician Family”) were written especially for this volume, while the remaining two chapters, VIII on Yoruba chantefables and X on the *tusona* ideographs in Angola/Zambia, are adapted from articles published in other contexts.

In content and theoretical outlook, Volume II is more general and cross-cultural in approach than Volume I, and it stands on an advanced level of inquiry. Therefore, I advise readers to begin with Volume I and familiarize themselves with the basics, as in the introduction and Chapters III (on harmonic patterns and polyphony) and IV (on the structure of court music of Buganda as reflected in cipher notation). From there the reader might proceed to Volume II, Chapter VI and so on. The present volume is concerned with a variety of topics relating to musical understanding, intra-culturally and cross-culturally: auditory perception and cognition, music and oral literature, music and graphic symbolism, and portraits of individual creative musician-composers such as Mwenda Jean Bosco (Congo) and Daniel J. Kachamba (Malawi).

It would be a misunderstanding to see the principal objective of this volume as presenting a theory of African rhythm. We have outgrown the rhythm stereotype of Africa and also the quest for grand theories. I even place “rhythm” within quotation marks. My basic concern in Volume II is the creative musical mind of individuals and in tradition; how musical personalities in various African cultures conceive, categorize, perceive and process movement and sound, and how they integrate their specific experiences within the broader realm of culture (e.g. language, oral literature, art, societal environment, historical consciousness). This is the compass and scientific orientation of my inquiries, and the answers come from a broad sample, across many cultures.

Until 1994 I used to revise and update these texts regularly, in the hope that this volume would be published in 1995 as a sequel to Volume I. However, this was not brought about. Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the original publisher, the International Institute for Traditional Music in Berlin, was closed down by the German authorities for economic reasons, despite protests by notable ethnomusicologists and virtuoso musicians, including Yehudi Menuhin. One of the casualties of the sudden shortage of funds was my book. Volume I had appeared in print in 1994 and Volume II was already typeset, thanks to the tireless cooperation of Ulrich Wegner, at that time employed in the same institute.

From there begins the odyssey of *Theory of African Music, Volume II*. By the mid-1990s, the University of Chicago Press indicated an interest in pub-

lishing both volumes together, and an electronic version of my book was sent to Chicago. Due to different computer systems and other computer-related hurdles, however, publication was delayed indefinitely. When in 2005 Elizabeth Branch Dyson of the Press gave me an idea of the nature of these problems, I was at a loss, not being a computer expert.

Eventually, a solution came in sight, in the form of an offer I received from a colleague and friend—we have known each other since the days in Zambia in the 1980s—Dr. Ernest Brown of Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts. He said that he would help to get the computer version of the text into shape and sort out the electronic mess into which my manuscript had slipped. Ernest even came to our home in Malaŵi in August 2005, and we began to have a look at the electronic files, drawing up lists of photographs, figures and other components that had mysteriously disappeared.

By mid-2007, it was clear that we would have to begin anew with the original typed version of the manuscript, scanning and digitizing the text. This work was then taken up by three members of our current research team within project P 17751 G06, “Musical Cultures of East and Southeast Africa: Historical Perspectives.”¹ Dr. Moya A. Malamusi, Dr. August Schmidhofer and the young computer-experienced musicology student Yohana Malamusi joined forces, each handling a part of the original manuscript, chapter by chapter. This process also allowed me to make some final revisions of the text.

Naturally, the enormous delay in the publication of Volume II has been a source of bewilderment for everyone, and for me a source of ambivalence. My own research, like that of many of my colleagues, did not come to a standstill in 1988. Meanwhile, I have published several other books, including *Africa and the Blues* (1999), and made contributions to the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (edited by Ruth M. Stone, 1998), the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001) and Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje’s book *Turn Up the Volume* (1999). Some of the theoretical concepts discussed in Volume II have also been the subject of lectures I have given at conferences and in universities across Europe, America, Africa and Japan. Should I have updated the texts of this book to incorporate my most recent findings and the work of others through the 1990s and into the 21st century?

I would have had the possibility of rewriting Volume II beyond the few revisions suggested by peers, but have felt that this would have been more confusing than enlightening, for historical reasons; and it would have inflated the texts out of proportion. *Theory of African Music*, Volumes I and II, is an anthology of basic insights that are supposed to have permanent value. Both volumes grew together at a certain stage of my work; and details about my most recent research interests in Africa and elsewhere can be found in a host

1. We are most grateful to the Wissenschaftsfonds, Vienna, for financing this three-year project (2005–2008). It has greatly helped to deepen our understanding of intra-African streams of influence in African music history.

of publications produced since 1994. To make these and other writings more easily accessible to the reader, I have included in Volume II a Further Recommended Readings section, which lists sources from the 1980s to the 2000s not necessarily cited in the chapters.

Eventually, I decided to limit the final revisions of Volume II to necessary processes of language editing, strengthening some formulations without blowing up the time frame of the original writings. As much as possible, I have resisted the idea of including field information gathered after 1994.

To remain within the original time frame, however, it was also necessary, in one case, to shorten a chapter. Due to the loss of my friend, the musician-composer Donald Kachamba, who died January 12, 2001, shortening Chapter IX, “Genealogy of a Malaŵian Musician Family,” was unavoidable. It would have been inappropriate, even misleading, to retain fully a portrait of the artist written in 1988. His contribution until 2001 and the rise of our successor jazz band will have to be discussed in a future context. I have, therefore, removed the original sub-sections on Donald, and also on a young musician named Fulaye. Chapter IX now concentrates on Daniel Kachamba’s lifework, with background information on the family, particularly his father.

Generally, I have tried to deal with the texts of Volume II as if they were old frescoes to be restored. Although in the course of restoration I may have used fragile (mechanical) equipment in climbing those (virtual) walls, I am glad to report that I did not fall down and break my limbs upon a sudden encounter with Salvador Dali’s melting clocks.

Chileka, Malaŵi, August 27, 2007

Special thanks go to Dr. Moya Aliya Malamusi, who in an exemplary marathon retyped the four indexes on the computer in six weeks in March and April 2010. I had selected and compiled all the names and terms “with eye and hand” the old-fashioned way from the 600-something pages of the two volumes.

Chapter VI

The Cognitive Study of African Musical “Rhythm”

A continent-wide sampling of data on the theory and practice of African music inevitably leads the researcher to questions of a more general nature regarding humans as music makers (cf. Blacking 1973a), and to increasing consciousness of the limitations of cross-cultural understanding. The more necessary it seems to work comparatively, the more evident challenges of comparison become. Survey-type studies can, of course, be multiplied indefinitely, but in-depth studies of musical cognition are more difficult to carry out. Researchers in African music can focus on one or two musical cultures that are different from those in which they grew up, to an extent which makes them almost “native speakers” of that culture, but it is not possible to repeat the same experience in an unlimited number of cultures. Such “code-switching,” excessively practiced, would lack credibility.

Music is considered a universal phenomenon, in a sense that all cultures seem to have developed resources for producing sound-and-motion patterns that are organized and message-carrying. However, music is not a universal language. Universally, music represents the picture of a plurality of communication systems. Its code-systems are culture-bound and conditioned for intra-cultural reception. Cross-culturally, therefore, music is regularly misunderstood by audiences, rather than understood; i.e. it is “understood” in terms of perceptual sets and conventions pertaining to the receiving culture.

In the 1960s the need for bi-musicality was often stressed, and at one time it was almost a campus fashion to be “bi-musical.” The reality in psychological terms is much more prosaic. “Bi-musicality” is at best a transitional state of getting acquainted with another musical culture, because eventually all new acquisitions of knowledge are integrated into a person’s total resources.

What I mean is that an individual, after intensive cross-cultural experience, does not end up as a sort of two-channel carrier of traditions, switching to and fro. Inevitably, cohesive psychological forces bind the new idiom to the old one, rounding a bit off the edges of both. After some time the individual no longer belongs exactly to the culture he or she once came from; various new experiences have generated a new configuration of cultural references. This is perhaps what is really implied by Fernando Ortiz’s term “transculturation” (cf. Ortiz 1940). Cognitively, therefore, nothing like permanent individual

bi-culturalism (cf. Euba 1988a:404) really exists, let alone collective “cultural pluralism.” What may come out of a cross-cultural encounter is a reconfiguration of cultural resources within the individual. And this can also change considerably during an individual’s life span.

This chapter is devoted to the cognitive dimension in African musical practices. It deals extensively with both intra- and cross-cultural understanding, particularly with reference to that structural realm of African music which has been called “rhythm.” Its orientation is analytical and comparative. It deals with a variety of issues in some detail, but with no particular ethnic community in extenso, looking at musical cultures both from inside and outside, and analyzing individual conceptualization.

Section 1

Cognitive Anthropology and African Music: What We Can Learn from Each

Definitions

Stephen A. Tyler has defined the theoretical orientation of cognitive anthropology as follows:

It focuses on discovering how different peoples organize and use their cultures. This is not so much a search for some generalized unit of behavioral analysis as it is an attempt to understand the organizing principles underlying behavior. It is assumed that each people has a unique system for perceiving and organizing material phenomena—things, events, behavior, and emotions (Goodenough 1957). The object of study is not these material phenomena themselves, but the way they are organized in the minds of men. Cultures then are not material phenomena; they are cognitive organizations of material phenomena.

Many anthropologists have expressed an interest in how the natives see their world. Yet, there is a difference of focus between the old and the new. Where earlier anthropologists sought categories of description in their native language, cognitive anthropologists seek categories of description in the language of their natives (Tyler 1969:3, 6).

The cognitive study of African music includes a multitude of questions:

- (1) What acoustic phenomena are significant in specific African cultures, and how are these organized within the concept of music/dance?
- (2) How does musical terminology in African languages reflect individual and culture-specific patterns of conceptualization?
- (3) What intra-cultural and cross-cultural margins of tolerance are present in

the perception, recognition and conceptualization of patterns in specific African musical cultures?

- (4) How can universals in musical perception and understanding be identified when dealing with learned modes of behavior?
- (5) To what extent is musical understanding variable in an apparently homogeneous musical culture? How is it related to individuals with different specialization, with the existence of sub-cultures and the association of musical genres with social strata, age groups, etc.?

Cognitive studies imply that cultural behavior is assessed according to the thought processes prevalent in the individuals concerned, basically from an emic standpoint. This contrasts with studies undertaken from an etic standpoint, i.e. when researchers analyze a culture within the framework of scientific concepts that are external to the culture. Both processes of investigation are necessary and complementary.

Some readers may not be familiar with the emic/etic dichotomy. These terms, introduced by the linguist Kenneth L. Pike (1954), are derived from the designations "phonemics" and "phonetics" in language studies which mark important differences in approaching the study of language. Phonetics studies all the measurable sounds in language on a global basis, and one of its creations has been the International Phonetic Alphabet. Phonemics registers what is different in meaning from the standpoint of the speakers.

In some African and Asian languages, for example, [l] and [r] are one and the same phoneme. It makes no difference in meaning if you articulate these consonants in either of two directions. In Chichewa of Malaŵi, you may pronounce these sounds either way: "Ndilibe" or "Ndiribe," most often somewhere between, and it will be understood to mean: "I don't have (it)." In German, the lexical items "ich" (I), "Nacht" (night) and "nackt" (naked) employ the sounds [ç], [x] and [k]. For German speakers the difference between the first two—though noticeable—is insignificant, because you could exchange these two sounds with each other in the words "ich" and "Nacht" without altering their meaning. Therefore we can say that [ç] and [x] are one and the same phoneme in German. The third sound [k], however, stands apart. My good friend, the musician and composer Donald J. Kachamba from Malaŵi, discovered that in 1972, when he was eighteen, on his first trip to Europe. Trying to say "Good night" to one of my female colleagues in German, he replaced the unfamiliar sound [x] with [k]. Therefore, to the amusement of everyone, instead of saying to her "Gute Nacht" (Good night), he was saying "Gute Nackt!" (Good naked) . . .

In his historical 1954 essay, Kenneth L. Pike suggests that the conceptual distinctions inherent in the terms "phonetics" and "phonemics" can be applied to the larger field of cultural studies. Hence, the origin of the terms "emics" and "etics."

Pike ([1954] 1967:37–38) has summarized the “principal differences between the etic and emic approaches to language and culture” as follows:

The etic approach treats all cultures or languages—or a selected group of them—at one time. . . . The emic approach is, on the contrary, culturally specific, applied to one language or culture at a time. . . . Etic units and classifications, based on prior broad sampling or surveys . . . may be available before one begins the analysis of a further particular language or culture. . . . Emic units of a language must be determined during the analysis of that language; they must be discovered, not predicted . . . (etc.)

Subsequently, Pike’s thesis was often misunderstood as equating “emic” and “etic” analysis with insider and outsider perspectives. However, he was talking about standpoints; and anyone, regardless of their place of birth, can alternate between standpoints. Pike’s primary idea resulted in a new consciousness about culture-specific variation margins in conceptualization. This generated the great leap forward in cultural anthropology in the 1960s. Emically oriented studies elicited native categorizations; etically oriented studies described phenomena from external, cross-cultural and universal standpoints, using scientific terminology.

However, both standpoints, so defined, exclude a third one, the idiocultural, in which popular, non-scientific ideas pertaining to the observer’s culture become a framework of reference for the analysis of another culture. In his treaty on problems, methods and aims in ethnomusicology, Artur Simon (1979) has given lucid examples of idiocultural standpoints in music research. In concrete terms, if one measures African instrumental tunings with a Stroboscopp to obtain the c.p.s., this may be called an etically oriented investigation (although Alexander Ellis’s Cents system also has an idiocultural bias). Like radio-carbon dates in archaeology, the results of these measurements are verifiable to a certain extent. They may be subject to fluctuations and calculable probabilities of error, but in a sense they are facts. Their interpretation is left open. If, on the other hand, one undertakes comparative studies of African music on the basis of categories and concepts adopted from one culture and transferred to another, e.g. “hocket” technique (Nketia 1962b), “hemiola-style,” “horizontal and vertical hemiola” (Brandel 1959, 1961), “organum” (Jones 1949; Kubik 1968a), down to ubiquitous terms such as “major” and “minor,” “melody,” “rhythm” and “harmony,” one runs the risk of idioculturally determined interpretations. I am not saying that such an approach is necessarily wrong; I am only recommending enhanced consciousness of one’s implicit frame of references.

A. M. Jones’s graphic notations of African drum strokes and time-line patterns, executed by means of a transcription machine he constructed himself, constitute research from an etic standpoint. His collection of drum teaching

syllables from his Ghanaian informant, Desmond K. Tay (Jones 1959b), demonstrates an emic approach, while his rewriting in Western staff notation of the percussive patterns originally notated by his machine demonstrates neither emic nor etic standpoints; it is the author's attempt at understanding from an idiocultural point of view.

"Rhythm" is, of course, not an emic category in Africa. No term has been isolated in any African language whose semantic field would be congruent with the Western notion "rhythm." Robert Kauffman even claims that "in Africa there are no highly verbalized or systematic means of determining the nature of rhythm" (Kauffman 1980:393). I personally cannot subscribe to that, because there are other concepts in African languages which are equally suited to describe such phenomena; but in a general way it is true that in the absence of a concept there cannot be any statements, unless the informant uses the researcher's idiom. Thus, to begin one's studies by proceeding from a concept which is (a) non-indigenous, and (b) one on which many doubts have already been cast, is probably ill advised. Moreover, attempting an emic analysis working from a category which is not part of the emics of African music is a contradiction. To express my reservations, therefore, I have put the word "rhythm" in quotation marks in the title of this chapter. It stands as a thought-provoking tag to let us discover the reality behind this concept.

Preoccupation with "rhythm" has been a persistent trait in cultural studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa. But at least since the late 1970s, critical remarks have been heard. When John Miller Chernoff's book *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* appeared in 1979, Alan P. Merriam's review in *Ethnomusicology* pointed to

the reader's difficulty in orienting himself to the author's framework and approach and, indeed, in satisfying himself as to the background of the work and the consequent center of its thrust . . .

Chapter II is devoted to discussion of the features of African music structure, but this quickly boils down to rhythm, which "forms the basis for discussing . . . the general characteristics of the various African musical traditions" (p. 40), and thence to drumming. It is here that the reader will probably decide whether the basic premise of the approach is reasonable or flawed; for me, it is the latter. To reduce African music to African rhythm as expressed in African drumming is to substitute one complex factor for the study of a much larger set of complex factors. (Merriam 1980:559–60)

The concept "rhythm" belongs to the classical Greek heritage in Western literature, science and music theory. In Western music theory it is part of a trilogy of categories—which Cajetan Lunsonga (1978:72) pertinently calls the "musical trinity"—comprising "melody," "harmony" and "rhythm," each

of which is heavily charged with symbolic side-meanings and associations such as: melody → spirit; harmony → soul; rhythm → body. Projected onto Africa, such conceptualization has suited Western stereotypes about the African culture world. In 19th- and early 20th-century writings Africans were often described as born with a “natural rhythm,” but lacking higher intellectual development symbolized by “melody” and “harmony”. “Il faut noter que les peuples primitifs ignorent de l’harmonie,” was written as late as 1967 by a French ethnologist, Jean Cazeneuve, in his volume *L’Ethnologie*, of the *Encyclopédie Larousse de Poche* (Cazeneuve 1967:363).

Such ideas linger on in popular thought, though nowadays they are mostly articulated in some form of disguise, using substitute expressions. They were also largely internalized by a generation of pre-independence African writers. Certain ideologies of aestheticism and “authenticity” have often been served by the idea of “rhythm” as something symbolizing the core of “African culture.” Négritude considered “rhythm” central to African “life,” and in French-language treatises by Léopold Sédar Senghor (1956, 1964, etc.) the term was rolled out in florid philosophical and poetic generalities. Négritude responded to stereotypes from Europe by inverting their negative charge, while accepting at the same time the projection of those thought models that were generating them.

The Intra-Cultural Approach

In 1963 William Bright first suggested there should be more cooperation in language and music studies, but it took time for methodology developed by the beginnings of cognitive anthropology in the 1960s to be tested in studies of African music. For a long time Hugo Zemp’s “Musique Dan. La musique dans la pensée et la vie sociale d’une société africaine” (Zemp 1971) has remained the exemplary work in book form.

In recent years I have outlined a methodology for what I have called an intra-cultural approach.¹ Its basic premise is that a culture always manifests itself as a closed system of communication. By this I mean that the total margin of transmission of verbal and non-verbal concepts, ideas and forms of expression between individuals is determined by the intra-cultural communicative repertoire. To guard against any misunderstanding, it may be noted that the term “closed system of communication” literally refers only to the communi-

1. Its field technique was one focus at my seminar “Introdução à metodologia das pesquisas culturais” at the Departamento Nacional de Folklore, Luanda (Angola), January 18 to March 3, 1982, with about 35 participants. Cf. interview in *Vida & Cultura* 46, 2 May 1982; *Rocha Matos* 1982, 1983. It came also up in the discussions of the “Table Ronde Internationale du C.N.R.S.” in Paris, October 11–13, 1983, and at the seminário “Novas Perspectivas em Etnomusicologia” in Lisbon (Portugal), May 16–20, 1983.

cative channels of human interactions. I am not saying that cultures are closed systems—on the contrary, we know that in the historical dimension cultures have always been open, ready to absorb, integrate and adapt by creative response. However, from a historical perspective, cultures may at any point in time be viewed as momentarily closed systems of communication. Regardless of their transformations, the momentary communicative repertoire of a culture is a distinctive arrangement understood within that culture.

This implies that without specific methodological preparation, cross-cultural understanding of what really makes one culture different from another is not possible. One can comprehend cross-culturally the universals binding all cultures together, but not the culture-specific, unless by chance two traits in question are cognitively identical in the two cultures which have come into contact: they can then function as a cognitive bridge².

Understanding the culture-specific is a process of learning. As soon as one begins to understand specific concepts in a culture, following the thought-patterns of one's friends, it is a sign that barriers are beginning to be broken down and that a learning process has started whose eventual outcome is transculturation. But before that happens the contents of a contact culture cannot be understood adequately by adherents to another culture: they can only be reinterpreted in terms of concepts and notions brought along. So one may question the wisdom of anthropologists trying to show off by dancing with the villagers three days after their arrival!

While ethnoscience of the 1950s and 1960s used indigenous taxonomies as a starting point for its investigations—cf. several splendid studies of color categories, kinship terminology, or ethnobotany, Sturtevant (1964)—the analysis and presentation of results continued to be given in a language other than that of the culture investigated, usually in English. This is one of the areas where the intra-cultural approach differs from ethnoscience. Ideally, it implies that the results of studies are also to be presented by the communicative means available within the “closed system,” i.e. in the language of the community or individuals researched.

A typical intra-culturally oriented study would begin with the researchers writing most of their field notes in the language of the community and the individuals under study. If the researchers originally come from that community, all their notes would be written in the local language. If they do not exactly come from the community where they collect their material, which is more often the case,

- (1) all information (whether recorded on tape or not) would be written or transcribed in the dialect of the place, preserving informants' individual styles of expression;

2. See also some of my anthropological writings, e.g. Kubik 1991b, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 2007a and 2007b.

- (2) the researcher's own observations, however, would be written in his/her own language.

At a later stage, the intra-cultural approach can be expanded to cover a wider geographical area and several cultures whose database has already been secured. Such comparative, multi-cultural studies present no contradiction to the methodology of an intra-cultural approach.



Photo 1. An exercise in cross-cultural comprehension: audiences in Lisbon at the international symposium “Novas Perspectivas em Etnomusicologia,” May 16–20, 1983, listening to *kora* player Sadjá Djalo from Guinea-Bissau (CD Track 1). In the background one can recognize a few prominent faces: Andrew Tracey (left, seated on the ground), Margot Dias, Portugal’s foremost researcher on the music of Moçambique (next to Andrew Tracey) and Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, the doyen of Portuguese ethnomusicology (first person fully visible to the right of the *kora*’s string-bearer). An audience such as this cannot speak the Mandiñ language or relate sound and meaning the same way as a Mandiñ audience would do. The concert is geared towards an appreciation of the sound patterns as “abstract music.” The patterns are reinterpreted in their pitch and temporal aspects by each participant from his/her specific idiocultural standpoint. That this does not prevent audiences from experiencing satisfaction is one of the reasons why such concerts can take place. In Lisbon, Portugal, May 20, 1983.—Photo: author.

Putting Taxonomies on Record

We now cite some examples of local taxonomies to help assess their use for intra- and cross-cultural studies. First we look at cross-cultural variations in the meaning of the ubiquitous word stem -NGOMA (var.: *ng'oma*) in East and south-central Africa. In Kiswahili it has perhaps the widest semantic field in any Bantu language, and its general meaning can be summarized as “drum” or “community-based dance.” In other languages its meaning is more restricted. For example, among the Wagogo of central Tanzania, there is the *ng'oma* dance for women, in which several women hold hourglass-shaped *ng'oma* drums between their legs, drumming with their hands in triple crossing and interlocking patterns. While drumming they twist their shoulders, which are specially decorated, and play locally bought “police” whistles in an interlocking



Photo 2. Wagogo women performers of hourglass-shaped drums. The ornamentally decorated drum in the center is the *ng'oma fumbwa*. In Iseke, Dodoma District, Tanganyika, May 1962.—Photo: author.

style. One or two *kayamba* rattles are played by men to accompany the group. The *ng'oma* drums (sing. and plural), which are played exclusively by women, are single-headed and open-ended. The group leader's big drum, called the *ng'oma fumbwa*, is about 55 to 60 cm high; the smaller drums are called *nyanyulua*. *Ng'oma* is danced at the end of a girl's first menstrual period, when a boy is taken for circumcision, or at weddings.

Thus, among Tanzania's most musically celebrated ethnic group, the Wagogo, the term *ng'oma* means (a) a specific dance and (b) the drums employed. One of these drums, *ng'oma fumbwa*, contains in its name a descriptive attribute, referring to the size of the drum and its "shut" sound quality: *fumbwa*. In the Kigogo language, the word *ng'oma* has assumed a specific meaning—the dance—besides the general one. Perhaps this is because among the Wagogo drums do not play as important a role as elsewhere. In their *msunyunho* and *nindo* chants, there are no drums at all. *Mpendo* uses double-headed conical drums played with sticks which seem to have come to Ugoogo with the 19th-century caravan trade. It may be historically significant that among the Wagogo the more "traditional" hourglass-shaped drums are played by women. Elsewhere in Tanzania they are played by men, as in the *mangara* circular dance among the Wahehe, or by men and women, as in the *ngwaya* dance of the Wapangwa.

The following table shows the intra-cultural meanings of words based on the stem *-ngoma* (respectively *-ng'oma*) in some Bantu languages of East and Central Africa:

Term	Language	Meaning in translation
<i>ngoma</i>	Kiswahili (East Africa)	(a) any kind of drum (b) any kind of community-based music and dance
<i>ng'oma</i>	Kigogo (Tanzania)	women's initiation-related dance with drums; the hourglass-shaped drums used in this dance
<i>ng'oma</i>	Chicheŵa/Cinyanja (Malaŵi, Zambia)	(a) <i>ng'oma</i> (generic name meaning "drum") (b) <i>ng'oma</i> (beehive) ³
<i>ngoma</i>	Chimbo (Malaŵi)	a specific dance of Ngoni origin

3. The two meanings are kept separate by different speech-tones. Asked whether *ng'oma* ("drum") and *ng'oma* ("beehive") should be considered the same or two related words, Moya A. Malamusi said that in his opinion it was the same word (in spite of the different intonation). The two meanings are linked by the fact that a beehive (of the type put in the trees) resembles a drum by its shape. (Personal communication, August 10, 1988.)

Term	Language	Meaning in translation
<i>ingoma</i>	Chitumbuka (Malaŵi)	a specific dance of Ngoni origin
<i>ingoma</i>	Kinyarwanda (Rwanda)	the royal drums of the Mwami of Rwanda
ngoma (pl. <i>zi-</i>)	Luchazi (Angola, north-western Zambia)	(a) generic name for drum(s) (b) beehive
<i>engoma</i>	Runyankore	(a) generic name meaning “drum” (b) single-headed conical drum (beaten with one stick)
<i>ng’oma</i>	Khipangwa (Tanzania)	(a) generic name meaning “drum” (b) high single-headed hourglass-shaped drum in the <i>ngwaya</i> dance to be con- trasted with <i>fimkhang’u</i> (the small one of the same shape)

Table 1. NGOMA (NG’OMA) across East and Central African Bantu languages

We possess substantial data about the conceptualization of pitch in various African cultures. By comparison, our database regarding taxonomies of motional patterns—dance movement and movement-patterns performed on instruments—is more slender. A remarkable work linking these areas of study in Igbo culture, Nigeria, and providing transcriptions of motional patterns, is Tuburu 1987. Apparently, the most effective emic repertoire for the classification of motional patterns (as demonstrated by Tuburu’s examples referring to Igbo dances) lies not in verbal descriptive classification systems, but in the mnemonics used for teaching.

Motion- and sound-producing action is classified in African music/dance cultures from various viewpoints: type of action and style, extra-musical associations, etc. Lo-Bamijoko (1987:19) has given five verbs used in the Igbo language to express the “playing” of musical instruments:

- (1) *iyọ*—to shake, rattle, or clap together
- (2) *iku*—to strike a hard surface with a beater
- (3) *iti*—to strike a membrane with hand or beater
- (4) *ikpọ*—to pluck or bow
- (5) *ifu*—to blow

Igbo musical instruments are then classified under these verbs.



Photo 3. *Mpendo* circular dance among the Wagogo. Two double-headed conical drums of different sizes and tuning are placed in the middle of the circle and struck with sticks. It is possible that these instruments were introduced with the 19th-century caravan trade passing through Unyamwezi. The crowd of dancers moves counter-clockwise round the drums. In Mvumi, Dodoma District, Tanganyika, January 1, 1962.—Photo: author.

Paul van Thiel (1969) deserves credit for having been the first to look at instrument classification in this manner. He gave us a taxonomy of sound production in Runyankore based on the verbs used to express what Western observers would describe with the generic term “playing” (an instrument). In most African languages, there is no semantic association between “play” and musical production. We know this from Bantu languages, and Lo-Bamijoko’s data confirm it for Igbo, an I.A.4 (Kwa) language in Joseph Greenberg’s (1966) classification. Instruments are not “played”; they may be “struck” (e.g. *kupiga* in Kishwahili) or “sung” (*kuyimba* in Chicheŵa). A specialist generic term may be used to express the sound-producing act, such as *kusika* in the eastern Angolan group of languages (cf. Chapter V). Alternatively, there may be no generic term.

For Runyankore, van Thiel elicited the data below.

Verb describing the playing action	Names of instruments to which it is applied
<p><i>Okuteera</i> (to hit, to strike, to beat)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>engoma</i> (single-headed conical drum, beaten with one stick) 2. <i>engalabi</i> (single-headed cylindrical drum, beaten with two hands) 3. <i>rwabasheegu</i>, <i>entimbo</i>, <i>bagyendanwa</i>, <i>kambembura</i>, <i>nyakashaija</i>, <i>nyabayangwe</i> (other drums) 4. <i>enyungu</i> (percussion vessel, struck with a beater made of dry banana fiber) 5. <i>omubanda</i> (open single end-blown notched-flute with finger holes), individual names: <i>akaruru</i>, <i>entabya</i>, <i>omugunda</i>, <i>omubanda</i>, <i>omukuri</i>, <i>endere</i> 6. <i>enanga</i> (trough zither with resonator consisting of one string laced through notches) 7. <i>endingiri</i> (spike tube lute, bowed) 8. <i>omu ngaro</i> (hand-clapping) 9. <i>ensheegu</i> (stopped single end-blown flute). Various individual names: <i>enyahuro</i>, <i>enkuratsa</i>, <i>enyigarura</i>; <i>encwa</i>, <i>enkombeezi</i> 10. <i>egobore</i> (mono-heterochord musical bow with attached resonator with tuning noose). Various individual names: <i>egobore</i>, <i>umunahi</i>, <i>egubure</i> 11. <i>ekinimba</i> (open single end-blown notched flute with two finger holes) 12. <i>ekindongo</i> (mono-heterochord musical bow with separate resonator without tuning noose; 3-stringed musical bow) 13. <i>enzamba</i> (side-blown horns; hunting horns made of animal horn). Various names: <i>eihembe</i>, <i>enkuri</i> 14. <i>omujariko</i> (mono-heterochord musical bow with resonator attached without tuning noose; earth bow). Various names: <i>omujariko</i>, <i>sekitulege</i> 15. <i>amakondere</i> (side-blown horns; animal horns, some of which have gourd bells). Names of former royal set: <i>omwongo</i>, <i>omurangi</i>, <i>enkanga</i>
<p><i>Okugambisa</i> (<i>Okugamba</i> means: to speak. <i>Okugambisa</i> is the causative form, meaning: to make speak, to speak through, to cause a sound)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>amajugo</i> (vessel rattle; composite ankle rattle made of iron spherical pellet bells). Various names: <i>amayombera</i>, <i>engorogoro</i> 2. <i>enjebajebe</i> (composite vessel rattle; leg rattle made of dried fruit shells) 3. <i>esaasi</i> (hand-shaken single-vessel rattle, made of little tin-plate can). Various names: <i>esaasi</i>, <i>kyekékya</i> 4. <i>enyimba</i> (hand-shaken vessel rattle, large gourd rattle) 5. <i>oburengo</i> (small ritual vessel rattle; gourd rattle)
<p><i>Okushungura</i> (to sift, to winnow). “Musicians use it to indicate the playing of the hand-shaken flat reed-box rattle. The behavior of the performance is closely related to movements of someone who winnows.” (Thiel 1969:1)</p>	<p><i>rugaaniira</i> (vessel rattle; flat reed-box rattle)</p>
<p><i>Okuhonda</i> (to stamp, to bring forcibly down)</p>	<p><i>entimbo</i> (percussion vessel; bamboo stamping tube)</p>

Table 2. Runyankore taxonomy of sound-producing action



4a



4b



4c



4d

Photo 4a–d. Aspects of the *ngwaya* dance of the Wapangwa, with hourglass-shaped single-headed drums: the large, up to 1.5-m-high drums are played by men in the “riding” position, holding them between their legs. These are called *ng’oma*. The small ones, called *fimkhang’u*, are held above the head with the left hand and struck with right-hand palm; these are exclusively played by women. *Ngwaya* is considered by Wapangwa informants as their “oldest dance.” It is played at marriage festivities and parties with *ulanzi* (bamboo wine). Near Madunda, Njombe District, Southern Highlands Province, Tanganyika, May 1960.—Photos: author.

Runyankore taxonomy demonstrates that the verb *okuteera* (embracing the notions “to hit,” “to strike,” or “to beat”) is used to express the playing action of most Kinyankore instruments, including all membranophones, chordophones and aerophones. *Okugambisa* (“to make something speak”) is the term used for agitating all rattles, except one type. *Okushungura* (“to sift,” “to winnow”) is used in relation to the sideways-shaken reed-box rattle called *rugaaniira*, also known—according to Thiel (1969:5)—by other names derived from verbs indicating sound- and/or motion-producing action: *rugaaniira* (from *okugaanii-era* = “to converse”), *akakyenkye* (= “piece of thin reed”), *orunyegye* (name of special rhythm), *enshungura* (from *okushungura* = “to winnow”), *akahuubaano* (from *okuhuuba* = “to swing”). Finally, the term *okuhonda* (“to stamp”) is used in connection with one instrument, the *entimbo* (bamboo stamping tube).

Comparing the emic repertoire of verbs indicating sound-producing action across cultures, it is apparent, for example, that the semantic field of *okuteera* corresponds closely with *okukuba* in Luganda, and to some extent with *kupiga* in Kiswahili. *Okushungura* (“to winnow”) is probably identical in its semantic field to the verb *kuhunga* (“to winnow”) in eastern Angolan languages. In both Runyankore (Uganda) and eastern Angolan languages, the word for women’s winnowing work seems to have become the reference term for a comparable movement in music/dance. There is probably a remote historical relationship between the two verbs.

A comparison of taxonomies compiled in the manner of Paul van Thiel over a wide geographical Bantu-language area might elicit common and divergent traits which would be interesting to interpret. However, comparison would be facilitated if field-workers all arranged their taxonomies in the form of a table or diagram. Here, as in any cross-language comparisons, it is best to observe Joseph Greenberg’s rule for mass comparison of words (1966), particularly the first, which is “the sole relevance in comparison of resemblances involving both sound and meaning in specific forms” (Greenberg 1966:1).

In 1969 Maurice Djenda from the Central African Republic, then a student in Vienna, and I tried to elicit from our field trips to his home area in 1964 and 1966 the musical terminology in Mpyemō, a Bantu language of the north-western fringe of the Bantu-languages zone (cf. also Chapter III). Maurice Djenda was a native speaker of that language. The Mpyemō belong to a cluster of peoples of the Sangha River area in Congo and the Central African Republic, including the Pomo, Mpompo, Bakota, Bongili and others. These peoples are marked by a strong physical contact with ancient Pygmy inhabitants of the same area, who survive in a few pockets. According to Djenda (1966/67), from the beginning of the 19th century onwards the Mpyemō migrated along two migration routes from the south to their present habitat in the south-western corner of the Central African Republic and adjacent areas in Cameroon (east of Yokadouma).

With regard to general terminology, as is often the case in African lan-

guages, there is no generic term in Mpyemᄃ for “musical instrument.” Singing and dancing are distinguished and pitch is differentiated by “small” (“high” in English) or “big” (“low”). The verb indicating the tuning action is *-jyali*. The most important verb indicating sound production is *-bomᄃ*. It is applied to performance of the following instruments: *ajomba* (concussion rattles); *kenge* (double, flange-welded iron bell with bow grip); *kuli* (slit drum); *kembe* or *sanji* (box-resonated lamellophone with an additional calabash resonator); *mentsyan*, *menchaᄃa*, or *manja* (various xylophones); *ntumᄃ* (double-headed cylindrical drum, with three sub-categories according to size and tuning: *ᄃia*, *nyanᄃa* or *nyanᄃo ntumᄃ* and *mᄃna* or *mᄃ ntumᄃ*); *bokinda* (goblet-shaped single-headed drum with wedge-and-ring bracing); *agwᄃᄃ* (mouth-resonated musical bow), *diᄃi n’anyᄃ* (one string slung around a pole, its two ends attached to a horizontal bar which is pulled by one player; the other strikes the two parts of the string with sticks, and the sound is amplified by a resonator underneath); *aᄃᄃenden* or *mpeli* (two different names for a one-string idiochord zither or a one-string ground-bow). For aerophones the verb *-lᄃ* is applied. Instruments are the *mpyanᄃᄃ* (side-blown horn) and *efu* (end-blown single-note flutes from a papaya branch). The *ᄃkama* (plaited vessel rattle) requires the verb *-seᄃᄃᄃ*, while the *keᄃe* (stick rattle) requires *-nivo* or *-tsyᄃᄃ* to describe the performing action. There seems to be no generic name for “drum” in Mpyemᄃ.

English way of saying it	Mpyemᄃ way of saying it
musical instruments	—
singing	ajyemᄃᄃ
dancing	aᄃᄃᄃ
a song	jyemᄃi
he is tuning the <i>kembe</i> (<i>sanji</i>)	arijyali kembe (sanji)
high voice (of a woman or child)	toᄃa gwondᄃ; mᄃmᄃᄃ gwondᄃ
deep voice	ᄃᄃᄃ gwondᄃ
he is playing <i>ᄃkama</i>	ariseᄃᄃᄃ ᄃkama
she is playing <i>ajomba</i>	ariᄃᄃᄃᄃ ajomba; ariniᄃᄃᄃ ajomba
he is playing <i>kenge</i>	ariᄃᄃᄃᄃ kenᄃe
he is playing <i>kuli</i>	ariᄃᄃᄃᄃ kuli
she is playing <i>keᄃe</i>	ariniᄃᄃᄃ (vi)-keᄃe; aritsyᄃᄃᄃ (vi)-keᄃe
he is playing <i>kembe</i> (<i>sanji</i>)	ariᄃᄃᄃᄃ kembe (sanji)
he is playing <i>mentsyan</i> (<i>menchaᄃa</i> , <i>manja</i>)	ariᄃᄃᄃᄃ mentsyan (menchaᄃa, manja)

English way of saying it	Mpyemḵ way of saying it
he is playing <i>ntumḵ</i>	aribomḵ ntumḵ
he is playing <i>ḡia</i>	aribomḵ ḡia; ariduḡgi ḡia
he is playing <i>nyanḡa</i> (nyanḡḵ ntumḵ)	aribomḵ nyanḡa (nyanḡḵ ntumḵ)
he is playing <i>mḵna</i> (mḵ ntumḵ)	aribomḵ mḵna (mḵ ntumḵ)
he is playing <i>bokinda</i>	aribomḵ bokinda
he is playing <i>agwḵḡ</i>	aribomḵ agwḵḡ
he is playing <i>diḡi n'anyḵ</i>	aribomḵ diḡi n'anyḵ
he is playing <i>aḡḡendḡ</i>	aribomḵ aḡḡendḡ
he is playing <i>mpyanḡḵḵḵ</i> (<i>siḵ</i>)	arilḵ mpyanḡḵḵḵ (<i>siḵ</i>)
she is playing <i>efu</i>	arilḵ efu

Table 3. Musical terminology in Mpyemḵ (extract)

Some readers expect a translation of the verbs used for sound production. Paul van Thiel did it for his area, but to be consistent, our methodology does not permit this, for reasons discussed earlier defining cultures as “momentarily closed systems of communication.” A semantic analysis of the verbs is, in fact, only possible within the language itself. We are not gaining real information, and are even inaccurate, if we say that *-bomḵ* means basically “to strike,” and *-lḵ* means “to blow.” Actually, there is no “basic” meaning in words; the only semantic reality is the total semantic field. And here, already, there seems to be a difference between *-bomḵ* in Mpyemḵ compared to *okuteera* in Runyankore. *-bomḵ* does not include sound production in aerophones, while *okuteera* does.

It is important to understand that the Mpyemḵ categories, like those in any other taxonomy, are part of a larger reference system and can only be assessed from within that system. Here is an example from a better-known language, Kiswahili. The verb generally referring to the performance of musical instruments is *kupiga* (usually translated as “to beat,” “to strike”). It is applied not only to percussion instruments, but also to aerophones. So one says: *kupiga tarumbeta* (“to play a trumpet”). No Tanzanian musician associates this expression with any concept of “beating” or “striking” the trumpet. The joke is good for foreigners, because it works by a misunderstanding arising from translation through substitution.⁴ The reality behind the verb *kupiga* is that its semantic field transgresses the ideas “to strike,” “to beat” in English.⁵

4. Stephen R. Gumbo, the Karanga/Duma *mbira* player (recorded by Hugh Tracey in Fort Victoria in 1958), made great fun of the misunderstanding arising from translation by substitution as practiced by a “naive native.”

5. The *Standard Swahili-English Dictionary* founded on Madan (1955) says that “*piga* in the Direct Act. form has an indefinitive use,” including various actions such as performing on a trumpet.

One way for the reader to get the feel of the various categories’ inherent meanings—in spite of the language barrier—is through photographs in which the actions and their objects are shown. Similarities and differences which are difficult to express in words can become perceptible in this manner. I have therefore included illustrations showing some of the instruments listed in our Mpyemō table actually being played. The action is identified under each picture only by the appropriate text in Mpyemō (as in the right-hand column of Table 3).

Probing further into Mpyemō, Runyankore and other African musical terminology, one can lay out each classification system according to the overall segregates, categories, sub-categories and their attributes in the manner



Photo 5. *aribomō ajomba—arinivō ajomba*. Performer: Jenda, a woman of about 60 years of age. In Bigene, Nola District, Central African Republic (C.A.R.), May 1966.—Photo: author.



Photo 6. *aribomɔ kejge*. Performers: Léon Daju, about 12, and Victor Ngoma, about 6 years old. In Bigene, Nola District, C.A.R., May 1966.—Photo: author.

explained in Charles O. Frake's article first published in 1963 which is still basic reading for anyone interested in cognitive anthropology and its sub-disciplines (Frake [1963] 1968).

The operation of laying out a classification system involves isolating what are called segregates. A segregate is a "terminologically distinguished array of objects" (Frake [1963] 1968:509) for example "something to eat," or in Runyankore *engoma*. By observing contrast sets, the researcher arrives at a sub-partitioning of the segregate, as revealed by naming responses to objects.

Returning to Paul van Thiel’s 1969 article, one could tentatively present the sub-partitioning of *engoma* as follows:

	engoma		
	Engoma		engarabi
	rwabasheegu	entimbo	
Objects:	A	B	C

Figure 1. Segregates within the category *engoma* in Runyankore

This is then followed by looking out for attributes (Frake [1963] 1968:512ff.).

In Runyankore and many other Bantu languages, the stem *-ngoma* (*-ng’oma*) is both a generic term marking a segregate, and a specific term referring to one type of drum. Incidentally, *-ngoma* is not current in all the Bantu languages; for example in many languages of the “western stream,” including Mpyemō etc., it is not known. A distribution map for such an important word, if completed one day, might give us interesting historical clues about Bantu migration.

Section 2 Timing Systems

In any musical culture, concepts must exist which make it possible accurately to carry out the cooperative effort which music requires. This applies both to community music and to the interaction of individual bodily parts—voice, breath control, coordination of striking actions, etc. Throughout Africa music-making involves organized collaboration between individuals in which performers contribute complementary but not identical constituents which blend to form an integrated whole. But what are the central reference points that allow performers to create such an integrated whole?

As in speech, in music there are also learned guidelines that steer behavior, although they have mostly been learned so intensively and penetrated so deeply into the general system of behavioral patterns of an individual that in actual performance they remain largely unconscious. For instance someone who has successfully learned swimming, cycling, or skating does not constantly think about the actions by which he or she achieves the necessary balance.

John Baily has attempted to express what happens psychologically in learned processes that lead to perfection in musical performance, while most of the earlier conscious reference points have disappeared:



Photo 7. *aribomo kuli*. Performer: Léon Daju, about 12 years old. In Bigene, Nola District, C.A.R., May 1966.—Photo: author.

The development of performance skill on an instrument could be interpreted as leading to the development of a kind of audiomotor coordination (by analogy with visuomotor coordination) that allows the musician to produce immediately musical patterns that he or she either hears or experiences as auditory images. . . .

The issue is complex and one needs to take into account many factors, such as the transfer of musical skill from one instrument to another and different levels of performance encountered in the acquisition of an instrumental skill. But it is clear that what is remarkable

about musical performance is the integration of auditory and spatio-motor representation of music structure; the same pattern can be attended to by the performer both as a pattern of movement and as a pattern of sound. Auditory, kinesthetic, and visual information must all be involved in the planning and feedback control of pattern. Instead of viewing the spatiomotor component in musical cognition as a lower-level process through which auditory images are translated into sound patterns called music, it may be better to treat auditory and spatiomotor modes of musical cognition as of potentially equal importance. (Baily 1985:257)

With regard to African music, J. H. Kwabena Nketia used to say: “African musicians think in patterns.” This implies that while performing one would not



Photo 8. *arinivɔ vikeɣe—aritsyɔɔ vikeɣe*. Performers: women under the leadership of Albanie, about 20 years old. In *bandoka*, 5 km from Nola, C.A.R., May 1966.—Photo: author.



Photo 9. *aribomɔ kembe*—*aribomɔ sanji*. Performer: Mentombo, about 45 years old. In *bandoka*, 5 km from Nola, C.A.R., May 1966.—Photo: author.

analytically dissect larger patterned units into particles, just as the speakers of a language do not think about each syllable they speak or the structural, tonal and grammatical characteristics of their own sentences.

Yet, there are those, in African music and elsewhere, who are accustomed to teach others within their societies, because perhaps they are leaders of en-

sembles and therefore in need of transmitting their knowledge. Such individuals are likely to have at their disposal a repertoire of verbal references, as well as mnemonic teaching devices for the benefit of their students. An interesting question which arises in this context is to what extent any temporal notions would play a role in the teaching of African music. Therefore I have given this section the title “Timing Systems,” hinting at another dimension in the cognitive study of “rhythm.” In the early 1980s, Ruth Stone organized a lecture series at the Folklore Department of Indiana University, Bloomington, on the general theme “African dimensions of time” (see also Chapter X). This has stimulated lively discussions on “time concepts” in African music.

It may seem surprising that those words in African languages which are usually translated by the English term “time” are not normally applied to



Photo 10. *ariɓomɔ mentsyāŋ*. Performer: Pierre Ndiā, about 60 years old. In Mékara, 1 km west of Nola, C.A.R., May 1966.—Photo: Maurice Djenda.

anything musical in African cultures. Certainly, no continent-wide sampling concerning this issue has yet been undertaken, and my own samples come mostly from Bantu languages, with some data from languages of the Kwa (I.A.4) family in West Africa and the Adamawa-Eastern family (I.A.6) (as yet not thoroughly analyzed). But it is important to draw attention to this observation.

For Chicheŵa/Cinyanja, spoken in Malaŵi, eastern Zambia and central Moçambique, I discussed this matter at length with Moya Aliya Malamusi



Photo 11. *aribomō bokinda*. Performer: Aviyi, about 14 years old. In Bigene, Nola District, C.A.R., March 1966.—Photo: author.



Photo 12. *aribomɔ agwōŋ*. Performer: Antoine Ntinga, about 60 years old. In Nkwala, 7 km from Bilolo, Nola District, C.A.R., May 1966.—Photo: Maurice Djenda.

and Lidiya Malamusi during joint fieldwork in oral literature carried out in 1983 to 1989.⁶

In Chicheŵa there are two terms which can be translated by the word “time”: *nthawi* and *nyengo*. The basic meaning of *nthawi* is “extension” of time or space. *Nthawi yakwana kapena siinakwane?*—“Is there sufficient time, perhaps it is not enough?”

Nyengo on the other hand is “time” with reference to the cycle of the sun throughout the year, therefore often translated as “season.” Neither of the two terms exactly corresponds with the semantic field of the English category “time.” *Nyengo* is also often translated as “weather,” even “climate.”

With regard to “music,” Moya confirms that *nthawi* is not a word used in

6. Research projects P 4977 and P 6316 G. We gratefully acknowledge that this fieldwork was financed by the Foundation for the Advancement of Scientific Research, Vienna.



Photo 13. *arilō mpyangɔlɔ*. Performer: Gaita Nkumbɔlɔ, about 30 years old. In bandoka, 5 km west of Nola, C.A.R., May 1966.—Photo: author.

sentences describing musical matters. What then happens if in a musical group some members “don’t keep time”? How is criticism expressed in Chicheŵa? For example, if the rattle player in a band does not enter on the correct beat (if he mistakes some accentuated note for the beat)—how is he rebuked? The bandleader may say, for example: *Mukuyambira malo olakwika* (“You are beginning in the wrong place”) or *Mukulowela malo olakwika* (“You are entering in the wrong place”). And what is recommended to him? *Mudziyambira pano* (“You should begin at this place here”). *Pano* implies “the place where I stand.” In music a performer wishing to correct his partner will simultaneously strike a sound and say *pano* to tell his partner “Here, you should begin at this point.”

If the group leader needs to point out even more precisely what went wrong, he will have recourse to mnemonic syllables, the “oral notation” of African music (cf. Kubik 1969c, 1972b). I observed such instances during recording sessions with the late Daniel Kachamba in Malaŵi. The rattle player normally learns the pattern to be played in *sinjonjo* dance pieces with the syllables

ka-cha ka-cha ka-cha (*ka* standing for the accentuated up-stroke which is off-beat, *cha* for the down-stroke marking the beat). If he enters with his down-stroke on the accentuated up-stroke of the guitar, mistaking it for the beat, he may be told by a member of the group not to play *ki-chi-ka ki-chi-ka*. This is how the rattle seems to sound when the rattle player mistakenly enters in a false relation to the reference beat followed by the dancers.

In two of the pieces I recorded from the Kachamba Brothers in Blantyre, Malaŵi, in March 1967, the rattle player, Josefe Bulahamu, missed the correct entry. He was obviously disoriented by Daniel Kachamba's accentuation-patterns on the guitar.

There are also ways of correcting a rattle player who fails to conform to the expected patterns of accentuation. For example, if the rattle player, instead of playing *ka-cha ka-cha ka-cha*, i.e. up-down up-down in a clear ▲▼.▲▼.▲▼.▲▼. pattern, only plays *cha-cha-cha-cha*, i.e. without marking the accentuated up-strokes, the teacher can correct him or her as follows: *Musayimbe mbali imodzi, mudziyimba mbali ziwili* ("Don't play one side only, but you should play two sides").

This suggests that within those cycles the performers always recognize and identify "places" or "spots" (*malo*) which can be pointed to with words such as *pano* (here at this spot) or timbre-symbolizing mnemonic syllables like *ka*, *ki*, or *cha*. No time concept seems to be involved.

However, here one has to be very careful. It would be wrong to infer that in this culture area the basic concept of movement is probably "spatial" rather than "temporal." Actually it is both. The matter is complex. Locative prefixes in Chicheŵa are both spatial and temporal in meaning. *Padakali pano* can be translated "at the moment," with *pano* understood as a temporal concept. Space and time are essentially analogous in Chicheŵa/Cinyanja.

The present moment in time is also the present moment in space (where I stand, *pano*). *Apo* is nearby and *uko* is far away (over there). These categories suggest distances, indirectly applying to both space and time, because when an object is "over there" it is far away in space, but also in time: bringing it nearer means passing through space and time.

What expressions are used if a member of a musical group shows lack of coordination in performance speed—for example, if a beginner on the rattle tends to slow his beat because his arm gets tired? In this case one will say about him or her: *Amayimba mochedwa* ("He/she plays/sings in a delaying manner"; "He/she plays/sings late"). And he/she will be told: *Mudziyimba mofulumira chomwechi* ("You should play/sing as fast as that"), showing what the speed is.

In some urban styles, of course, English-language terminology abounds among musicians. But even there explicit references to "time" seem to be rare. Selective processes are evident in the choice of terms; English words are reinterpreted to fit closely with indigenous concepts. When the rattle player

in his band began to slow down, Daniel Kachamba used to say “*Waind!*” (from English: “to wind”), almost whispering to him onstage. The expression comes from “to wind up,” like winding up a hand-cranked gramophone which has lost speed. The term originated during the 1940s and 1950s in urban areas when such gramophones were found in many households. When the spring loses power, the speed and pitch level of the music also go down. The gramophone needs winding up. By analogy, the term entered the musicians’ code in dance bands who relied on records. Daniel Kachamba was known for gramophone-related terminology, referring to the speed of different dance movements in terms of so many r.p.m.’s.

In eastern Angolan languages a similar situation seems to exist with regard to the time concept (cf. Chapters V and X). In Luganda and related languages spoken in the so-called interlacustrine area of East Africa also, none of the terms and expressions I collected seem to involve an explicit “time concept” in relation to music. Most often it is something like space/time. This situation should put us on guard, cautioning us to use terms such as “timing systems,” “time line,” etc., without reservations. And yet we can state that movement organization in African music/dance cultures follows rigorous principles of timing, allowing for the intra-culturally correct placement of motional or acoustic accents, and that both universal and culture-specific methods must exist to attain these goals.

Most students of African music agree that African “rhythm” cannot be compared with the stress-oriented metrical systems of some non-African cultures. One of the recurrent factors in the foundation of African music-making is that metrical division of an acoustic event (as such probably one of the universals in dance-oriented music) is conceptualized as even and unaccented, not containing any a-priori notions of stress. Here perhaps music may be said to reflect certain characteristics of African languages. Almost any textbook on African languages points out that most are tonal, while concepts of stress, as known in English, play no role. Regarding stress, some Africanists distinguish between

- (1) dynamic accent (also called expiratory accent, pressure, intensity accent),
- (2) musical accent (also: chromatic, melodic, or tonal accent) and
- (3) temporal accent (also: quantitative or dilation accent, which refers to sound quantity) (Miehe 1983:26–7).

The English term “stress” usually refers only to dynamic accent.

According to which of these prosodic features dominates in a language, linguistics distinguishes “tone languages” from “stress languages.” In Africa the first category dominates. Diedrich Westermann and Ida Ward have stated:

In many African languages, stress such as we know it in European languages, does not exist. This is especially the case in tone languages, where correct use of pitch is of far greater importance than stress. Eu-

ropean learners of African tone languages should be very much alive to the danger of transferring their own stress habits into the new language. This is particularly easy to do, since stress is such a subjective action. (Westermann and Ward ⁵1966:115)

With specific reference to Yoruba, E. C. Rowlands has said:

It is very important to realize, however, that the distinctions we make in English between stressed and unstressed syllables do not exist in Yoruba. All syllables are approximately equally stressed regardless of *tones* they carry and we do not get any of the differences we make in English in the pronunciation of vowels and consonants according to their position in the word. (Rowlands [1969] 1980:2)

These statements can be transferred almost without alterations to the musical field. We could say that European learners of African music should be very alert to the danger of transferring their own stress habits into the alien musical language, particularly as regards metrical divisions.

From learning as a participant observer in several African cultures, from conversations with musicians and through direct observation and analysis, over the years I have isolated three basic, cross-culturally valid reference levels with regard to timing. In performance the creation of patterns which are often closely linked with speech-ideas is constantly and simultaneously related to these three levels—although in experienced musicians the process no longer involves any conscious effort. The three reference levels are

- (1) the elementary pulsation,
- (2) the reference beat with associated metrical schemes,
- (3) the cycle.

Elementary Pulsation: The Subjective Grid

Most African music that is accompanied by some regular body movement such as hand-clapping, work movement, or dance, is based on a sort of grid in the mind of the performers which can be described in English as elementary pulsation. All the participants in a musical event share it as an orientation screen.

This is the primary reference level of timing in all African music that can be danced to. Not included, therefore, are certain recitals, praise poetry, message drumming, etc.

The elementary pulsation can be thought of as a fast, infinite string of pulse-units considerably faster than anyone's heartbeat which can better be compared to the gross-pulse. In fact, the elementary pulses constitute the smallest time-units (= shortest distances between action-units) that serve musicians as a subjective reference-line in performance. There are traditions, for

example in Yoruba religious music, where the elementary pulse-line can be further sub-divided by fast drum strokes. However, these sub-divisions are transient, and therefore have no subjective orientation function for the performer. Significantly they are found particularly in those sub-Saharan cultures which have had intensive contact with North African or Arabian music.

The elementary pulse-line is unaccented and isomorphous. It need not be struck on an instrument; it can be totally silent, and merely present as a subjective awareness. And precisely for that reason it is so important in the organization of music across sub-Saharan Africa.

This inner grid is so deeply entrenched and so self-evident in most African musical cultures that it is normally not verbally expressed or discussed. Accordingly, it has remained undetected for a long time. In fact, it took a foreign observer to discover it, because of contrasting experiences of musical thought brought along from his own culture! So far as I know, A. M. Jones was first to describe it in English using the term “smallest units” (Personal communication, in London 1974).

Richard A. Waterman (1952) then was the first to stress its subjective nature in his concept of a metronome sense, which individuals develop depending on their cultural environment. As for me, I became aware of the “smallest units” as a basic reference level as a jazz player in the mid-1950s (cf. Kubik 1959). This was enhanced by Yoruba drumming lessons I took in Oshogbo, Nigeria, in August 1960 (see Chapter VII, Transcription Example I). In an article published in 1969, I first used the term “elementary pulses.” Other references to the concept include “fastest pulse” (Koetting 1970:122) or just “pulses” (Andrew Tracey), while Mantle Hood (1971) and Robert Kauffman (1980) prefer the term “density referent.” In French I have proposed “unités de pulsation” (Kubik 1969c:48, 50) and as an all-embracing term “pulsation élémentaire.”

Normally, the elementary pulsation is learned and internalized in early youth or later. Enculturation in African musical practice begins with the gradual development of this inner orientation screen and the ability of the individual to resist even the strongest disorientation effects generated by accents and offbeat phrasing. The mind then recognizes the elementary pulsation instantly in a musical performance, even if those fast pulse-units are not objectified in sound.

As an audio-psychological presence, this mental background pulsation constitutes a reference level of pulse-units of equal distance in time elapsing ad infinitum, often with enormous speed, something like this:

..... etc.

Figure 2. Elementary pulsation

In many genres of African music it runs at a speed of between 500 and 600 M.M. It has no pattern structure, as the pulses are unaccented. There is

no notion of stress. Understanding of African music actually begins with the recognition of these units as the primary element in a pulsation *ad infinitum*.

Although much research needs to be done, there are indications that the inner awareness of an elementary pulsation is intimately connected with the development of a "sense" for constant performance speed. I have observed, on many occasions in many different countries of Africa, that some learners of music within the local communities may have considerable problems with holding a constant speed. Their teachers rebuke them for this and, if that does not help, suspend them from performance. Whether there are any innate or psychological factors which would facilitate or inhibit the individual development of a "sense" for constant speed, is a research subject that has hardly been touched at all. However, I observed one case of a learner on the rattle who had a cardiac arrhythmia and had at least initially considerable problems in performing at a constant speed. Later, this was straightened out.

For the researcher in African music, a rule of thumb for identifying the elementary pulsation in a recording or a live performance is to watch out for those fast action-units that seem to constitute an uninterrupted flow. Though the elementary pulsation is not necessarily identical with "the smallest rhythmic units" in a musical piece, in practice it will be so in most cases.

In transcriptions the concept of an elementary pulsation can be visually demonstrated in various ways, such as a number or dot in cipher notation, quavers in staff notation, vertical lines crossing various types of stave, or little boxes in the TUBS (time-unit box system) developed by Philip Harland at the University of California, Los Angeles. In the 1930s, A. M. Jones introduced a kind of TUBS to his students in what was then Northern Rhodesia, using "square-ruled exercise books. Each square represents the shortest unit of time used in a piece of music and one plots the notes accordingly. If one square equals a quaver, then a crotchet will occupy two squares and so on" (Jones 1978b:24).

With regard to performance, the elementary pulsation can be defined as an inner perceptual awareness shared by all participants: dancers, musical performers and audiences. However, it is so much at the threshold of the unconscious that one is scarcely aware of it. In a performance one pays attention to the patterns, perhaps the dance steps, but not the scanning frequency of the "inner screen."

Occasionally, verbal references to the elementary pulsation have been made by African musicians, particularly with regard to dance movement. Eno-Belinga, the Cameroonian geologist, oral literature specialist and musicologist, told me that in his culture area, the Bulu of southern Cameroon, the speed of the elementary pulse-units was compared with "army ants," those fast ants forming "streets" across a path through the tropical forest. This term, Eno-Belinga said, was inspired by the fast hand movements of the Bulu dancers which coincided with the elementary pulses of the musical piece. The hand

of periodicity, because there are meeting points at regular distance between the two reference-lines.

The Reference Beat

The next level of subjective timing is the reference beat, or gross-pulse. It usually combines 2, 3 or 4, more rarely 5, units of the elementary pulsation to form larger units of reference that may serve dancers to find their steps, or a bass drum to mark the beat.

Observers have often wondered whether African musicians regularly refer their musical patterns to a beat, a gross-pulse that would go 1–2–3–4, for example. Lots of misunderstandings have arisen, rooted in two problems:

- (1) a cross-cultural perceptual problem; i.e. that Western observers inexperienced in African music sometimes cannot find the beat in what is like a stormy weather system of irregular accent sequences;
- (2) the concept of a reference beat in African music is different from the stress-incorporating beat concept in Western classical music.

Hewitt Pantaleoni (1972b, c), it seems to me, was struggling with these problems. And even James Koetting was, in a sense, victimized by the teaching methods of his Ghanaian informants, encountered during fieldwork. In an otherwise remarkable paper, Koetting (1970) tended somewhat to undervalue the importance of a beat or gross-pulse at least in some kind of West African music. On the other hand he did acknowledge the importance of the "fastest pulse" (see Chapter VII, Transcription Example III).

While the elementary pulsation constitutes the fundamental level of African musical "time" itself, another important dimension is the relation of musical patterns to larger units. I once discussed this issue with the Ghanaian musicologist Atta Annan Mensah when he was at Makerere University, Kampala (February 1972). He commented with one sentence: "All people have two feet." To him it was self-evident that people would refer any musical patterns to a beat, because everybody had two feet to stand on firm ground, to walk at a regular pace, to stamp and to dance.

Without the concept of a beat, nobody could dance in Africa. There is an abundance of terms in African languages which express it. Mostly the beat is called (in translation) "the steps." In 1969 Eno-Belinga told me that among his people, the Bulu of southern Cameroon, the term was simply "pieds de danse" (literally: dance feet). Pie-Claude Ngumu has adopted the term "pas de danse" in his French-language writings (cf. Ngumu 1975/76:18).

The word "beat" has been adopted in African musicology from jazz terminology. This did not occur by chance; it is part of "the round trip" (cf. Mensah 1971/72), or coming "home" to Africa, of African-American musical con-

cepts, which are sometimes virtual translations from African languages. Beat is one of these. In Jazz the term is understood in a sense that does not imply the stress accents on 1 and 3, as in a Western 4/4 meter. Sometimes it may appear that 2 and 4 are accented. Using the word “beat” in the jazz sense, we can apply it to African music and take it to mean the (inner) reference beat. This refers to the performer’s awareness of a gross reference-line, a regular, constantly repeated basic pulse occurring throughout a musical event. It may be objectified (as is usual in jazz) or it may be merely present as the second orientational reference level after the elementary pulsation, in the performers’ and audiences’ minds.

Like the elementary pulsation, the beat itself has no a-priori accentuation and extends ad infinitum. Psychologically, the beat seems to testify to a structuring attempt by the brain vis-à-vis the unstructured elementary pulsation. In African music, the beat can occur at every second, third, fourth or sixth pulse-unit, more rarely every fifth. This can be shown as follows:

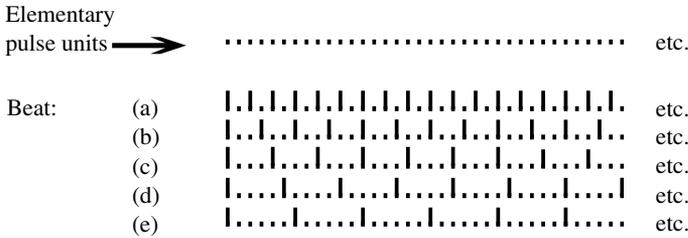


Figure 4. Elementary pulsation and beat (gross-pulse): five ways of organization

The beat may be sounded (objectified) on a single instrument, for example a bass drum; it may be marked by hand-claps, a rattle, or sometimes by a stamping of the foot, as among *litungu* (lyre) players in western Kenya, where a bell or pellet bell is attached to one leg and the musician stamps as he plays.

There are many instances in African music where the beat is hardly objectified acoustically. The performers, and of course the dancers, are aware of it, without thinking of it explicitly. This has posed a difficult problem for musicologists seeking verbal references by musicians. Such references are difficult to obtain if something functions perfectly. John Baily, in this context, has stressed that conscious knowledge of specific motor actions by a performer seems to belong to the earlier stages of learning and “reliance on the spatiomotor representation is symptomatic of imperfect mastery (lack of musicianship)” (Baily 1985:257).

Experienced performers and dancers sense the beat in the intra-culturally correct places of the musical event with imperturbable certainty. It can even be left unsounded, but the reference is maintained. With learners in African music, however, the beat reference often presents problems, and the teacher



Photo 14 a–b. Joshua Omwami, about 50 years old, performer of a *litungu* eight-string lyre from Western Kenya. Joshua's first language is Luluhya, the language of the Abaluhya people. At Kenyatta University College, near Nairobi, July 1976.—Photos: author.

may then resort to a rich repertoire of mnemonic devices to communicate the idea.

From a psychological point of view the most important characteristic of the reference beat is that, in contrast with the elementary pulsation, it contains a new element: the experience of the number. By grouping together 2, 3, 4, (sometimes) 5 or 6 units of the elementary pulsation, something extremely consequential has entered the musical process: numerical relationships, what A. M. Dauer (1966a, reprinted 1983:41) has called “the inner experience of abstract numbers” (unbenannte Zahlenerlebnisse).

Although this is not the place for reconstructing an evolutionary history of motional organization in African music, we can assume that once compound pulse-units such as 2, 3, 4 and 6 had come into the picture, a new situation emerged. As a regular marker along the time line, the beat combines a certain number of elementary pulses to form groups; but from that moment on those pulse-units can also be understood as sub-divisions of the beat (Fig. 5).

By analogy, the experience of the number is then projected from the micro- to the macro-dimension. Just as the beat is divisible, it is also multipliable. Thus, several such groups of pulse-units may coalesce to form entities that are still larger. Those recurrent sequences may be called metrical units. It is interesting to note that in African music, most metrical schemes combine four beat-units, a preference which has continued in African-American music. Rarely is there something like 3/4 time; but there are, of course, many 12-pulse cycles, often reinterpreted by Western-trained observers as 12/8 time. The larger cycles demonstrate a similar predilection. The exclusiveness of four measures per line also translates into larger compounds such as the chorus form in jazz (16 or 32 measures) and the 12-bar blues form.

In Africa, metrical schemes based on cycles other than four measures per line, e.g. three or five measures, are equally rare, but examples exist from southern Uganda (cf. Chapter IV), Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Namibia. “*Muser-evende*,” recorded from the blind *kadongo* players in southern Uganda, Livingstone Waiswa Lubogo and Gatangayire Abonyo Ntalo, is an outstanding example of a three-measure cycle, i.e. in this case spread over 36 elementary pulses. Many *amadinda* pieces in Uganda are also structured like that.

A difference between African metrical schemes and European measures is that the former do not include the notion of stress. However, both include the notion of number, and the African schemes can also be used in interlocking combinations (see Chapter I).

The habit of associating metrical schemes with notions of stress is so deeply rooted in European cultures that observers trained in Western classical music often find it difficult to dissociate the two. Consequently, at one stage of African music research (particularly during the 1970s), some Western observers reacted to the absence of a stressed meter in African music by deny-

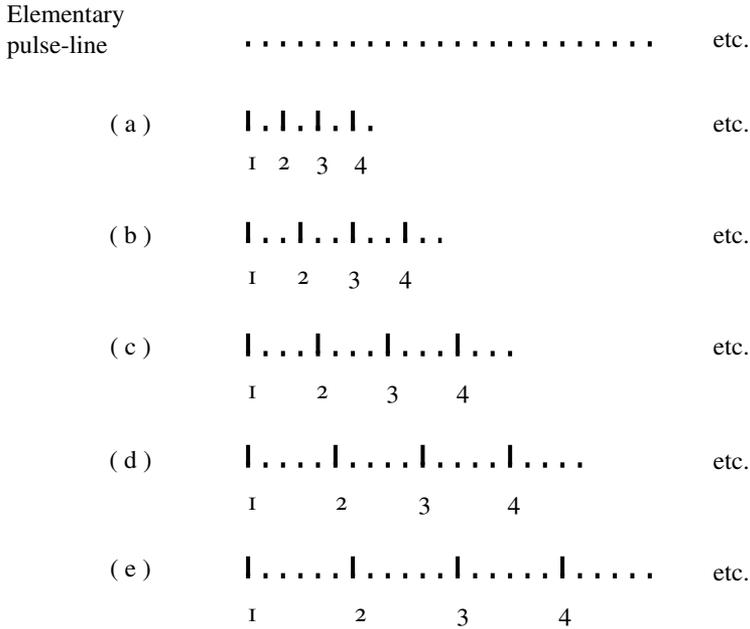


Figure 5. Basic metrical schemes in African music

ing the existence of any metrical scheme. Observers are often disoriented by the strong accentuations which may fall anywhere in the infinite series of elementary pulses, and consequently tend to underestimate this relationship. In transcriptions, bar-lines were reduced (to allow for phrasing across them), which is legitimate, and even abandoned altogether, which, however, can delete important information. Some authors grouped melodic lines according to apparent acoustic accents or their internal symmetries, which resulted in ever-changing time-signatures within a simple song. Eventually, some authors tried to fill the uncomfortable gap by assuming that the asymmetric time-line patterns, for example, represented something like a metrical scheme. In order to get their starting points, musicians in a West African percussion group do, of course, relate their individual parts to pivot points of the time-line pattern, but they do not relate to those alone.

In African music, metrical schemes are often composite. In this way several metrical schemes may operate simultaneously within a musical group so that pivot points for individual performers may be identical or may cross. There are musical forms in Africa in which the performers share a common beat, and there are others in which they do not.

Individual performers in a group may conceptualize their parts with refer-

ence to an interlocking beat, which means that two performers sitting opposite each other at a log xylophone, for example, may interlock not only their strokes, but also their beat reference, i.e. they operate from relative standpoints of subjective beat recognition. This can be a strange experience for observers coming from a different culture; even intra-culturally, a division may cut through age-groups today. In East and south-east Africa, where the interlocking beat used to be common, this combination technique is now often inaccessible to young musicians.

It can be that the dancers' beat reference also differs from that of individual performers on an instrument. Usually awareness of a relative reference beat is associated with performance groups in which several musicians either play on one and the same instrument or play sets of same-type/same-timbre instruments, such as the hourglass-shaped drums (*ng'oma*) played by Wagogo women in Tanzania. The log xylophones of southern Uganda, northern Mozambique, Malawi and other parts of Africa, with two or more performers striking the same slats, are good examples for the first case.

Players sitting opposite each other then have a different inner reference-line (Kubik 1960, 1965c). Although they may play a similar series of equally spaced notes in interlocking style, none of them would feel his own series as "syncopated" or as "afterbeats" in relation to his partner. The frequent association of an individual reference beat with the interlocking technique partly answers the question why interlocking exists in various types of African music. It is not an esoteric brain exercise, but it exists for the performers' convenience. By relating his patterns to an individual beat which interlocks by duple-division with that of his partner, a musician can comfortably play at half the speed of the total event. Thus, it is possible to produce incredibly fast music. If there are three performers, each can play at a third of the total speed. The origin of the concept of an individual beat seems to go back into Africa's remote history, and may be inherited from a principle of group work division. For example, three women standing round a mortar, pounding millet while singing a song (CD Track 3), will not relate their singing to a common beat valid for all. That would cause some participants to have to think of their strokes as offbeat or "syncopated." It would not be economical, only disturbing the work. What happens in millet pounding is simply that each woman relates her singing to her own strokes, with the pestle as the beat. So they operate each from a relative standpoint, because the other participants do the same. It is always one's partners whose strokes therefore seem to be offbeat.

The relative beat is strange to Western musicians, and Western students often have great difficulty in learning not to refer all the patterns in an ensemble to a common beat. One of A. M. Jones's lasting contributions to the study of African music is the discovery of the relative beat. He first observed it in the

organization of drumming among the -Bemba of Zambia and called it "cross rhythm" (Jones 1934:2-4). Later he referred to this process as "crossing the beats" (Jones 1954a:40).

The Cycle

We call a cycle one round of a constantly repeating structure; a recurrent series of notes or combination of patterns. It can also be defined as an entity created by the stringing together of elementary pulse-units, in combination with recurrent reference points forming the beat or gross-pulse, over the length of the basic theme of a musical piece. Cycles constitute the third level of inner references in African timing systems. They have a beginning and an end, with the two joining. Most African pieces have a cyclical form, consisting of structures of a determined length, which may be expressed by the number of elementary pulses covered. Strophic forms occasionally occur, as do compound cycles with several sections.

But characteristic of many kinds of African music are non-strophic forms, or what we call short cycles (cf. Kubik 1965c). This is a characteristic very different from what is usual in European music, and it has contributed to the stereotype of African music as "repetitive."

Short cycles are often no longer than 12 or 16 pulses. These cycles are usually repeated with variations, allowing a solo instrument (master-drum, lead-xylophone, or lead-guitar player, solo singer, etc.) to develop the theme and motifs. Like the chorus form in Jazz, the African short cycles constitute an important reference level for performers of African music, including the master musician in an ensemble, structuring his variations, "talking" to the dancers, etc.

He may temporarily ignore the cycle, playing offbeat phrases or off-cycle patterns that cross it in length and in harmonic implication, but he never loses his awareness of the cycle, always eventually returning to it.

The idea of cycles depends on notions of periodicity generated in two ways:

- (1) The elementary pulsation is grouped into recurrent numbers of units within a "slower" pulsation, the beat. In African music, rattles often carry a "middle beat" beside the "very slow" beat (at half speed of the "middle beat") carried by a bass drum. For instance the sequence of strokes of the *empunyi* drum in a Kiganda ensemble occurs at every sixth pulse, while the rattle strokes combine three pulses. Beat and elementary pulsation together combine into a structure that is repeated, thus establishing a basic cycle. Harmonic and melodic patterns can then be superimposed resulting in longer repeating units (longer cycles).

- (2) Some musical genres have a double elementary pulse-line (see Fig. 3, above), in which two lines continually meet and depart from each other. This infinite meet-and-depart pattern also establishes a cycle. The shortest cycles are congruent with metrical schemes; the larger ones are compounded. Usually the meeting point coincides with the starting point, a point ONE, followed by 2, 3 and 4.

While there can be no doubt about structural quantification in African music, it is not customary to count metrical units out loud. In formal music and dance instruction, there is no counting of time, but full patterns are taught. Counting is not necessary in learning African music, because the inner “apparatus” seems to do it much faster and more effectively. To activate and develop this ability is an unstated but primary objective in African music and dance instruction.

On the other hand I have documented occasions where loud counting took place, although in all cases it was in European languages and was probably introduced with military drill, particularly during World War I. In the *pekwo-kenu* dance-pattern performed by initiates in a totally non-military context, namely a *mukanda* (boys’ circumcision school) in north-western Zambia, the boys say: “One! Two! E yaya yaya pekwo-kenu!”⁷

Zambia was, of course, a British territory until 1953, and already A. M. Jones pointed out the impact of military music in some areas (Jones 1945). By comparison, on the other side of the border where *mukanda* is found, in Angola, nothing comparable was observed, not even in the military-inspired *kalukuta* dance (cf. Kubik 1991c:226–37).

In Nyasaland (today Malaŵi), I recorded in 1962 another instance of loud counting in one of the most swinging forms of African music ever heard, the *visekese* (music of flat reed-box rattles), performed by Tumbuka/Henga women in northern Malaŵi (cf. our record: Kubik et al. 1989a). The women began their performance by counting “One-two-eins-zwei” (the latter in German!), before the rattles (*visekese*) started on beat 1 of the metrical scheme. This musical genre would probably be qualified as “traditional music” by observers unaware of Africa’s early 20th-century music history. Clearly, the loud counting is an alien trait which was integrated into a local tradition. Yet, its appearance is of some significance to the general theory of beat perception in African music: even if there were no counting, beat 1 could easily be deduced by looking at the musical structure of the piece. Thus, the loud counting confirms the existence of ideas of periodicity and quantification.

Larger repeating entities can be created by multiplying smaller units in

7. Field notes, November 2, 1971, at Chikenge village, Kabompo District. I also made cinematographic shots of the dance movement. (Film no. 15/1971, Private Archive Kubik/Malamusi, Vienna.)



Photo 15a–b. *Visekese* performance in northern Malaŵi: Dairress Mtavale, born 1930 (right) and Eva Nkandawire (left) with their group (CD Track 4). Each of the participating women holds a flat seed-shell rattle called *chisekese*. The instruments have different sizes. In the background there is a marching drum. While the women form a circle, a female soloist dances in the center. The songs were comments on recent political events in the country. In Mlowe (on the shores of Lake Malaŵi), Rumphu District, Malaŵi, July 1967.—Photos: Maurice Djenda.

order to accommodate longer themes and text-lines. Like the smaller cycles, in which the number 4 plays a dominant role, most large cycles in African music are also conceived as divisible by 4. The most common cycles in African music embrace structures spread over 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, 24 and 32 elementary pulses. Their multiples, for example 48 pulses, are equally common.

Cycles were first described in visual terms by David Rycroft (1954:19)

and in greater detail in 1967, when Rycroft introduced a circular notation system to express the idea. Structurally, some cycles contain the possibility of “polymeter.” A 24-pulse cycle, for instance, can be internally structured by the simultaneous use of metrical units of 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 or 12.

In my transcriptions I have expressed the cyclical form in African music by putting an encircled number at the beginning of the staff, thus replacing conventional time-signatures. The cycle number indicates the number of elementary pulses contained in the cycle. When transcribing African music one can easily discover the cycle by counting the pulses in sound or cinematographic recordings.

For representing a cycle in actual notation, however, there are two options:

- (1) identifying by the cycle number the length of a repeating accompanying pattern, for example a time-line pattern with 8, 12 or 16 pulses;
- (2) identifying by the cycle number the length of the recurrent theme of the song which may be twice or four times longer, for example 16, 24, 36 or 48 pulses. A compromise is to write, for example, 4×8 , 4×12 , etc., pulses, expressing both ideas. In my earliest transcriptions of Kiganda xylophone music (1960, 1964c), I felt that to the local musicians the cycle of the individual tone-rows (*okunaga* and *okwawula* parts) was the important reference, and took the number of strokes of the tone-rows in each part as the cycle number. The use of a cycle number in Kiganda music enabled me to avoid “metrical” interpretations of the irregular, non-metrically conceptualized combining parts. This solution then proved to be generally applicable to the transcription of African music.

There are also, in some African traditions, cycles with unusual cycle numbers. Songs based on a division of the beat by five pulses, for example, often have a cycle number of 20. This occurs in some Shona music (cf. A. Tracey 1961:55) and also among the -Sena of Malaŵi and Moçambique. In the court music compositions of Buganda, “*Bakebezi bali e Kitende*” has a cycle number of $2 \times 25 = 50$ elementary pulses, and “*Agenda n’omulungi azaawa*” is $2 \times 35 = 70$ pulses long.

Until recently, little attention has been paid to a further structuring element, namely the tonal-harmonic segmentation of a cycle. In most African music, cycles are sub-divided into two, four or eight tonal-harmonic segments. Thus, a 16-pulse cycle will typically accommodate four or eight hand-claps, dance steps and tonal-harmonic progressions. For a 12-pulse or 24-pulse cycle, the segmentation will equally be 4×3 or 4×6 elementary pulses. A division by 3, i.e. into three segments, thus creating a kind of 3/4 or 6/4 time, is considered foreign to most African styles.

However, there are notable exceptions; for example in *mbira* (lamellophone) music of the -Shona of Zimbabwe studied by Andrew Tracey (1961,

1970a, 1970b) and Paul Berliner (1978), in *budongo* (lamellophone) and *em-baire* (xylophone) music of southern Uganda, etc. Typically, Waiswa Lubogo’s *budongo* song “*Muserevende*,” based on a 36-pulse cycle, is divided into three consecutive tonal segments centered on these roots:



Figure 6. Tonal segments (Soga)

Recent urban musical styles in Africa display almost exclusively the common four-segment division of cycles. However, among the Nama and Damara (speakers of a Khoisan language) in Namibia, we get forms divided into three or six segments in an urban dance style called the “Nama step.” In a typical (24-pulse cycle) piece as recorded in 1992 in the town of Khorixas from Adolf !Hanegu //Naobeb, with electric guitar, keyboard and voices,⁸ the internal segmentation was as follows:

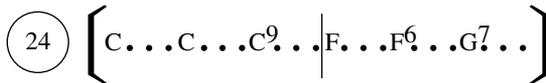


Figure 7. Tonal-harmonic segments (Nama)

Foreign observers first became aware of cyclic form in African music only when such forms began to appear in songs dressed up in Western “harmonies” provided by their instrumental accompaniment by guitars etc. In the 1950s, when “short-cycle” *kwela* records from South Africa first came on the market, the initial reaction of Westerners—including many jazz musicians—was at best ambivalent. To a jazz musician used to improvising over 16- or 32-bar themes, perhaps within an A A B A chorus form, the four- to eight-bar *kwela* themes sound like “incomplete” jazz pieces. At that time many hard-core jazz fans thought of *kwela* as a feeble attempt at the genre by young township boys who were only capable of grasping the first four bars of a tune, then improvising over those. Consequently, *kwela* had a transient impact on the European and American Pop music scene. Louis Armstrong played *Skokiaan*, and one tune, “Tom Hark,” by Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes, briefly was a hit in the streets of London (78-rpm record, Columbia DB 4109). *Kwela* was imitated by some Western dance bands with brass and reed instruments, omitting the flutes, whose correct embouchure remained a mystery. But European performers remained uncomfortable with short cycles and—lacking the *kwela*

8. S-VHS document no. 17, Namibia project Kubik/Malamusi, P 8643-SPR, October 1992.



Photo 16. Adolf !Hanegu //Naobeb and his group. The group, performing with one electric guitar and a keyboard (played by the leader, Mr. //Naobeb), regularly played in the “beer garden” where we recorded it. The vocal part was performed by the leader’s wife and some other female relatives. This music was locally considered “Damara Traditional Music.” In a township of Khorixas (in the heart of Damaraland), Namibia, November 5, 1992.—Photo: Moya A. Malamusi.

musicians’ approach towards subtle variation techniques—they soon clung to devices compensating for the boredom, such as modulating a short theme through various keys.

It took a long time for short cycles to be adopted more intensively from African and Latin American music into contemporary U.S. popular styles. Eventually in the 1970s and 1980s, Rock music began to absorb some short cyclical forms, Rhythm and Blues music perhaps even more so. Often cyclic patterns have been referred to by U.S. music critics as “ostinato.” With the more recent surge in popularity in the United States of *mbaqanga* music from South Africa, and the “Graceland” craze, the impact appeared to become more permanent.

In Latin America, for example in the music of Cuba and Venezuela, short cycles had never disappeared from local traditions of the African descendants. Since the days of slavery they were transferred to instruments such as guitars.⁹ Cyclic patterns probably also persisted in some southern U.S. styles for generations; but it seems that short harmonic cycles (as in South and Central America) did not begin to penetrate U.S. popular music until the early 1950s.

9. Cf. recordings from Venezuela by L. T. Laffer in the Barlovento Region in 1959, Phonogram Archive Vienna, rec. no. B 4771-4778.

The two sources for this were (a) Latin America and (b) South Africa, with more recent borrowings from West Africa.

In this context, the chorus form in jazz and some West African highlife music presents an interesting topic for discussion. With regard to jazz, its roots in late 19th-century European-American dance music are apparent; but looked at from a closer angle, it actually constitutes a compromise between European song forms and the African heritage of short cycles. In various New Orleans jazz themes, either of these elements may be prominent. In the 12-bar blues, something of the idea of African cycles is molded into an overall strophic form.

New clues about what might be “African” in the blues can be gained indirectly by studying reactions to the 12-bar blues form by urban African musicians, who adopted it with the “return” of jazz to Africa (cf. Mensah 1971/72). In South Africa and the southern African periphery to the north (Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malaŵi), the blues form was adopted from swing jazz in the 1940s and rock ’n’ roll in the 1950s. While there are many 12-bar blues in *kwela* music, musicians on the fringes of South African popular music, such as Daniel and Donald Kachamba, were feeling more comfortable reducing it to a 10-bar form.

Donald Kachamba’s repertoire included at least four songs which show the reduced 10-bar blues form: (a) “*Chipiloni chanjamile*,” which he learned from his brother; (b) “*Gule wina*”; (c) “*Sulule*”; and (d) “I Was a Baby.” Only one piece in his repertoire had the full 12-bar blues form, the song “*Buluzi*,” which is based on the South African *kwela* musician Lemmy Special Mabaso’s theme “4th Avenue Blues,” originally published on the LP record *Kwela with Lemmy and Other Penny Whistlers* (Gallotone, GALP 1246, side 1, item 4). Donald told me several times that he never felt totally comfortable with this song’s form, because of the extreme length of the first four bars over one chord (C C C C⁷). It is clear that many other southern African urban musicians also feel this first line is contrary to the idea of a regular division of the total cycle. In the reduced, 10-bar blues form, the first two bars over C are cut off, thus rendering a version which is closer to the idea of a cycle divided into sections of regular harmonic change.

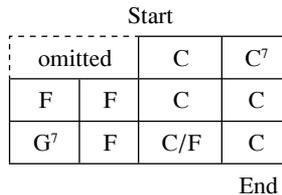


Figure 8. 10-bar blues form in Daniel and Donald Kachamba’s music of the 1960s (Each rectangle represents one 4-beat measure).

Special Techniques and Non-Linear Offbeat Phrasing

Richard A. Waterman (1952) suggested that a performer's ability to recognize and relate musical patterns to an inner beat depended on the intensity of training and the experience available in different cultures. He called this special ability the metronome sense. He also coined the term "off-beat phrasing of melodic accents," which was soon to replace the earlier notion of "syncopation" in the literature about African-American and African music. Waterman observed that the offbeat accents would always fall on a regular sub-division of the beat, dividing it by 2 or 3, thus indirectly acknowledging the elementary pulsation.

This holds true as a rule of thumb for most musical cultures in Africa, although in some traditions one also encounters the phenomenon of non-linear offbeat phrasing. This is probably speech based, and it may be generated in two different ways: (a) the temporary abandonment of both beat and elementary pulsation by an improvising musician, and (b) systematic retardation (less often anticipation) of impact points, i.e. playing one's phrases just a little bit "behind the beat." In jazz, Miles Davis was a master in this technique; Errol Garner and others also used it.

In Africa, the first type of non-linear offbeat phrasing is prevalent, for example, in some musical cultures of the Western Sudan (Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, etc.) but also elsewhere in West Africa.

In connection with the offbeat phrasing of melodic accents, one can always ask, therefore, to what extent a particular master drummer or performer of another lead instrument abandons his inner reference beat in improvisations, particularly during climaxes in a performance. Are there moments in which a lead musician, carried away by inspiration, abandons his inner bearings and allows the patterns temporarily to assume an autonomous quality according to their own internal numerical and accentual structure?

The question is a complex one, because in playing a lead instrument (in jazz and African styles) there are normally several simultaneous levels of awareness. The presence of an inner reference beat does not imply that one thinks of each note as on- or offbeat; the simultaneous presence of the elementary pulsation seems to prevent that. Waterman's metronome sense includes both levels of reference. Thus, only a beginner with a very weak inner awareness of reference level 1 (elementary pulsation) would perhaps have to do so. There is evidence that non-African performers of African or African-American music initially have particular problems with level 1. As a result they introduce a sort of dual, not multi-lateral relationship, playing offbeat only with reference to the beat—and that is virtually nothing more than syncopation. Hence also a tendency to play hastily, in uncontrolled excitement (cf. Blesh ⁴1946:18–9).

When performing African music or jazz, a balanced and simultaneous reference to all three basic levels, plus several other pivot points and the "think-

ing in patterns" (Nketia 1974), takes place. While performing, one is vaguely aware of the reference beat, the elementary pulsation, the cycle and the autonomous structure of the patterns one plays. The tensions created by making the autonomy of one's patterns more prominent are counteracted by the cohesive force of the three inner reference levels. The more one stresses overtly the autonomy of the patterns, the more the three levels are reinforced. It is a subtle "forward and backward" at the threshold between disorientation and reorientation. The patterns one weaves along the inner reference-lines hang loosely at this or that point of the beat, without endangering their accentual autonomy. They are pasted at on least one part of the inner grid, and so the performer cannot "get lost."

Departing from this normal relationship, there are, however, two instances in which the beat may be suspended by an instrumentalist:

- (1) While the other performers in the group continue to relate their patterns to what may be a common beat, at some point a master drummer or lead musician may superimpose a string of patterns in a contradictory meter, clinging to the structure of these autonomous patterns as an inner reference and temporarily abandoning the common beat of his partners and the dancing crowd. This may be associated with heightened psychical states in which the master musician creates his own temporary or transient individual beat. In such cases a five-beat metrical scheme that is superimposed and repeated over a 12- or 24-pulse cycle will stand by itself; it is no longer conceived as offbeat. The beat is temporarily abandoned, but not entirely lost, just as a person who falls into a trance in spirit possession ceremonies eventually returns to the solid ground. For the master performer this is like a takeoff: you suddenly realize you are flying on your own, drawing a gentle curve and landing safely again on the ground. I cannot think of any other analogy to explain what it feels like.¹⁰
- (2) In music with a polymetric structure, for example some West African drum ensemble music, the master drummer may change his internal beat relationship during a performance, i.e. he may temporarily abandon the visible beat of a dancer to follow the individual beat of one or other of the instrumentalists, who provide the polymetric accompaniment. The master drummer thus decides to shift between his partners' different meters, alternately hooking his perception onto pivot points of any one instrument such as the bell, rattle, or small drum, etc. In so doing he may incite the dancers also to change their beat reference, so they look at the polymetric

10. Several recordings of African music contain internal evidence that the main performer must have temporarily been in that psychological "floating" state. For example the lead guitarist in a "modern" electric guitar band of Dyula musicians from the north of the Côte d'Ivoire recorded by Mose Yotamu in December 1978 obviously "floated" (cf. recording orig. tape no. Y/B/I/1, Abteilung Musikethnologie, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin).

structure from another angle. We may refer to these practices as beat ambivalence. However, my observations of musicians and dancers—particularly along the Guinea Coast (Nigeria, Togo, Ghana and the Côte d’Ivoire)—confirm that this is done sparingly and in a controlled manner. It seems to be a prominent technique within the I.A.4. Kwa language zone, is connected with ecstatic psychological states and often occurs at climax levels in a performance.

The two phenomena described signal temporary abandonment of the performer’s own particular reference beat. The moment of abandonment may signify that the performer has switched to another individual reference beat, slower or faster than the previous one, or that he plays in “parlando” style for a transient period, without any regular metrical bearings. Such instances also occur with dance ensemble instruments whose function is mainly talking, such as the *iya-ilu* (“mother drum”) of the hourglass-shaped *dùndún* set among the Yoruba, from the moment it begins to “talk,” playing speech-patterns.

Work songs may provide the student of African music with an unusual opportunity to gain insight into beat relationships and offbeat phrasing techniques. We have examples from the Cameroon grasslands, where the relationship between melodic accents and beat over a 12-pulse cycle creates a psychological effect in listeners, which in jazz was first described as swing. The existence of such a phenomenon in African music has long been denied, perhaps because it is not a prominent feature of the musical cultures that were studied earlier, particularly those of the Guinea Coast. But swing is essential in several other African musical cultures. One of the most unforgettable experiences I had was in central Cameroon, hearing a young Tikar woman sing a work song while grinding corn at her grinding stone. I recorded this at Mēñbrā, a village about half a day’s walk from Koñ near Linté on the path to Ngambe, on February 14, 1964. (Cf. Kubik 1999a:73–78, and CD accompanying the Italian translation, Kubik 2007.)

At the time this village was remote and could only be reached on foot, so my arrival at the house was totally unexpected. As my local companion and I entered the village, we heard this song coming from the veranda of a house and found the young woman grinding her corn. At my request she repeated her song and I recorded her. The scalar pattern is highly suggestive of blues, and the movement organization suggests swing. Unfortunately, communication was almost non-existent, my companion barely speaking French, not enough to translate even simple questions for me.

There seems to be an African geographical swing belt which stretches from the western Sudan to central Cameroon and further east up to the Ingassana hills in eastern Sudan. Here and there within this belt, musical genres with a swing quality have been recorded. The *timbrh* (lamellophone) music of the



Photo 17. *Waza* horns of the Berta people in Sudan. Ten trumpets made of composite gourds are involved in this music, besides a variety of idiophones and a group of women dancers. In Uffud, southern Blue Nile Province, Sudan, November 19, 1982.—Photo: Artur Simon.

Vute of central Cameroon, neighbors of the Tikar, is another example. Further west, in Guinée, a famous recording by Gilbert Rouget of the *seron* (19-string bridge-harp) performer Mamadi Dioubate from “Malinké” ethnic group, displays qualities which remind one of boogie-woogie. (First published on MC. 20045, Musée de l’Homme, Paris, in 1952.)

At the eastern end of the Sudanic belt, in 1982 Artur Simon made stereo recordings of *waza* music among the Berta at Uffud, southern Blue Nile Province, Republic of Sudan. Ten calabash trumpets and idiophones were played. In this music one cannot help but recognize sensorimotor qualities which are highly reminiscent of jazz. Even the photographs transmit the feel of swing.

In 1977 the same struck me during a field excursion to the people who are settled in the Ingassana hills, west of the Er Roseires dam, south of Karthoum, Sudan. Lyre (*janjar*) and reed-pipe (*bal*) music and dance performances incorporate a shuffle which simply swings in a manner unknown in musical traditions south of the Sudanic belt. In one of my recordings of the *janjar* player Gambya, this is quite impressive. He began his performance late in the evening and was soon joined by young girls and women, who began to dance. During their singing they produced vocal sounds such as *gs-gsgs-gsgs* with a jive- or shuffle-type offbeat accentuation. Ingassana music shows close



Photo 18. *Jajar* (lyre) performer in the Ingassana hills, central Sudan: Khalefa, about 19 years old. This musician employs a relatively small lyre with metal strings. As is usual in this area, lyres have five strings and the tuning is pentatonic, based on perfect intervals. Disjunct pitch-lines with several fourths dominated in this player's style. In Rumeilik, Ingassana hills, central Sudan, January 27, 1977.—Photo: author.

affinities with the music of other Nilotic peoples in southern Sudan, as well as several traits which seem to be spread horizontally through the Sudanic belt.

In 1970 Paul Oliver made a significant statement with regard to West African traditions in the I.A.3 (Voltaic) language zone. He concluded that some of these musical traditions may have contributed significantly to the genesis of the blues. The I.A.3 language zone including the Grunshi people in northern Ghana, where Oliver conducted fieldwork, extends across much of Burkina Faso, the northern parts of the Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomey), Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, into eastern Mali. The Dogon are also speakers of a I.A.3 language.

Section 3 Time-Line Patterns

Research History

According to Atta Annan Mensah, the expression “time-line pattern” was coined by J. H. Kwabena Nketia during lectures at the School of Music,



Photo 19 a–b. Aspects of a *bal* performance in the Ingassana hills (CD Track 5). These pictures were taken the day after a night’s long performance. A *bal* ensemble consists of a set of single-note reed pipes, individually called (from the highest to lowest tuning): *diay*, *wɔn*, *yezə*, *aswān* and *təlyə*. This set is supplemented by a gourd rattle (*siḡara*) played by the leader. In this group the boy Karap, about 14 years old, holds it in the right hand, while in the left he blows the deep-tuned reed pipe. The deepest sound is provided by a calabash horn (*siḡr*). In the *bal*-dance, men and women are involved. This is an extremely swinging music. In Rumeilik, Ingassana Hills, south-east of Ed Damazin, Sudan, January 26, 1977.—Photo: author.



Photo 20. A Lamba performer of a two-stringed plucked lute. The Lamba, who are settled in northern Togo, are one of the peoples speaking Voltaic (I.A.3) languages (according to Joseph Greenberg's classification). This instrument has horizontal pegs and is played in picking style, using the thumb and index finger. This itinerant musician was recorded on a footpath near Atakpamé, far from his home. North of Atakpamé, Togo, January 1970.—Photo: author.

University of Ghana, Legon, possibly in the 1960s. Today this term designates certain patterns of complex structure which function as “timekeeper” (Nketia's term), and serve as a guide and orientation to performers and dancers. These patterns occur in some genres of African music and play an important role, particularly along the Guinea Coast and in west-central Africa, with narrow offshoots into the Zambezi and Ruvuma valleys of south-east Africa. The expression “time-line patterns” replaces the older term “additive patterns.”

Arthur M. Jones was the first musicologist to describe and analyze time-line patterns and their asymmetric structure (cf. Jones 1937:3). He acknowledged that in 1920 Natalie Curtis had produced the first accurate notation of the five-

stroke 12-pulse pattern in a transcription of the story song “*Shilima jiwe maji*” collected from storytellers of Moçambique (cf. Jones 1959b-II:237).

Jones obtained an “objective” transcription of time-line patterns with the aid of a transcription and notation machine, requiring the performer to tap the pattern with metal sticks on a copper plate. The machine then recorded the impulses on paper, rather like an electrocardiogram.

Other early and accurate notations of time-line patterns, such as the seven-stroke 12-pulse pattern (usually referred to in the literature as “standard pattern”), can be found in Kolinski (n.d.), based on music recorded by Melville J. Herskovits in the Fõ-speaking kingdom of Dahomey in 1938. (See also Blesh 1946: musical ex. 42.)

The five-stroke 12-pulse time-line pattern first analyzed by Jones comes from his field-research area in north-eastern Zambia (Jones 1954a). The machine transcription revealed to him the distances between the strokes and the pattern’s resulting mathematical structure. Jones then chose a suitable method for presenting it in staff notation. Below I give two of his notations of the five-stroke 12-pulse time-line pattern, which he found in the 1930s in Zambia among Tonga musicians and others.

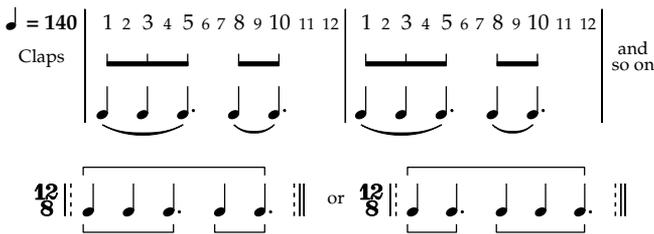


Figure 9a–b. The five-stroke 12-pulse time-line pattern as notated by A. M. Jones

In Jones’s time very few musicologists working in the field of African music seemed to doubt the universal applicability of staff notation. Eventually, however, some of Jones’s notations were criticized as implicating a strong Western bias. His critics are only partly justified. From the examples above we can deduce the following:

- (1) The claps are interpreted as durational units, because Western notation uses durational symbols.
- (2) Five strokes or claps, which are probably conceptualized as identical by performers, are represented in Jones’s notations with two different symbols: crotchet and double crotchet.¹¹

11. By comparison Kolinski in his notation used one symbol for a stroke (quaver), and another for an empty pulse (quaver rest).



Photo 21. The author with A. M. Jones in England in May 1974, in the backyard of Jones's apartment at 52, Warwick Road, London.—Photo: Mrs. Jones.

- (3) Jones identifies the patterns as a “twelve-quaver phrase” and uses a 12/8 time-signature.
- (4) He sees the patterns as sub-divided, expressing this with two parentheses under the sets of notes.
- (5) Accordingly, the pattern is seen as having two possible starting points (versions 1 and 2 in notation b).
- (6) Jones sees this pattern as “additive,” i.e. as a structure “subdivided either as $2 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3$ or, conversely, as $2 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3$ ” (Jones 1959b: Vol. 1, p. 210).

Intra-cultural evidence has confirmed points 4 and 5 as correct in the conceptualization of time-line patterns across Africa. Point 3 is correct in a sense, while points 1, 2 and 6 testify to ideas from a more or less idio-cultural Western standpoint stimulated by the structural properties of the notational system used.

I could not find in Jones's work any reference to the way this particular pattern related to the dancers' footsteps. Perhaps this was because Jones also discovered the individual or relative beat in -Bemba drumming (Jones 1934), his first great contribution to the study of African music. He therefore tended to discuss how this clap-pattern related to other claps or the individual beat of different drummers. The issue of the dancers' steps did not come into the picture. He always insisted that one should understand this pattern

and related ones "in their own right," i.e. according to their inner, "additive" structure.

Our Present Understanding

Time-line patterns are structured, short cycles of specifically spaced action-units, generating sound mostly on one pitch level. They have been called "rhythmic ostinato" (David Rycroft, in a conversation) or "a brief repeated sequence," characterized by an asymmetric inner structure, such as 5 + 7 or 7 + 9, against which the "melodic and rhythmic phrasing of other performers is juxtaposed." They are percussive patterns produced either by hand-clapping or by striking a musical instrument with penetrating sound such as a bell, high-pitched drum, the rim or the wooden body of a drum, a bottle, axe blade, calabash or percussion beam, concussion sticks (such as the Cuban "claves"), or a high-pitched xylophone key.

Although most time-line patterns are asymmetric in structure, they are always contained in an even-numbered cycle. In those forms of African music in which time-line patterns are employed, they constitute a further (fourth) reference level of timing besides the elementary pulsation, the beat and the cycle.

For curiosity one may add here that in the forest zones of southern Cameroon, Gabon and Congo, time-line patterns can even be struck on the surface of water. In 1969 I had an opportunity to document the *mòkútúk*, a percussion game with songs, in water, performed by girls of the Bulu ethnic group (southern Cameroon). *Mòkútúk* consists of songs accompanied by percussive sounds very similar to those of a drum, produced by striking or "pounding up" water. The girls stand in shallow water in the river. One of them begins to strike the five-stroke 12-pulse pattern on the surface of the water with her hands: ⑫ [x . x . . x . x . x . .]. Another girl plays a basic pattern and a third plays the "bass," pounding deeply into the water with both hands. When shoveling up a quantity of water, air is released. This gives an explosion-like sound similar to that of a drum. Listeners to the tape recordings accompanying the photographs were convinced that the girls' songs were accompanied by a drum (CD Track 6).

Time-line patterns are not a universal characteristic of the music of sub-Saharan Africa. Their geographical distribution mainly covers those parts of Africa where I.A.4 (Kwa) languages and the "western stream" of the I.A.5 (Benue-Congo) or "Bantu" languages are spoken, with offshoots into the Lower Zambezi valley and the Nyasa/Ruvuma area in south-east Africa. In most other parts of the continent, particularly in its eastern and southernmost regions, they were unknown before the mid-20th-century impact of popular music from the Congo and other parts of Africa.



Photo 22. Schoolgirls in southern Cameroon enjoying a fascinating game during Christmas holidays spent with their Bulu-speaking relatives. The game is called *m̀̀k̀̀t̀̀t̀̀k̀̀* in Bulu. A surface of water may function as a musical instrument. A time-line pattern is struck on water (CD Track 6).

The leader of this group is Bilounga Belinga Honorine (left), in the black bathing suit, about 17 years old, a relative of Martin Samuel Eno-Belinga, the well-known Cameroonian musicologist.

Similar musical “water games” are known in several parts of West Africa.

Near village M̀̀n̄̀b̄̀a, at the river Ōnl̄̀o, south of Ebolowa, Cameroon, December 1969.—Photo: author.

Although the various asymmetric patterns have characteristic distribution areas of their own across the continent and certainly do not all occur simultaneously in any region, they are structurally related to one another. Each time-line pattern has two complementary “faces,” like the two sides of a coin; where one is manifest, the other is latent, like an inaudible partner. Thus, the 12-pulse “standard” pattern may appear in a five- or seven-stroke version. The two are inverted mirror images.

The same applies to what may be called the 16-pulse “standard” pattern characteristic of southern Congo and eastern Angola (CD Track 7). Among the -Nkhumbi and -Handa of south-western Angola (Wila Province), the hand-clapped version usually has seven strokes, particularly in the *nkili* dance. In Katanga the nine-stroke version appears as a famous pattern for the “bottle” to accompany the *likembe* box-resonated lamellophone, the guitar or other instruments. In some musical cultures, the manifest “face” of a time-line pattern is struck simultaneously with the latent “face,” for example among the -Luvale/-Lwena in eastern Angola and north-western Zambia.

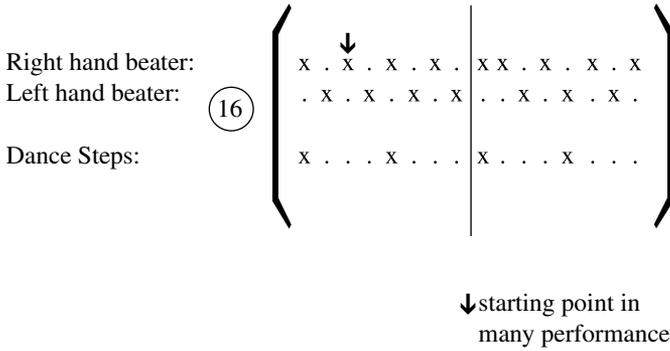


Figure 10. Luvale performance of *kachacha*¹²

From Jones's research in Zambia and his studies of Ewe music (Ghana), supplemented by the work of others, including my own, we can summarize the following facts about time-line patterns:

- (1) Most time-line patterns in African music are asymmetric, but a few have a symmetrical division of the cycle.
- (2) Time-line patterns (like other pattern in African music) are taught by means of mnemonics, which may or may not be meaningful in the semantic domain.
- (3) A structural analysis of the mnemonics reveals something about their intra-cultural conceptualization.
- (4) Across cultures the "same" time-line patterns may be conceptualized somewhat differently; this is reflected in the type of mnemonics used for teaching.
- (5) Time-line patterns are not performed in isolation. They serve as an accompaniment, for example of solo singing. Otherwise in ensemble playing they function as "timekeeper" patterns (to use Nketia's phrase). They are therefore always related to other aspects of a musical event.
- (6) Each time-line pattern has a complementary matrix. Some performers strike it silently with a fingertip on the object used for playing. In other cultures it is audibly struck (Luvale etc.). Taken together, the struck pattern and its complementary partner embody the elementary pulsation.
- (7) Although on the level of structural analysis it cannot be denied that different "distances" of strokes, combining two or three elementary pulses, are "added up" within the cycle, performers do not think of time-line patterns as "additive rhythms," consisting of, for example, 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 pulses

12. Cf. Cinéfilm documents G. Kubik, "Mukanda at Lutali River," no. 32/1979 and "Makisi at Sangombe," no. 74/1987, Zambezi and Kabompo Districts, N. W. Province. (Archived in the Abteilung Musikethnologie, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin.)

strung together. “Additive rhythms” are the analytic construction of the musicologist.

- (8) For the performer, time-line patterns exist in “their own right” (Jones 1959b:Vol. 1, p. 211) as well as in relation to the three inner reference levels of elementary pulsation, reference beat and cycle. Musicians conceive of time-line patterns as defined by their inner structure and in extended context by their relation to other patterns played in the group and to the dancers’ footsteps. The conceptualization, recognition and performance of time-line patterns is a process that simultaneously embraces several reference levels.
- (9) Time-line patterns are also related to dancers’ steps. The main steps of dancers in different cultures are hooked into a time-line pattern according to culture-specific conventions. There seem to be two standard relationships of the seven-stroke 12-pulse pattern to the dancers’ beat, depending on whether it is conceived as starting with its shorter (five-pulse) or longer (seven-pulse) sub-section.

Learning to Perform the Five-Stroke 12-Pulse Pattern

1. Mpyem̄ Conceptualization (Central African Republic)

In the 1960s I had the opportunity to undertake joint field trips with Maurice Djenda, then ethnology student from the Central African Republic. We worked together in the Upper Sangha area in 1964 and 1966 among his own ethnic group, the Mpyem̄, as well as the Pomo, the Mpompo, and two pygmy hunter-gatherer communities, the Bangombe and Bambenjele (Djenda 1969). We also visited southern Cameroon and Gabon in 1966, where we recorded Fang’ religious music. In 1967 we were appointed by the then German Africa Society of Bonn for nine months’ fieldwork in Malaŵi. Later in 1967 and 1968 we conducted joint fieldwork among the Basoga and Baganda of southern Uganda.

Maurice Djenda and I used to communicate in French, but he also taught me the beginnings of Mpyem̄, his first language, so we sometimes intermingled our French with a few expressions in Mpyem̄. At that time we often discussed issues relating to the theory of African music. We also performed together, since Maurice was a fairly good guitarist.

Mpyem̄ musical culture is characterized by multi-part singing with semi-tone shifts (cf. Chapter III), a predilection for slow-speed instrumental performances, use of instruments such as the *kembe* (box-resonated lamellophone [CD Track 8]), gourd-resonated xylophones, drums and several types of one-stringed chordophones. The prominent time-line pattern used to accompany the *kembe* and other music is the five-stroke 12-pulse pattern. According to Djenda it starts as follows:

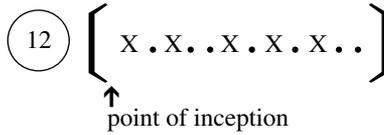


Figure 11. Five-stroke 12-pulse time-line pattern used to accompany the *kembe* lamellophone in Mpyemō music

Such patterns may be referred to as *mayo* in Mpyemō, a term which Djenda defines as follows:

On appelle *mayo* les rythmes frappés pour l’accompagnement sur des objets qui ne sont pas des instruments de musique. Ces mêmes formules peuvent être frappées des mains. Dans ce cas elles ne s’appellent plus *mayo*, mais *makeke*. (Djenda, manuscript p. 21)

In 1968 I began to practice this pattern, accompanying him on the slit drum (*kuli*). Fortunately, I possess diary notes about those early stages of my learning. From those and from memory I can now reconstruct my own process of trial and error, until I began to understand how to conceptualize time-line patterns. Apparently I was first following A. M. Jones, counting the smallest units additively. So I performed it as 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 units, thus creating a kind of 5 + 7 meter—without mentally relating my strokes to an underlying reference beat. The resulting performance was uneven in tempo and drew criticism from Maurice, of which I took written notes.

On one occasion he said that I was coming too late with my second stroke and that, consequently, I tried to catch up at the first of the following three strokes (stroke 3 in the transcription above). Literally he said, “What is not all right is the distances between the strokes.” Asked to elaborate, he said:

I cannot describe this pattern. It is in me, therefore I know it, and when it is played incorrectly, I notice it immediately.

Responding to my persistent questions, he eventually told me how the *mayo* was conceptualized against the constant dance beat, and he made a recording of this, marking the beat with vocal noises. This was the result:

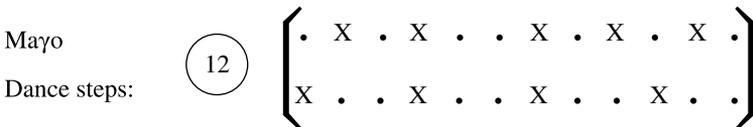


Figure 12. Conceptualization of the *mayo* time line in Mpyemō music (according to Maurice Djenda)

On another occasion Maurice declared that the Mpyem̄ “conceived of a meter” in music, but in two different types. He did not elaborate. With regard to the five-stroke 12-pulse pattern, he said:

One has to start with the section of two strokes and not with the three, otherwise one is immediately “out” when the drums join.

I also asked him whether in his opinion there was a common method to establish where the dance steps (or beat) in a specific kind of music could be found. Was there any particular instrument or sound which the dancers would use to find their steps or follow with their movements?

He said that with reference to “modern” Congo/Zairean electric guitar styles, i.e. of the late 1960s, it would be the bass guitar. When I asked him to find the dancers’ beat in the music of the Malaŵian xylophone player Zuze (whom we had recorded together in 1967), he said: “I don’t know, because I have not danced to this music.”

Then I asked: “How is it in the music of your home area, with the *mentsyāŋ* (xylophone), *kembe* (lamellophone), etc.?” He paused for a moment, then said:

I believe, here also it is the bass notes where the dancers’ beat is to be found. How should it be otherwise? Nobody can dance to the “small notes” [les petites notes] because they vary at any moment; how should one be able to dance to the “small notes”?

Finally I asked: “And how do the dance steps behave with regard to the *mayo* [time-line pattern]?” He replied:

This has no influence on the music. The *mayo* is an accompaniment; one is not guided by that pattern.

The last statement is most significant. For at least one west-central African musical culture, it contradicts the claim made by authors studying drumming in Ghana: that time-line patterns function as a primary reference level for the performance group. With regard to the dancers’ orientation, at least in Maurice Djenda’s home area, this does not seem to be the case.

Once I discussed Jones’s terminology about “divisive” and “additive” rhythms with Djenda. He did not comment on the term “additive,” but he said that for him divisive rhythms were characterized by a bipartite structure, by the fact that they were divisible by 2. He said that for a European the following phrase  was sufficient to be considered a pattern. For him, however, it was necessary to group two of these together in order to make a pattern:



Figure 13. Pattern formation according to Djenda

My interpretation (and I have put the encircled 12 in front of the notation) is that Maurice Djenda's concept of a pattern as something that can be divided into two components could be rooted in the strong awareness of the reference level of cycles, which was discussed in the previous section. According to his musical conceptualization, a phrase of only six elementary pulses obviously does not constitute a cycle; a minimum length of 12 pulses must be covered.

After our joint fieldwork in the Central African Republic, Gabon, Malaŵi and Uganda, we often played Congo/Zaire-style guitar music together while Maurice was studying in Vienna. He used to perform songs in Mpyemō and Mpompo, and some with French texts. At that stage he was strongly critical of my performance. I usually accompanied him with a time-line pattern on the rattle or "bottle." He said my major mistake in rattle playing was that I produced "noise" (*bruit*). A rattle should produce a punctuated pattern and not "molluscous noises!" He gave me only "3 marks" for my rattle playing. As to time-line patterns, he said that I played irregularly, not keeping the distance between the strokes precisely.

The following paragraphs from my 1969 diary demonstrate the point (translated from German):

Today he showed me a new piece and asked me to find a suitable time-line pattern that would go with it. This caused me considerable problems. I began with the *mayo* pattern, beginning with the section of three strokes. Maurice said, my fifth stroke always came too early.

Eventually I played it better. I asked him again and again which notes of the guitar each of my bottle strokes should coincide with. He answered that this was of no importance, and that I was making things unnecessarily complicated. The important thing was the point of entry. I should know that, and then simply continue with my pattern at a stable speed, "holding" it. Maurice often said to me in the middle of a performance: "Tiens bien!" (Hold it well!) As the entrance point for my pattern he indicated a note, which he struck in the middle of the string area with the thumb and which sounded (relatively) as an F. In the second part of his phrase I believe that he arrived in the same metrical place also on the note C. However, when I entered with my pattern at that point, he said that was wrong; it was not all the same which place one entered; it would have to be that stroke he showed me (the F). And there I should enter with the section of three strokes on the *mayo*.

2. Bassa Conceptualization (Cameroon)

In 1970 a little-known essay appeared (originally in German), entitled "Introduction to African Rhythm with Examples from the Federal Republic of Cameroon," by Pierre Emmanuel Njock, teacher of German and music at the Collège Evangélique, Libamba/Makak in Cameroon (Njock 1970). In his paper he takes songs and dances from his home area and prepares them for use

in the classroom. He describes them as “simple exercises for learning African rhythm” (Njock 1970:21). The only instruments necessary are:

- “your hands,”
- “your vocal cords,”
- “your feet,” and
- “instead of a membrane drum and a slit drum you can use your legs or anything hard enough to produce a sound (such as a table, the floor, a book, etc.).”

The reader is then invited to learn some of the songs.

Njock’s paper is a precious document with regard to the conceptualization of the five-stroke 12-pulse time-line pattern, and its relation to other instruments among the Bassa- or Mbène-speaking peoples of southern Cameroon. One is fascinated by how well Njock communicates with the novice musician even through writing. He transcribes four songs, which he used for teaching: (1) a lullaby, (2) a story song, (3) a dance song for young girls, (4) a dance song for young boys. Trained in linguistics, he then gives precise instructions about the Mbène song texts and their tonality. He even goes so far as to indicate nasals that are syllabic.

He obviously taught these four musical examples to schoolchildren many times. He tells teachers precisely how to divide a classroom and perform different patterns. The transcriptions, therefore, are tested, and I have no doubt about their accuracy, since they are also reproduced in facsimile in his paper. The words are given in phonetic script. The beat reference (symbol: \cap) is marked in the first two of his transcriptions. It is also implicated in the bar-lines.

Njock’s linguistic remarks are based on the studies of H. M. Bot ba Njock (possibly a relative), who obtained his doctorate at the Sorbonne in 1962 with a thesis on the phonological description of the Bassa (Mbène) language. His bibliography shows that he is familiar with Jones’s *Studies in African Music* (1959b), and he notates the time-line pattern in Jones’s way. However, by marking the other drum rhythms, including a kind of slow bass drum (under IV in his transcription), he leaves no doubt about where the dancers’ feet are in relation to the drum. In contrast with Maurice Djenda’s area, among the Bassa the time-line pattern seems to start with the three strokes (see Chapter VII, Transcription Example IV).

The words of the song reproduced below mean: “Give me good fish, water of the barrage!”

[lěŋ mè litós à kúm dzɛgi]
[hějá]

This text is designed to help the beginner to acquire the “rhythm” more easily. If a performer has already mastered it, he need not necessarily sing these words during the dance.

had finished he ate it all by himself, without giving a grain to his brother or comrade. Shortly afterwards he fell ill with diarrhea. His comrade began to sing: “What has hurt him is the maize!” (Personal communication, Moya A. Malamusi, August 20, 1981.)

Obviously the humorous implications of this anecdote enhance the didactic value of the pattern. But its phonetic structure is also a guide to its correct conceptualization. The syllable *cha* (which, by comparison, marks the beat in rattle mnemonics) indicates in this case beat 1 of the underlying metrical scheme, objectified by the left-hand strokes. The syllables *-te-* and *-ka-* allude to the fact that some strokes seem to have particular acoustic prominence, while the nasal sounds [m], [n] or [ŋ] coincide with either empty pulses (no strokes occurring) or strokes that are conceptualized as having no particular prominence.

Although this seems to suggest the existence of different accentuations in this pattern, I believe the distinctions are purely cognitive and do not imply a difference in motor-accent. In actual performance practice the strokes are played absolutely evenly.

The same pattern was also used by the eminent -Yao *mangolongondo* (log xylophone) performer Waisoni Msusa, a man of about thirty-five years of age in 1983, when we recorded him at Lukono village, north of Makanjila, Mangochi District. He also used mnemonic syllables for remembering and teaching the pattern. Waisoni was the unofficial head of what could be described as a xylophone school in this village on the border with Moçambique. This involves men and young boys—most outstanding among them was the (then) eight-year-old Tawina Mdala.

In a recorded interview, Waisoni revealed that there were two mnemonic patterns associated with this struck time line. The first, *ŋga-ŋga-ŋga chi-ŋga-ŋga*, had no semantic implications, while the second, *wanƙwanƙu ali koswe*, had a humorous meaning: “My husband is a rat.”

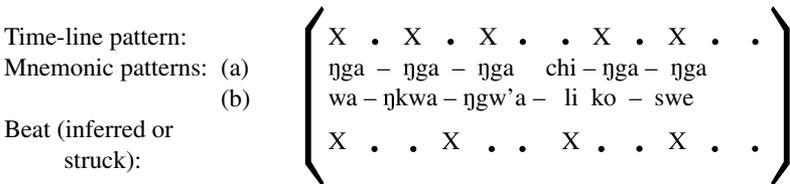


Figure 15. Mnemonics in Chiyao for the five-stroke 12-pulse pattern

Like Maŋanja mnemonics, Yao mnemonics reveal something about conceptualization of this pattern in this culture:

- (1) It is thought of as starting with the three strokes.
- (2) All strokes are conceived as equal, identical. This is expressed by the uniform, repeated syllable *ŋga* (under [a] in the transcription).



Photo 23. Yao time-line pattern struck on a percussion beam (*chindimba*) by Wire Zaidi, about 55 years old and three other performers, one a woman. This is a very old, pre-Islamic form of Yao music. It was associated with funeral gatherings in Yohanna B. Abdallah’s time (1919), but later it was played at any kind of beer party. At Chief Makanjila’s place, Mangochi District, Malaŵi, June 1967.—Photo: Maurice Djenda.

- (3) The syllable *chi* coinciding with an “empty” pulse, i.e. where no stroke occurs, is to remind the performer where the beat is. That an affricate sound is used to represent a place of the inner reference beat is not accidental: there are many other mnemonic patterns in African music where it has a similar meaning. Another consonant which often refers to the beat is the liquid sound [l] as in the syllable *-li* of the second mnemonic pattern (under [b] in the transcription).

The two different mnemonics used among the -Yao for the same pattern demonstrate a somewhat different didactic function for each. The syllabic pattern demonstrates the sound-related ideas behind the struck time-line pattern, uninhibited by verbal meaning. The verbal mnemonic pattern, on the other hand, is perhaps a much more effective teaching device, because of its humorous content. Its phonetic structure, however, includes sounds that are necessary to produce a meaningful sentence, thereby departing to a certain extent from a “pure” representation of the timbre picture of the pattern to be struck.



Photo 24a–b. A five-string *mvét* with two gourd resonators. The *mvét* is classed as a polyidiochord stick zither. It is made from a length of a raffia palm-leaf stem with the strings peeled off from its surface and led over a notched bridge. Tuning is achieved through moveable rings. The *mvét* is an instrument used by some of the greatest poets and narrators of epic poetry and history in southern Cameroon. In Yaoundé, at the road to Obala, August 1960.—Photos: author.



Photo 25. *Kö-lö-ləŋ*-based music, performed by one of Gabon’s foremost guitarists of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Nkogo Essono Martin, also called “Jovial.” In northern Gabon and southern Cameroon, among Faŋ-, Bulu- and Beti-speaking peoples, the guitar is like an “urban” successor to the *mvèt*. Not surprisingly, therefore, Nkogo Essono called his guitar by that name, and his music also shows a strong basis in the *mvèt* tradition. In Oyem, northern Gabon, January 1970.—Photo: author.

kö represents an accentuated *stroke*? David Rycroft once warned me about “accents’ as assumed by the *investigator*.” He said that

word-stresses in song-texts are likely to occur all over the place—on root syllables, or penultimate syllables, etc., depending on the language, if you consult the native speakers. (Rycroft, personal communication, 1972)

There is evidence that mnemonic syllables in what I have called “oral notation” (Kubik 1972b) communicate timbre ideas, within the limits of the sound spectrum of the object, be it iron, wood or in this case glass. In this way mnemonics fulfill a didactic purpose and show the student what kind of sound he should produce. Further, through their own structure, mnemonic patterns communicate to the student a way of thinking about musical patterns, including aspects such as the starting point, relationship to the inner reference beat, structure and (possibly) accentuation. If mistakes occur in any of the mentioned areas, the teacher immediately takes recourse in the mnemonic pattern by saying it loudly to the student.

We have come back to the term “accentuation.” Do plosives such as *p*, *k* and *t* indicate accents in African oral notation? Sonograms demonstrate that these plosives have a distinctive timbre structure, as indeed do any other

speech-sounds. One can categorize such structures on the basis of similarity, calling the *p*, *t* and *k* spectrum a “hard timbre,” and the spectrum of liquids and velar fricatives [l] and [ɣ] a “soft timbre.”

With regard to “accentuation,” we have to distinguish between

- (1) motor accentuation, which comes about through the expenditure of muscular energy. It can be objectively measured and seen in cinematographic footage;
- (2) accentuation felt by audiences, i.e. recognized through auditory perception. This is subjective and culture specific.

Mnemonic patterns such as *kō-lō-ləŋ* are (subjectively) perceived by musical trainees as symbolizing timbre and accent patterning, with the implication that these should be actively reproduced as such. Thus, for the musicologist, mnemonic patterns are a guide to cognition. With more subtlety than is possible through verbal description, they express how musicians in different cultures “think” of the patterns they play.

The late Hubert Kponton (1905–1981), Ewe musician, inventor, artist and founder of a private ethnographic museum in Lomé, Togo, provided me with an extremely revealing introduction to West African music (cf. Kubik 1986b, Kubik et al. 1989). When I visited Togo for the first time in January 1970, he gave me a long lesson in the conceptualization of time-line patterns and the instruments on which they are performed.

First he introduced me to two types of iron bells which are common in the area:

- (1) *gakókwé*¹³ (tones: --): single, flange-welded iron bell with stem-grip
- (2) *gakpāvi* (tones:--): double, flange-welded iron bell with stem-grip. Of the “guinea-type” (Vansina 1969:189, 193/4), i.e. with a smaller bell placed behind the plane of a larger one.

According to Hubert Kponton, the word *gakókwé* is composed of the following particles: *ga*, meaning “metal,” and *kó*, which is onomatopoeic and signifies the sound given by the bell when struck. *Kwé* is the same as *kó*, plus the ending vowel -é. “One can even say *gakoko* to the single bell,” he added. Therefore, the name “*gakókwé*” communicates the idea of “metal which gives sound,” “which is struck.”

He continued with an explanation of the name for the double-bell *gakpāvi*: “*Ga* means ‘metal,’ *kpā* means ‘carry on the back,’ *vi* means ‘child.’” The idea was that the larger bell with a “big voice” was carrying the smaller one with a “small voice” on its back, like a woman carrying her child.

13. Pronunciation of Ewe words vary with dialect. “*Gakókwé*” corresponds to the term “*gankogui*,” as reported in the literature from Ghana. Cf. Jones 1959b and others.

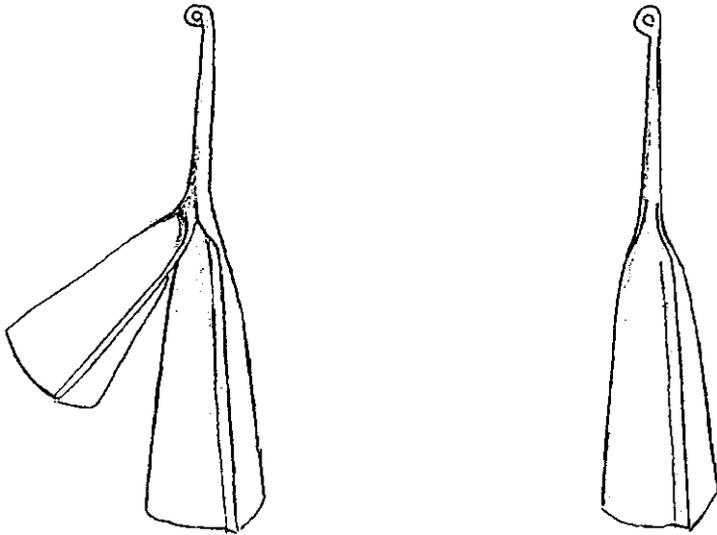


Figure 17. *gakpavi* (left) and *gakókwé* (right)

He said the most important pattern struck on the *gakókwé* was memorized with the following syllables:

time-line pattern (as struck by Kponton)	(X .	X X .	X .	X .	X X .)
mnemonic syllables ⁽¹²⁾		koŋ	kokoŋ	koŋ	koŋ	kokoŋ	

Figure 18. 12-pulse *gakókwé* pattern and mnemonics

Without the slightest hesitation, Kponton could explain the meaning of the syllables for the performer. He said: *ko* implies the idea “to strike” (producing the bell’s sound), the same syllable as in the name *gakókwé*.—And what was the meaning of the [ŋ]?—“That is the resonance!” (C’est la resonance) he added.

This testimony confirms that in Ewe culture as explained by Hubert Kponton, mnemonic syllables are not only a teaching device but a code in an oral notation system. Looking at the notation above, we can see that each stroke is represented by *ko* (the *o* is a closed vowel here), and the [ŋ] stands where the sound of the previous stroke is fading away, coinciding with an empty pulse. Thus, we have seven *ko* and five *ŋ*. This records the pattern’s hidden structure $7 + 5 = 12$ elementary pulses, and the fact that the five non-strokes represent a silent complementary pattern.

Jones used to call the pattern I have transcribed from Hubert Kponton the



Photo 26a–b. Double bell of the Guinea type among the Ana in central Togo. In Atakpamé, January 1970.—Photos: author.



Photo 27. Demonstration of the *gakókwé* single bell by a grandson of the artist and musician Hubert Kponton in his “Musée Historique et Artistique Kponton,” 19, rue Kuassibruce, Lomé, Togo. Photographed in January 1970.—Photo: author.



Photo 28. Hubert Kponton (1905–1981) with one of his instrumental inventions: the “gongophone.” It consists of a set of struck single flange-welded bells of the *gakókwé* type, mounted horizontally in chromatic tuning, reflecting the black and white keys of a piano.

Kponton said that his invention had two sources: his knowledge of the Western piano, and his enthusiasm for xylophones he saw played at the first Festival des Arts Nègres in Dakar in 1966.

At the “Musée Historique et Artistique Kponton,” 19, rue Kuassibruce, Lomé, January 1970.—Photo: author.

“standard pattern.” He devoted immense time and labor to analyzing it in his book *Studies in African Music* (1959b). It is one of the most important time-line patterns on the Guinea Coast. Staff notation communicates few of its cognitive aspects, however, and it also veils the existence of a silent complementary pattern, which musicians consciously or unconsciously “think” while performing it.

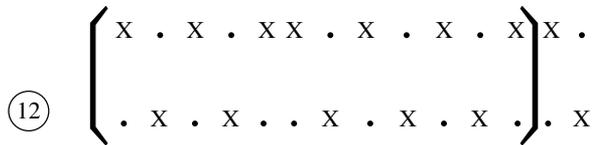
In February 1970 I also discussed this pattern in a lecture I gave in Cotonou, Dahomey (now Benin), for university students and journalists. One participant in the audience remarked that what was important in this pattern was the total movement (“le mouvement total”). The strokes going with the syllables were only one side of the pattern: the whole thing only became complete when the complementary pattern was also struck.

It was good to have this independent account. Recordings cannot reveal this fact, but cinematographic footage or observations can. Sometimes the complementary pattern is struck silently by the performer, as with the eminent singer Sosu Njakɔ, a man of about forty whom I recorded in January 1970 in the Fõ village of Sada Gbonjenji, north of Atakpamé in Togo (CD Track 10). He accompanied his songs with the “standard pattern,” holding a nail in his right hand and striking it on a beer bottle held with his left. Meanwhile his left index finger silently tapped the complementary pattern on the neck of the bottle. This was an integral part of the total action.

Strokes on the bottle
with a nail:

Silent taps with
left index finger:

Hurbert Kponton’s
mnemonic syllables
inferred:



koŋ kokuŋ koŋ koŋ kokuŋ



Figure 19 a–b. Sosu Njakɔ performing the time-line pattern. (Reproduced from color slide no. 331a, Kubik/Togo 1970)

In order to understand the motional structure of any music in Africa, one has to look at the dancers as well and see how they relate to the instrumental background. With regard to the starting point of the seven-stroke 12-pulse pattern, we have observed that Kponton's oral notation starts the pattern with the shorter 5-pulse section, $[x \cdot x \cdot x \cdot]$, while the inception point of the pattern (beat 1) falls on the last *koŋ*. This demonstrates that the internal structure of a pattern as expressed by the mnemonic syllables may be different from the pattern's relationship to the dancers' beat.

How did Sosu Njakɔ start striking the pattern in his performances? In the first recorded performance, he starts striking on the dancers' first beat, anticipating the last stroke in Kponton's mnemonic notation. If the listener correctly identifies the first stroke of the time-line pattern as beat 1 of the underlying metrical scheme, he/she will have no problem in following the song and swaying along with it to the end. If by mistake, however, the listener relates Sosu's time line to a 6/4 metrical scheme and hears his first two strokes as "crotchets," he/she will be thrown off the beat the moment Sosu Njakɔ starts singing.

In the next piece of his performance, Sosu begins the pattern with the 5-pulse section, as notated by Kponton. But this time he leaves out what is now obvious, namely where beat 1 was. One can hear the other instruments clearly marking the beat in this piece. In Sosu's music, in any case, if one has any doubts as to where the beat is in relation to the 12-pulse standard pattern, one should simply listen to the strokes of the deep-tuned calabash (*ògò*), struck with a leather whisk.

The same time-line pattern is common all along the Guinea Coast, as well as among the Yoruba and Igbo of Nigeria. In 1960 I first learned it during my drum lessons in Oshogbo at the house of Duro Ladipò and during my studies of *àlò* (Yoruba story songs) (cf. Chapter VIII). Musicians in Oshogbo used to strike it on the *kànàngó*, the smallest drum of the *dùndún* group. The drum's leather thongs were bound together to obtain a single high and penetrating stable pitch. This small hourglass-shaped drum is struck with a hooked wooden stick that has a small wooden head, which allows different modes of striking (with its surface or with the side, for example). This is the usual Yoruba oral notation:

$$\textcircled{12} \quad \left[k\textcircled{\text{ŋ}} \ k\textcircled{\text{ŋ}} \ k\textcircled{\text{ò}} \ k\textcircled{\text{ŋ}} \ k\textcircled{\text{ò}} \right]$$

Figure 21. Yoruba mnemonics

Compared with Ewe and Akan groups in Togo and Ghana, Yoruba musicians play it much more slowly. But are there any other differences in conceptualization?



Photo 30. This is the largest of the *dùndún* drum set: the *iyá-ilú* (mother drum), here performed by the chief musician of the Timi of Ede's court music. In Ede, Nigeria, August 1960.—Photo: author.



Photo 31. A *kànàngó* hourglass-shaped drum, given to me by Duro Ladipo. With the leather string loosely attached round the drum, the musician can tighten the vertical leather strings and thus raise the pitch to a stable position. Reduced to sounding one pitch, the *kànàngó* can then be used for playing *omele* (an accompanying pattern), such as the seven-stroke 12-pulse “standard” pattern.—Photo: author.



Photo 32. Learning the *kàràngó*: these young boys, photographed in the compound of the musician and playwright Duro Ladipo, are learning to “talk” on the hourglass-shaped drums. Dance patterns such as in *apala* can also be played with the same striking technique, using the bent drumsticks, hitting the skin with the knob. In Oshogbo, Nigeria, August 1963.—Photo: Helmut Hillegeist.

Following Hubert Kponton’s example, we can analyze the Yoruba syllables and identify the repertoire of symbols:

- kɔ*—indicates a stroke of one kind of timbre;
- lɔ*—indicates a stroke different in timbre, the second part of a “double stroke”;
- ŋ*—indicates the resonance or continuation of the sound after striking and (indirectly) the presence of an “empty pulse.”

In Oshogbo in 1960 and 1963, I observed that on *lɔ* the drummer sometimes struck in a “legato” manner without any marked effort, simply “snapping back” with the hooked beater, like saying: *kɔlɔ* . . . Some performers removed their beaters visibly less from the drum skin before striking *lɔ* than they did for *kɔ*, obviously because *lɔ* follows quickly. Also the *lɔ* stroke sometimes sounds “dry,” i.e. of short duration (which could explain the absence of the *ŋ* in the Yoruba oral notation).

The Yoruba mnemonics allow for an interesting structural analysis of the “standard pattern.” If one observes the recurrence of the symbols *lɔ* and *kɔ*, it is clear that the pattern must be conceptualized as consisting of two internal

sections, each starting with a $k\sigma$ and ending with $l\sigma$. Jones's earlier analysis (1954a:59), based on internal structural evidence, is therefore confirmed by emic testimony from one particular culture. Both sections of the Yoruba pattern are similar, but one is shorter by the value of one $k\sigma\eta$.

As in other oral notations, each syllabic unit has the value of one elementary pulse. But after each of the two $l\sigma$ which end one section, there is a silent action-unit which contains no stroke or mnemonic syllable. This is somewhat like a caesura, dividing the two sections.

Yoruba notation also shows how the two mirror images of the asymmetric 12-pulse "standard pattern"—the seven-stroke and the five-stroke versions—are related across cultures. We can obtain the five-stroke version described in the previous section either by writing out the non-strokes in the Yoruba pattern, as we already did with the Ewe version, or by subtracting the two $l\sigma$ from the mnemonic pattern. If one disregards the η values and takes all the remaining $k\sigma$ together, they form the five-stroke, 12-pulse pattern, namely:

$$(12) \quad k\sigma . k\sigma . k\sigma . . k\sigma . k\sigma . .$$

Figure 22. Reduced Yoruba mnemonics

The presence of two different notational symbols for the strokes of the Yoruba rendering of the "standard pattern," and the fact that $l\sigma$ also symbolizes strokes which can be left out, suggests that somewhere in the musicians' mind the five-stroke version is also present as a backup.

With regard to beat relationships, the Yoruba version is similar to that seen among the Fõ and Ewe. The decisive geographical border seems to be the Niger River. East of the Niger things tend to be different. Among the Igbo (I.A.4 Kwa language family) and the large group of Benue-Congo speakers (I.A.5) from eastern Nigeria through western Cameroon, down to southern Congo, eastern Angola and northern Zambia, where the 12-pulse standard pattern is known, there is a tendency to relate it to the dancers' beat in a manner different from that shown in Figure 23 (Sosu), namely:

$$(12) \quad \left(\begin{array}{cccccccccccc} X & . & X & . & X & . & X & X & . & X & . & X \\ X & . & . & X & . & . & X & . & . & X & . & . \end{array} \right)$$

Figure 23. A prevalent "Benue-Congo" relationship of the 12-pulse "standard pattern" to the dancers' steps

From the analysis of Ewe and Yoruba oral notation we have also learned that mnemonic syllables for the same time-line pattern are not necessarily

cross-culturally identical, although within one culturally homogeneous community they may function as a reliable code for communication between musicians. Variation across cultures seems to be generated by several factors:

- (1) language-based differences in conceptualization;
- (2) processes of natural divergence of tradition in communities that have lived in relative isolation from one another for a long time;
- (3) differences in the phonetic repertoire of the languages;
- (4) timbre differences of the objects used for the performance of time-line patterns in different cultures.

The importance of points (3) and (4) is demonstrated by the mnemonic syllables for the same "standard pattern" which I obtained from a Ndob speaker from Bamenda during a lecture I gave at Buea, western Cameroon, on November 24, 1969. This person from the audience told me that in his area around Bamenda the pattern was taught with the syllables: ⑫ *kɔ kɔ kɔɣɔ kɔ kɔɣɔ*. He added that normally it was struck on a slit drum.

This is what probably accounts for the absence in this notation of the nasal [ŋ], which otherwise symbolizes the duration of a sound. On a slit drum the sound fades away faster than on a bell. In the Ndob mnemonic pattern the bipartite structure of the "standard pattern" is also symbolized with 7- and 5-pulse sections. While *kɔ* marks the five strokes which form the "backbone," *ɣɔ* occurs where *lɔ* is found in the Yoruba version, expressing a somewhat different timbre.

However, this phonetic variation may not necessarily mean that the type of stroke in Bamenda is intrinsically different from the Yoruba. It could be the result of a different phonetic repertoire in the two languages. The velar fricative [ɣ] is not a feature of Yoruba phonetics. In attempting to distinguish between cultures, one must distinguish between cognitively significant variation and one that is imposed by language.

To what extent is the "code" for the oral notation of African music—and this includes not only time-line patterns but patterns of melody and timbre—identical over wide geographical areas? Considerable comparative research will have to be carried out to find a reliable answer to this question. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that in its pure form, the "code" may be better preserved in the "nonsense syllables" (as they used to be called in the earlier literature), i.e. syllabic patterns without verbal meaning, than in "verbal mnemonics." In the latter, the need for intelligible sentences or phrases doubtless has some influence on the choice of syllables and sounds representing the strokes.

And yet, even our small sample seems to ascertain that specific speech-sounds have similar, even identical symbolism as a notational code for African music within the I.A.4 and I.A.5 language areas, if not across wider areas of sub-Saharan Africa. Plosive sounds, [k], [p] and [t], symbolize a "hard" timbre,

whatever this may imply in terms of perceptually detected or motor-executed accentuation; [l] and [ɥ] refer to a “soft” timbre of strokes, marking those strokes that could be phrased legato, and which, in auditory perception, may appear to be less accented. Nasals [m], [n] [ŋ] imply a “muted” timbre, or marking an “empty pulse,” where no strokes occur.

The palato-alveolar fricative [ʃ] (in English-speaking Africa often written /sh/, in Portuguese-speaking areas /x/ and alternatively the affricate sound [tʃ]) is often found in the oral notation of rattle-patterns. The affricate sound [tʃ] (or *ch* in many orthographies) usually indicates the place of the beat, thus showing the musical trainee how to relate patterns to the dance beat.

The nasal [ŋ] seems to have the most specific function among the three nasal consonants. It symbolizes

- (1) duration of sound, in this case immediately following a syllable which symbolizes a stroke such as *ko*, *kɔ* or *kõ*;
- (2) an “empty pulse” where no stroke occurs, sometimes coinciding with an unobjectified first beat of a metrical scheme, as demonstrated in the chapter on Yoruba story songs (cf. Chapter VIII);
- (3) possibly, inaudible complementary movements such as tapping with a fingertip (as by the Fõ singer Sosu Njakõ); and
- (4) if followed by another consonant, for example as in *ŋga* or *ŋgo*—without the nasal being syllabic—the resulting syllable indicates a stroke with a clear and not harsh timbre, for example the sound of a note on a log xylophone.

Chapter VII

African Music and Auditory Perception

Sections 1 and 2 of this chapter are devoted to the psychology of auditory perception and to cross-cultural aspects of the cognitive study of music in Africa. This is connected with the larger areas of cross-cultural psychology and the psychology of perception. While Section 1 is devoted to understanding auditory perception in situations of culture contact, Section 2 deals with a universal audio-psychological phenomenon of which certain African musical cultures have made unprecedented use in compositional techniques.

With these two contributions I wish to promote a dialogue between the neighboring disciplines of ethnomusicology and the psychology of music, on the one hand, as well as the general field of cross-cultural psychology on the other. Such a dialogue is overdue, and it may help to remove shortcomings:

- (1) a tendency of the psychology of music towards an overly Western idio-cultural bias (cf. Baily 1985:258);
- (2) a tendency of cross-cultural psychology to ignore the auditory dimension as a highly relevant research subject, particularly in Africa (although important studies have been made in visual perception) (cf. Mundy-Castle 1966:102–31; Kanizsa 1980);
- (3) a tendency in ethnomusicology, not yet universally remedied, towards paying too little attention to problems of perception and cognition, while focusing either on the assessment of musical form and structure, or on music's socio-cultural context.

Section 1

Focus on Cross-Cultural Comprehension: Motor-Accents, Reference Beat and Metrical Inversion

All music provokes audience reactions, intra-culturally and cross-culturally. What kind of reactions it provokes is both culture specific and personality dependent. People react (a) as adherents to a cultural group, and (b) also as individuals with a particular configuration of reaction patterns. The differences in reactions embrace all levels of understanding, from the emotional response of a person to a musical performance, up to learned behavior in perception and recognition.

It took musicologists a long time to discover this. Only recently have ethnomusicologists become increasingly aware of culturally determined perceptual sets. Characteristically it is a part of any culture's enculturation program to cherish the illusion of a universal validity of one's culture-specific thought categories, communication symbols and societal norms. Discovering cultural relativity (cf. Herskovits 1972) is not easy. There is a natural resistance to the insight that one's own cherished system is not necessarily the only one that works. To discover this may come about through culture shock, i.e. through a personal, often painful cross-cultural experience. Nevertheless, Western cultures are beginning to teach their own relativity, and this is creating a novel situation whose outcome remains to be seen.

Cultural Determinants

In the previous chapter we noted that elementary pulsation and the length of a cycle in African music can be determined "objectively," through methods such as the mechanical transcription of drumming or frame-by-frame evaluation of cinematographic footage. One can easily discover the fastest regular pulse-line and notate it on graph paper, and one can isolate repeating sequences that determine the cycle.

On the other hand, the second level of reference in African timing systems, namely the reference beat, is connected with a metrical structure and is subjective. No measuring device such as Jones's transcription machine or even computer transcription could ascertain where a performer in a certain place conceptualizes beat 1 of a cycle, i.e. the inception of a subjective line of reference points.

This holds true for any culture. Although it may be self-evident to audiences within one particular musical culture where beat 1 of a cycle is, therefore making any verbal references superfluous, the researcher has to find clues. In Western musical notation the subjective element is expressed through devices such as the combining of certain notes as quavers or semiquavers, and by the bar-line, which marks what adherents to one culture perceive as the first beat in a metrical scheme.

With a little willpower it is possible to overrule one's conditioned reactions and invert motifs or themes from classical European music so as to hear them in odd relationships to an inner beat. Actually there is evidence from South Africa that urban musicians have quite often metrically inverted and reinterpreted European (Boer?) "folk" melodies to suit their own schema of beat and offbeat accents.

Numerical patterned structures are probably innate in our human perceptual apparatus; that they are projected on sonic stimuli is universal. What is culturally determined is the manner in which these inner reference structures are

hooked onto the auditory stimuli—where the listener believes to recognize particular bearings in the mass of an auditory perceptual input. Listening to the music of an unfamiliar culture, an individual may either get totally disoriented or feel his or her bearings in the “wrong” place from the standpoint of that culture, for example one or two time-units ahead or behind the inception point of locally acknowledged metrical schemes. Relativistic pivot points also determine the cross-cultural perception of tonal-harmonic structures.

Motor-Accents on Up-Strokes?

An early statement on African music by the eminent scholar Erich Moritz von Hornbostel in his paper “African Negro Music” (1928) points to cultural relativity in the recognition of metrical schemes. The short paragraph in which he advances a theory of “African rhythm” has been reprinted again and again in the literature, and almost everyone has tried to interpret it. Klaus Wachsmann once suggested that I too should comment on Hornbostel’s theory. This is the famous paragraph:

African rhythm is ultimately founded on drumming. Drumming can be replaced by hand-clapping or the xylophone; what really matters is the act of beating; and only from this point can African rhythms be understood. Each single beating movement is again twofold: the muscles are strained and released, the hand is lifted and dropped. Only the second phase is stressed acoustically; but the first inaudible one has the motor accent, as it were, which consists in the straining of the muscles. This implies an essential contrast between our rhythmic conception and the African’s; we proceed from hearing, they from motion; we separate the two phases by a bar-line, and commence the metrical unity, the bar, with the acoustically stressed time-unit; to them, the beginning of the movement, the arsis, is at the same time the beginning of the rhythmical figure; up-beats are unknown to them. . . . To us the simple succession of beats ♩ appears as syncopated, because we only attend to its acoustical aspect. In order to understand African rhythms as they really are, therefore, we must thoroughly change our attitude; and in order to write them down adequately we must place the bar-line before the rest or the up-beat . . . the elementary form of African 3/4 rhythm is not ♩ but ♩̣ (Hornbostel 1928:52).

Hornbostel’s idea of an essential, even innate, difference between Western and African perception of “rhythm” is based on worthwhile observations but an incorrect conclusion, leading him to create opposites. His observations have been corroborated, at least in part, by independent observers; but the conclusion that Westerners tend to “proceed from hearing” and Africans “from mo-

tion” not only generalizes on the basis of an alleged contrast that has never been defined, but also clings to stereotypes.

In reality, in performing African music one proceeds from both hearing and motion, to use Hornbostel’s terminology—as anyone who has ever tried to learn the correct timbre-sequences of rattle strokes or of a drum pattern such as *baakisimba* in Buganda will know.

And yet, we should be fair to Hornbostel. What was it that he observed?

It is the second half of his paragraph that has given rise to the most varied interpretations and, possibly, misunderstandings. First, one has to realize that Hornbostel’s article is probably an English translation of an original German manuscript. I believe that the key word “up-beats,” not common in English, is a translation of the German term *leichte Takteile*, or even *Auftakt* (in the singular). *Auftakt* is a “weak” note, falling on an “unstressed” beat, preceding a bar. From here the melody proceeds upwards into the stressed main beat. Physically, *Auftakt* is something like the concentrated assembling of mental or even muscular energy, getting ready for the “attack” on beat 1.

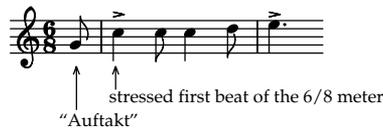


Figure 24. “*Auftakt*” in European pre-accentuated meter

Most musicologists will agree that there is no concept of “weak parts of the measure” (*leichte Takteile*), let alone of *Auftakt*, in African music. In African music, this is inconceivable as motor behavior. If one played the above example to African musicians without letting the subject see the performer’s movements—simply presenting it as a sonic pattern—the first quaver (G) would be perceived as having the same stress as the following crotchet (C): I predict that African musicians who were uninitiated into Western music and the Western tonal system might even regroup the phrase in this manner:



Figure 25. Evenly accented distribution of the same phrase

But we are dealing here with conditioning of perception, with cultural learning and relearning, nothing innate dividing human perception.

It is also necessary to examine the observational basis of Hornbostel’s statements. He never traveled to Africa, but I believe he must have directly

observed the performance of some African or African-American musicians, because his “inaudible stress theory” could only have been deduced from visual observation of musicians’ actions. In Hornbostel’s day, African musicians did occasionally perform in variety shows and other contexts in Europe. In the 1920s Josephine Baker appeared in Paris with African assistants. On October 9, 1929, 30-year-old ‘Abd ur Rahmân Silla, *balafõ* (xylophone) player of the Susu ethnic group Conakry, Guinée, was recorded in Vienna by the Phonogram Archive (shellac discs nos. 3268–3271). The notes to the recording say that he and his company, Mamadú Sow, had been traveling in Europe since March 1929. That was after the appearance of Hornbostel’s article and was probably not an isolated case. Considering Hornbostel’s urge to observe and learn, he would not have missed any opportunity to see such musicians in close quarters.

His statements, therefore, can probably be best understood as a reaction to first personal encounters with African and/or African-American musicians visiting Europe, by someone whose generation was still rooted deeply in classical Western music. This was long before the massive impact of African-American music on young Europeans, i.e. after World War II.

For Hornbostel in his time, the performance behavior of those visiting musicians and the challenge of relating their accentuations to conventional Western ideas of accent and meter must have been an experience of culture shock. He noticed that there was something like total organization of movement and sound; motional patterns were an integrated part of the sound-producing action. He then observed that motor-accented notes seemed to occur particularly on up-strokes. Perhaps he saw jazz musicians or American singers striking or clapping on beats 2 and 4 of a 4/4 metrical scheme, lifting the hands or beaters on 1 and 3. His short notation example inserted in the text could suggest that this was what puzzled him.

Before the impact of jazz and rock music, the customary stress in European music was on beats 1 and 3 of a 4/4 metrical scheme. That it could be otherwise had all the excitement of novelty in the Charleston and foxtrot craze of the 1920s. Hornbostel must have been puzzled that those musicians apparently lifted the beat. An excellent observer, he concluded that the action of lifting the arm had a kinetic meaning of its own and that it was part of an all-embracing sound-and-motion concept, with some parts of the total action resulting in sound and others being silent. Such an organization of movement was not to be compared to “syncopation” in Western music. Thus, he first threw doubt on the concept that jazz and any other African-American and African styles were “syncopated music.”

But since Hornbostel refers explicitly to the xylophone (in the second sentence) besides hand-clapping, a Senegambian or Guinean *jeli* (“griot” of Mandi background) could have been his second observational source. In Guinée performers of the *balafõ* often wear copper bangles on their wrists, pro-

ducing a constant sound when lifting their arms before striking the xylophone with the beaters.¹ If Hornbostel had indeed observed such performers, even without the bangles, his idea that those musicians did not think in terms of “up-beats” (in the sense of “weak parts” of the meter) makes sense.

To express this idea, however, he makes an untenable proposition. He suggests placing bar-lines at the inception of the motor action, i.e. before a performer lifts his hand or beaters. Anyone familiar with African music will object to this proposal. It would only work in those few instances where performers clap on beats 2 and 4 of a metrical scheme, for example, with a silent motor action of opening the hands on beats 1 and 3—as vividly demonstrated by Herero women in Namibia in their *oucina* dance songs, which we recorded in 1991. Here, then, the bar-line could be placed before the “rest.”

However, generally following Hornbostel’s suggestion would mean neglecting that musicians operate from an internal reference grid that accommodates both motor and sound accents: (a) the elementary pulsation, (b) the ground-beat (dance steps) and (c) the cycle. Contrary to the ever-changing configurations of motor-accents in a performance, the beat is a firm reference level. However, it may not necessarily be where the observer thinks it is. Kinetic organization of performance and subjective reference levels are two different things.

The most thorough analysis of Hornbostel’s ideas is found in an early article by John Blacking. Pointing to the fact that music also proceeds from motion in cultures other than African, Blacking states that “a European pianist must prepare a chord both mentally and physically before producing the musical sound. In both cases the performer is a step ahead of his audience; in a sense the pianist proceeds as much from motion as the African drummer” (Blacking 1955b:15).

He then proposes a more refined formulation of Hornbostel’s basic idea: “The contrast which Hornbostel suggests is therefore not so much one of procedure as of attitude towards movements and the production of musical sounds” (Blacking 1955:15). Referring to “stressed up-beats,” Blacking gives various examples from his own observations in southern Africa. In Johannesburg “jive” dancing of the 1950s, he notes that the lifting of parts of the body coincided with beats 1 and 3 of a 4/4 metrical scheme, while beats 2 and 4 carried the accent of dropping the body. (p. 16). Such behavior was, of course, imported with American swing dance music and, in this particular case, jitterbug dancing.

Blacking mentions a practice he noticed among some southern African choirmasters, namely that of lifting the baton on beats 1 and 3 and dropping

1. Cf. Gilbert Rouget’s recordings of Sidi Mamadi Dibaté, Sidi Karaman and Sidi Moussa at Kankan, Guinée, 1952, record no. MC.20.045. *Musique d’Afrique Occidentale*, Musée de l’Homme, Paris.

it on beats 2 and 4 of the metrical scheme. His observations are based on the Third African Eisteddfod Choir Festival in Bulawayo, June 1955:

All the choirs had to sing set pieces of European composed music, arranged either for part- or unison-singing. These songs were conducted by the African teachers who coached the choirs: I was astonished to see that several of them gave vigorous up-beats on all strong beats where I should have given a down-beat. . . . I discussed the matter with some African teachers afterwards, and they said that they definitely felt the up-beat to be the strong beat. (Blacking 1955:19–20)

Lifting the beater on 1 and 3 (often silently) and striking down on 2 and 4 was a standard practice in the jazz-drum accompaniment of *mbaqanga* music in South Africa in the 1970s. Kheswa Zepkhosa, who was permanently employed in the Gallotone Studios in Johannesburg, is a good example. He used to accompany any *mbaqanga* groups brought in for recordings, for example “*Izintombi zo Moya*” (“The Girls of the Wind”), in that manner. (Notes taken during a visit of the Gallotone Studios, December 3, 1975.)

Apart from jazz influences, Hornbostel’s observations may apply to several African traditions. In 1964 I observed the *kponingbo* dance among the Azande and noted that the metal hand bells (*nzoro*) were actually “thrown” upwards, so their sound occurred on beats 2 and 4 of the metrical scheme. It seems to me that motor and acoustic accents on up-strokes (lifting the hand, beater, etc.) are found particularly in those African musical cultures having a tendency towards relatively little polymeter, and an absence of asymmetric time-line patterns etc. Regionally, South Africa, some African-American cultures in the United States (especially in gospel singing), some musical cultures of Nilo-Saharan language groups in Africa and occasionally those bordering on them (such as the Adamawa-Eastern sub-division [I.A.6] of the Niger-Congo language family) seem to fall into this picture. The Azande present a borderline case.

To summarize, we can say that Hornbostel was perhaps the first to take note of a fact which in later years my good friend Ben Aning in Legon used to stress on many occasions: “African music is not sound alone.” Today we are well aware that there are sonic and non-sonic parts of a movement pattern, both forming a structured whole.

Mnemonic Codes in *Kwela* Guitar and Rattle Patterns

With regard to Hornbostel’s statements, one must clearly distinguish between motor-accents and the inner reference beat. A bar-line, if anything, should mark the inception point of the inner beat, as felt by the performer; it should not follow motor or other accents. While in some performance styles up-strokes may have motor-accents, in most African traditions the in-

ner beat remains associated with down-strokes, however much this fact may be veiled by a general tendency to underaccentuate beat 1 in a four-beat metrical scheme.

Rattle patterns and their conceptualization in southern African traditions such as *kwela* provide an instructive example. The rattle is a beat marker. Here I am drawing on the experiences I have had since 1974 as a performer on guitar, rattle and clarinet in Donald Kachamba's *Kwela* Band.

(a) "Jive" ⑧

Mnemonics: ka - cha ka - cha ka - cha ka - cha ka -

▲ | ▼ ▲ ▼ etc.

(b) *Sinjonjo* ⑫

Mnemonics: ka - cha ka - cha ka - cha ka - cha

▲ | ▼ ▲ ▼ etc.

Figure 26a–b. Rattle beat in “jive” and *sinjonjo*

The rattle patterns are learned by thinking of the syllables *ka-cha ka-cha* etc. This code indicates where the motor-accent is—namely on *ka*, which goes with an up-stroke (▲); and where the reference beat is felt—namely on *cha*, which goes with a down-stroke (▼).

Similar mnemonic syllables are used for the most common guitar patterns in this music. Regardless of accentuations and left-out strokes, the basic movement of the right hand (holding the plectrum) is always a constant up-down-up-down at the rate of the elementary pulsation, and in all patterns beat 1 occurs on a down-stroke.

In the examples below I have separated two structural levels with a short horizontal line. The first level constitutes “objectively” discernible actions, such as hand/plectrum movements, methods of dampening a sound, or finger positions on the guitar, all of which can be either heard (in the recordings) or seen (in cinematographic footage). The second level is subjective; it embraces elements such as the inner reference beat, which cannot be directly deduced from actions on the guitar (although it can sometimes be inferred from barely visible compensatory action by other body parts), and mnemonic syllables, which are internalized and not spoken during performance. On the borderline between the two levels are motor-accents, which can be seen and which are also felt.

Figure 27 will give readers an idea of the complexities of sound/movement organization and its associated concepts in just one African instrumental performance style.

(a) jive, “twist” etc.

Elementary pulsation: 350 M.M.

Felt accents: \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright

Movement with plectrum: \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle

Lifting off fingers of left hand to “dampen” sound: 0 0

Guitar chords:  etc.

Mnemonics: Ke nje nge nje ke nje nge nje ke

Inner reference beat: 1 2 3 4

(b) *sinjonjo*

Elementary pulsation: 520 M.M.

Felt accents: \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright \blacktriangledown \triangleright

Movement with plectrum: \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle

Lifting off fingers of left hand to “dampen” sound: 0 0

Guitar chords:  etc.

Mnemonics: Ke nje nge nje nge ke nje nge nje nge ke

Inner reference beat: 1 2 3 4

(c) double-step (*simanje-manje*)

Elementary pulsation: 520 M.M.

Felt accents: \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle

Movement with plectrum: \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle \blacktriangledown \blacktriangle

Dampening the sound with the ball of the right hand: 0 0

Guitar chords:  etc.

Mnemonics: Ke nje nge nge nje ng ke nje nge nge nje ng ke nje

Inner reference beat: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Figure 27a–c. Guitar patterns and their teaching mnemonics in Donald Kachamba’s *Kwela* Band (Five-string guitar. Tuning “LG.” Capotasto [capo] at third fret, if performing with flute in G)

Motor production and (expected) sonic result form an integrated whole in this music. Horizontally, there are several action and/or reference levels. At the base there is the elementary pulsation, objectified by the speed of the right-hand movement with the plectrum. Next there is the inner reference beat, marked evenly as 1, 2, 3, 4 in the transcriptions. There are also the mnemonic syllables, which describe the total motor- and sound-producing action. In this connection there are the accents “felt” by the performer, symbolized by the syllable *ke*. Then there is the left-hand movement, in which the fingers are periodically lifted just before *ke*, thus dampening the sound of the guitar, while the plectrum goes on without interruption. In *simanje-manje* the guitar strings are dampened with the right hand.

The plectrum may also strike different areas of the strings, forming further patterns. For example, in *simanje-manje*, musicians often emphasize the bass

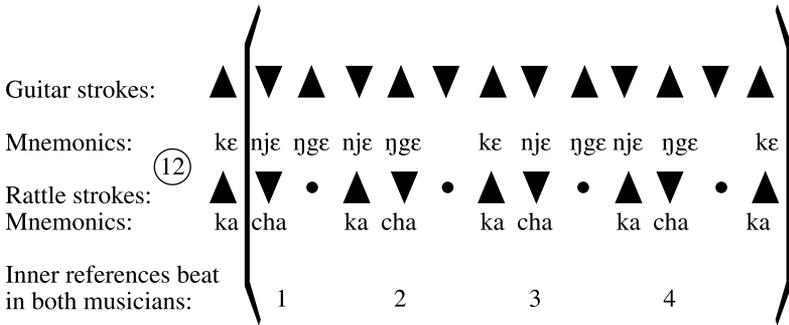


Figure 29. Duple/triple movement organization of *sinjonjo* and offbeat accents expressed by mnemonics

touched with the side of the right hand (Fig. 27c). In the *simanje-manje* mnemonic pattern, this action is symbolized by reducing a faintly pronounced *ηge* to its consonantal components, *ηg*, suppressing the vowel. The vowel is dropped, because sound is to be eliminated. Sometimes the syllable is left out completely.

The Phenomenon of Metrical Inversion

Some observers have called *kwela* “Europeanized” or “hybrid”—but African performers from the region who also play “traditional” music, such as Donald Kachamba,² do not experience any form of “code-switching” when playing one or the other genre. In the guitar patterns transcribed above, there is hardly anything which could be termed non-African in idea, approach or performance technique, except the pitch values resulting from the instrument’s frets. Strictly speaking, not even the chords are “European,” because the inversions chosen, promoting certain bass-lines, can be understood as extensions of certain tonal-harmonic ideas that have a long history in southern Africa (cf. Volume I, Chapter III).

To some people *kwela* appears to be simple and repetitive, but when they try to play it they fail miserably. Musicians trained in European or other African musical traditions sometimes experience considerable difficulties in learning *kwela*. In 1972, Donald Kachamba discovered to his amazement that a Ghanaian guest of ours—extremely musical, but with a predominant background in Western classical music—was so disoriented by the sounds of the up-strokes of the guitar pattern on the syllable *ke* that even in simple “twist” pieces he

2. As a member of the drum ensemble of a Mañanja *nyau* masked society. (See our cinematographic documentation, film no. 46/1982, 68/1987 and video no. 31/1994, archival copy at Abteilung Musikethnologie, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin.)

inverted the meter. When trying his hand at the one-string bass, he took the guitar's up-strokes for the beat and played accordingly. Donald loved to relate this story at parties, mimicking our guest's string-bass playing on the offbeat: ". . . and he was playing *abv, abv, abv, abv*" (notes, summer 1988).

This *abv, abv* . . . is revealing with regard to the conceptualization of motor-sound relationships. In order to describe the sound of the bass string striking on the wrong beat, Donald chose very unusual syllables. There are no Cinyanja/Chichewa mnemonics that would use sound combinations incorporating a bilabial voiced fricative at the end (*bv* in Chichewa orthography, pronounced like /v/ in English "virtue") without a vowel following. Mimicry of somebody's mistake makes it possible.

What we have described above is an instructive case of an audio-psychological phenomenon which we call "inverting the beat," or metrical inversion. It is a perceptual phenomenon by which a listener, exposed to unfamiliar music, gets so disoriented by its accentuations that he or she is unable to relate it correctly to a ground-beat in conformity with local musicians and dancers.

In perception the structure is turned upside down; the beat is erroneously perceived in prominent offbeat accents. An instructive demonstration of the phenomenon of metrical inversion comes from a self-observation by David Rycroft (1961, 1962), who, when attempting to transcribe one of Mwenda Jean Bosco's solo guitar songs, "*Bombalaka*" (from Gallotone G.B.1588T), at first mistook some of the accentuated higher guitar sounds and the voice-line for representing the beat, taking the guitar bass as offbeat. He discovered his error and corrected it. In 1982 Rycroft sent me a beautifully rewritten new transcription of Bosco's "*Bombalaka*," which is published here in facsimile for the first time (see Transcription Example V at the end of this chapter; CD Track 11).

Mwenda Jean Bosco, whose other name is Mwenda wa Bayeke (claiming descentance from the noble Bayeke clan of the Luba/Sanga people), was Congo's foremost guitarist of the 1950s. In the 1970s government officials referred to him as "le père de la musique moderne Zaïroise." Born in Lubumbashi in 1930, he was among the minority of Congolese who had obtained a Western education under Belgian colonial rule, mainly due to his father's position within the Roman Catholic Church. As a young man he was employed as a clerk by the Belgian administration of Jadotville (now Likasi).

By his early twenties, Bosco had already catapulted himself to the position of top performer on the guitar, as is evident from his first recordings of 1952 with Hugh Tracey, among them the celebrated "*Masanga*" theme. He had managed by that time to create a highly individual and virtuoso repertoire of songs, and his fame even spread to the United States and England. Bosco also received accolades from many Western classical guitarists and prominent fig-

ures of the Western folk song revival like Pete Seeger, who began to perform his music. While still in his early twenties, Bosco recorded over 100 discs in Africa and traveled extensively in the central and eastern regions of the continent, becoming a major influence on the development of acoustic guitar styles there.

As a composer, Mwenda Jean Bosco drew on a variety of sources. There was music from his own local environment: “traditional” music of the Luba/Sanga people, the *likembe* (lamellophone), whose popularity preceded the guitar; the organ playing by his father; and from the late 1940s onwards the emergence of a Katanga guitar style. Bosco was a close friend of Losta Abelo, another of the great Katanga guitarists. Many of these musicians knew one another personally, and much exchange and cross-fertilization occurred. Then came the recycling of the new styles, Bosco’s, Losta Abelo’s, Edouard Masengo’s, etc., and the “Ngoma” records, published in Kinshasa, became available.

In 1961 and 1962, David Rycroft’s study of Bosco’s music appeared, containing transcriptions of twelve of his songs. While some of them seemed to pose lesser problems of beat, meter, time-line and harmonic patterns, two of them, “*Bombalaka*” and “*Usichukie*,” proved to be problematic with regard to recognition of the beat and its inception point.

Discussing the matter with Andrew Tracey, who had tried to perform Bosco numbers from his father’s recordings, Rycroft eventually corrected his scores. He shares with us a most interesting self-observation (referring to his error in Rycroft 1961:95):

From the way in which I have placed the bar-lines in *Bombalaka* (see Part I) and *Usichukie*, these two pieces give the impression of being exceptional in that their main bass notes are consistently off the apparent main beat. It might perhaps have been more in keeping with my treatment of the other pieces if I had scored *Bombalaka* as following with the bar-lines placed one quaver earlier than they appear in the full transcription.

. . . Scored in the manner indicated above, both the guitar treble line and the vocal phrasing fall one quaver off the beat throughout the piece. As a listener, it is difficult to conceive of this form of barring as being the correct one for *Bombalaka* because the vocal line and the treble melody of the guitar are so convincingly phrased that it requires quite an effort of will-power not to accept them as expressing the main metrical scheme. The illusion is particularly strong since the bass never comes into prominence as an accentually expressed meter, and at one point Bosco even forsakes it entirely—between bars 37 and 44 in the transcription (see Part I). But if one tries playing the piece on the guitar—and Andrew Tracey, who manages better than I can, has



Photo 33. The first known photograph of Mwenda Jean Bosco, taken in Likasi (Jadotville), Congo, in February 1952.—Photo: Hugh Tracey.

finally persuaded me on this point—one cannot but feel that the main metrical scheme does in fact lie in one’s fingers, and that only the bass is on the beat. (Rycroft 1962:96–98)

If anything, these honest remarks demonstrate what components in African music may release the metrical disorientation effect, until in the observer’s perception the structure “tilts over.” To my knowledge, Rycroft was the first to describe in unambiguous language this phenomenon of “metrical inversion” in cross-cultural comprehension of African music.

Some of the burning questions raised in Rycroft’s article, however, left us with a sense of deprivation, because research on Bosco came virtually to a standstill in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nobody seemed to know his whereabouts. In 1973, while visiting Lubumbashi, I managed to trace him. A



Photo 34. Mwenda Jean Bosco thirty years later, on the verge of a second career; performing in Vienna, July 1982.—Photo: author.



Photo 35. Mwenda Jean Bosco's finger-set on six-string acoustic guitar. Two fingers of the right hand are used to pluck the strings. In Vienna, June 20, 1982.—Photo: Moya A. Malamusi.

year later he was recorded again by a colleague from the University of Vienna, Walter Schicho. (These recordings can be found in the Phonogram Archive, Vienna.) In 1978, after discussing his project with me, the young Kenya-born guitarist John Low was ready to risk a trip to Katanga. He met Bosco, stayed with him, and out of this came a beautiful book entitled *Shaba Diary* (Low 1982). Eventually, in May 1982, it was possible to obtain an invitation for Bosco from IWALEWA House of the University of Bayreuth and the Musik-ethnologische Abteilung of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, and new recordings were made.

Until his concert tour of 1982, musicologists had not known any details about Bosco's guitar-playing techniques, although I had drawn some tentative conclusions from his photograph of 1952. By extrapolating from our more detailed knowledge of other guitarists in Central and East Africa and their techniques, I was sure that Bosco simply used the thumb and index finger for sounding the strings (cf. Kubik 1973b:175).

Meanwhile, Western musicians who had learned some of Bosco's pieces from Rycroft's transcriptions were performing "*Masanga*" and other compositions (usually the guitar part only) with more than two fingers, in the tradition of classical guitar playing. The consequence was that Bosco's motor patterns were altered; the original motional organization of his music was lost.

Bosco's appearance in Europe in 1982 resolved all queries about his guitar-playing technique and his guitar tunings. As I had predicted, he was using the same two-finger guitar-playing technique characteristic of "acoustic" guitar styles across Central and East Africa. He used the Western standard guitar tuning when playing in the key of G, but when playing in "full C" he often raised the sixth string (E) a semi-tone, tuning it as an F.

On the occasion of Bosco's visit to Vienna, June 20, 1982, I made a sync-sound movie of him playing four of his guitar compositions, "*Bombalaka*" and "*Bibi Mupenzi*" among others. This footage has been included on my DVD *African Guitar*, Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop, Sparta, New Jersey.

Just one look at Bosco's performance of "*Bombalaka*" in the film should dispel any doubt about where he feels the beat. While playing he gently marks it with his steps, almost "slipping" into it in some places while walking up and down. One can see the beat in his body movement and the way he himself enjoys the mild tensions created by his offbeat vocal-line.

Actually, Bosco's offbeat phrasing is "mild" compared with what can be encountered in some other African urban styles, especially in South Africa. While his music should present no problems regarding beat perception to any young audience today—and I have tested this in numerous lectures in Europe, America and Africa—some South African urban music does indeed pose such difficulties. The most instructive introduction to perceptual inversion of metrical schemes by alien audiences is, in fact, provided by *simanje-manje* and *mbaqanga* music from South Africa and adjacent areas where this urban style

has spread since the 1960s. *Simanje-manje* (cf. Chapter IX), meaning “things of now-now,” is a term that was apparently launched by South African record companies promoting early electric guitar styles in the mid-1960s. The term *mbaqanga*, used for the same kind of music, has a different background. It expresses the view that in spite of their modernity, these new urban musical styles belong to the cultural heritage of “Black” South Africans, like home-made mealie-bread (*mbaqanga*). They are not thought of as “foreign music.” According to David Coplan (letter dated November 9, 1978), this term was already heard in 1952 in relation to music.

This was the kind of music regularly practiced in the rehearsal rooms of the Gallotone Company at Msaho (Roodepoort) by various professional groups, such as Izintombi zo Moya (“Girls of the Wind”), and by the saxophonist West Nkosi. (Notes during a brief visit in 1975.)

In part, *mbaqanga* accentuations and the often “heavy” emphasis on beats 2 and 4 of the metrical scheme may be rooted in an “exaggeration” of jazz-style metrical concepts by South African urban musicians. Township audiences of that period were able to cope with very strong melodic accents without losing the barely objectified main beat. Sometimes beat-unit 1 in *mbaqanga* is almost inaudible, a black hole as I would describe it, using a concept from theoretical physics, i.e. a point where energy is swallowed up so completely that its material manifestation disappears.

But there are probably also roots of the *mbaqanga* concept of beat and accentuations in older South African traditions. In Xhosa and some other South African music, there seems to be a common stylistic trait with regard to the relationship between the beat and melodic-harmonic patterns, namely the anticipation of the themes’ and chords’ entry one or two elementary pulse-units ahead of the dance steps (the beat), and clap beats or other objectified or merely thought reference-lines. Deirdre Doris Hansen in her doctoral dissertation (1981:732) has recognized these as distinguishing characteristics.

However, the bulk of my research and experience regarding metrical inversion comes from the southern African periphery: Zambia and Malaŵi. My observational basis is

- (1) verbal testimonies by musicians with whom I have worked;
- (2) self-observation during the learning process in the Kachamba Brothers’ group as a performer;
- (3) observation of audience reactions during world-wide tours as a performer in this group between 1972 and 1981.

It was during performances with the Kachamba Brothers (the band led by the late Daniel Kachamba) in Germany in 1972 that we found that dancers normally failed to recognize the beat in songs such as “*Dikile mbale wanga*” or “*Atsale Jive*,” which are in a double-step, or *simanje-manje*, movement pattern. Most of the young boys and girls in our audiences had had intensive

experience in various forms of Afro-American music, including jazz, rock 'n' roll and other pop music forms current in the early 1970s. Yet even such a background was insufficient for them to recognize the beat in southern African dance music of this type. In “double-step” pieces they regularly danced on the offbeat (cf. Kubik 1973b:185).

To understand the magnitude of this problem and what “metrical inversion” really is, I recommend that the reader conduct an easy self-experiment. One of the numbers recorded by Daniel Kachamba and his Brothers in 1967 (before I joined the band) is “*Woyaya*.” The text is in a phonetically imitated Shona. Listeners can check their perception of the recording against my notation (Transcription Example VI at the end of this chapter). (CD Track 12)

In the 1970s, Donald Kachamba and I, using an analogous example with two guitars, were conducting experiments with audiences on our world-wide concert and lecture tours. From South America to Europe to West Africa, the results were similar. Only in southern Africa did most audiences get the beat right; in other parts of the world it was a minority, usually people with an intensive background in jazz and some forms of pop music.

The perceptual problem for audiences who are unfamiliar with this musical culture comes about through a disorientation effect triggered by the musicians' strong offbeat accentuations on the guitar and the generalized anticipation of harmonic change by one stroke. When the guitar chords change in double-step pieces, it is always on beat 4, never on beat-unit 1 of the metrical scheme. Audiences who reverse the structure perceptually believe that the beat in “*Woyaya*” coincides with the syllables *I . . . , fa . . . , bu . . .* and *ha . . .* of the text-line, while these actually start on an offbeat, namely rattle-stroke 4 in the metrical scheme. What coincides with the dance beat is *ma . . . , lo . . . , la . . .* (the first one!) and *ma . . .* And that is where the listener must find his/her bearings. Listening to the bass-line may also help. The beat never coincides with the first stroke in the pair of bass notes; it coincides with the second one. “Hearing” this correctly is a prerequisite for understanding this music. In the classroom it can be communicated relatively easily, which can be quite a startling experience for the students.

The experiments we have undertaken in West Africa, Brazil and other places during lecture tours since 1972 suggest that metrical inversion occurs with predictable certainty in individuals whose dominant educational background is in “classical” European music, wherever they may have been born. The tests have confirmed that a European background in music education tends to make people invert these structures, because they had been conditioned to think of music as organized in “strong” and “weak” parts of a meter, and to identify acoustical accents with motor-accents or metrical inception points. They are inevitably disoriented by offbeat accentuations, unusual inception of harmonic change and pitch prominence in offbeat positions.

In South African urban styles of the 1970s—perhaps as a compensatory



reaction to the strong presence of a mono-metrical scheme—accentuations on beat-units 2 and 4 combined with offbeat shifting of harmonic and melodic patterns were carried to an extreme. Beat-unit 1 was acoustically non-prominent, often hidden in some deep notes and sometimes totally left out. This should explain why metrical inversion is particularly demonstrable in the cross-cultural perception of *mbaqanga* by foreigners. By the late 1970s, however, we found that the response among audiences of jazz and rock music



in Europe had changed. Even in *simanje-manje*, or “double-step,” pieces, a number of people now began to perceive the beat in the “correct” place, or could adjust very quickly and learn after being told where it was.

Recognition of one or the other metrical order within a musical event is learned. In contrast with the perception of pitches and intervals as an integral



Photo 36a–e. “*Izintombi zomoya*” (“Girls of the Wind”). A glimpse of a recording session in the studios of the Gallotone Company in Johannesburg. The photographs show the three guitarists (from left to right): Marubini Jagome (rhythm guitar), Lucas Dlamini (lead guitar) and James Mukwebo (bass guitar); the female singers (from left to right): Eunice Kwekwe, Florence Ndlovu, Queen Basi, Thembi Motaung and Mary Manjakwe; and the saxophonist and composer West Nkosi with Julia Yende, the leader of the group. Another musician involved in the session was Kheswa Zepkhosa on drums. At the Gallotone Studios, Johannesburg, December 3, 1975.—Photos: author.

part of a tonal system (apparently an irreversible acquisition during childhood, into adolescence [cf. Kubik 1985:46]), beat recognition can be relearned under the influence of another musical culture. How quickly one can readjust differs in each case; it largely depends on an individual's personal history. In view of young people's superior aptitude for learning, they probably have an advantage over older people.

Much of my evidence regarding learning processes is derived from self-observation. In 1967, during my first intensive contact with the southern African urban music scene, in particular with the Kachamba Brothers in Malaŵi, I used to hear their twist, *sinjonjo* and rock 'n' roll numbers on the correct beat. However, I had problems with "double-step" numbers, such as "Anifa love me . . ." and "Woyaya" (already mentioned) or "*Mawrong-wrong*." I consistently mistook beat-unit 4 as beat 1. Scientific interest, however, lies not so much in my perceptual inversion of the structure as in the fact that—like everyone else—I did it in good faith. I thought the way I heard it was the "natural way." It never occurred to me that another perceptual standpoint could exist. This is interesting, since my musical background as a performer, even before my first visit to Africa in 1959, was almost exclusively dominated by jazz, not classical European music. Moreover, in 1959 and 1962 I had found for myself in Uganda and Moçambique that there existed xylophone styles (*amadinda*, *akadinda*, *mangwilo*, etc.) with a relative reference beat. Yet, with urban music in Malaŵi, which reminded me so much of my jazz-performing years, the idea that the beat in "double-step" might be somewhere else did not occur to me.

How and when I eventually discovered it is revealing: it was after I had joined the Kachamba Brothers in 1972, first helping out as a rattle player. Without a performer's experience I would have never found out. At that time I had understood the timbre-sequences to be produced on the tin rattle and the patterns I was to play. This was transmitted to me by Daniel and Donald through mnemonics. I was good at keeping a constant speed and resisting the various offbeat accentuations by my partners; after all, this was standard jazz experience. But in double-step pieces, such as "*Sibana nsambi*" etc., there was a problem. I always ended the series of my rattle strokes one beat too early. Daniel gave me a disapproving glance. He interpreted my behavior as "lack of concentration." He could not imagine that I was on the wrong beat, because all the rattle strokes are equal; there is no accent difference between 1, 2, 3 and 4. But the fact was that I ended a piece on beat-unit 4 of the last measure, because it was for me beat-unit 1 of the following measure.

How did I find out?—not by counting; that activates a different area of the brain. I found out when I was given a part of the vocal chorus response. I discovered that it was difficult, if not impossible, to sing my vocal part correctly. Then, in a flash of insight, it occurred to me that I was perhaps on the wrong beat.

Once I had become conscious of my mistake, however, the adjustment was a simple procedure, although with some songs, notably “Anifa . . .” and “Woyaya,” it took a bit of time to learn to resist the strong offbeat accentuations of the sung melodic line.

These are some of the audio-psychological phenomena of which audiences are usually unaware. Everyone believes that their own perception of even the most unfamiliar music corresponds with the music’s intrinsic structure and meanings. However, not only does conformity in the perception of music decrease with the geographical distance between cultures, it also decreases diachronically, with their distance in time, since all cultures are subject to substantial changes from time to time. Examining southern Africa in the 1980s reveals that the urban music scene had totally changed. In Zimbabwe the *chimurenga* music of Thomas Mapfumo, partly rooted in the “traditional” *mbira* (lamellophone) playing of Zimbabwe, partly in *mbaqanga*, and all molded together by Mapfumo’s extraordinary personality, dominated the picture in the late 1970s and early 1980s.³ In Malaŵi urban music of the 1970s and 1980s had clearly moved away from South African models. The swing element had disappeared; harmonic changes were onbeat, namely on beat 1. In some groups the beat was hard, even “stiff” at times.

When members of the youngest generation in southern Africa were exposed to *mbaqanga* records of the 1970s, they often reacted like external listeners, also inverting the beat. This was a startling observation I made in 1983/84 with some of the youngest musicians in Malaŵi.

Section 2

Focus on “Auditory Streaming” and the I.P. Effect

Research History

The audio-psychological phenomenon to be discussed here was discovered independently in laboratory experiments (cf. Miller and Heise 1950; Heise and Miller 1951) and in African field research (Kubik 1960, 1962c). It was first called the “melodic fission effect” (by Miller and Heise), referring to the fact that if one constructs a fast-running sequence of sounds in disjunct intervals, human auditory perception cannot process the melody as a whole. We split it up into separate melodic lines at different tonal levels, associating a set of high tones to form one line; and independently, a set of low tones to form another. All of a sudden we seem to hear at least two, sometimes even three independent, interweaving melodic lines.

3. See for example the LP *Thomas Mapfumo Greatest Hits*, AFRO SOUL ASLP 5001, w.o.w. Music.

Far from laboratories, I stumbled on this phenomenon in December 1959 in Kampala, Uganda, when I was taking lessons in *amadinda* xylophone playing. The compositions I learned from my teacher, Evaristo Muyinda, had been handed down for generations within the tradition of court music of the kingdom of Buganda, a state that had existed since the 14th century A.D. When combining the tone-rows of an *amadinda* composition in interlocking style—my teacher and I sitting opposite each other—I noticed to my surprise that our individual parts would disappear in the recordings we were making. Instead, there would emerge a puzzle of melodic-rhythmic lines, crisscrossing one another, which we had not played. That such a result was intended by the ancient court music composers of Buganda became incontestable when I learned from my teacher that it was the task of a third player on the xylophone to pick one of those “ghost melodies” in the deep register and imitate it two octaves higher by striking the two top keys of the instrument.

I began to refer to my observation as a gestalt-psychological phenomenon and to call the illusory patterns heard in the depths of those Kiganda xylophone compositions “inherent or subjective rhythms” (Kubik 1960:12). However, since these were not merely rhythms but complex melodic patterns, I later changed the term to “inherent patterns” and spoke of an I.P. Effect (inherent pattern effect; cf. Kubik 1962c, 1969a, and Chapter IV).

I realized that the ancient court music composers had made a fantastic discovery: they had found how human auditory perception processes a complex sequence of rapid, irregular sound impulses by splitting the total image into perceptible units at different pitch levels. And they had made use of their discovery in composition, creating indirectly polyphonies of interweaving melodic lines that would suggest words to a Luganda speaker, as if some spirit were talking to the performers of a xylophone or to the lone player of a harp (*ennanga*).

The music would be produced by regular movement, with the fingers or sticks combining two interlocking tone-rows, but the patterns heard would be irregular, often asymmetric and complex. All the 102 xylophone compositions I transcribed in Buganda during the early 1960s reveal an extremely complex structure, and they “fall apart” in perception-generated inherent melodic-rhythmic patterns. No one, so far, has succeeded in composing a new piece that would match in quality and complexity those compositions handed down for generations. Some of them can even be dated by correlating the accompanying song texts with events during the reign of past kings.

To give an example of what happens when listening to Kiganda court music compositions, I shall briefly describe the I.P. effect in one historical, possibly late-18th-century composition: “*Ssematimba ne Kikwabanga*” (see also Chapter IV). The two basic tone-rows are combined in interlocking fashion. In this particular case they consist of 18 strokes each, melodically represented here

with the ciphers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 reflecting the pentatonic tuning. Both musicians strike their parts in parallel octaves. However, as soon as the second player enters and the combination is achieved, human auditory perception gets puzzled by the emerging fast sequence of 36 sonic impulses forming an irregular melody in disjunct intervals. The human “ear,” Muganda or non-Muganda, then splits the structure into perceptible entities. Instead of hearing

③⑥ [4 1 5 4 2 3 3 1 3 2 5 3 2 4 1 3 2 2 5 2 2 5 2 4 1 3 4 2 4 4 2 4 1 4 1 1]

we hear two conflicting lines by associating all the higher notes, 5, 4 and 3, and the lower ones, 2 and 1. The melodic lines perceived in a recording or during a live performance are these:

③⑥ [4 . 5 4 . 3 3 . 3 . 5 3 . 4 . 3 . . 5 . . 5 . 4 . 3 4 . 4 4 . 4 . 4 . .]

and

③⑥ [. 1 . . 2 . . 1 . 2 . . 2 . 1 . 2 2 . 2 2 . 2 . 1 . . 2 . . 2 . 1 . 1 1].

The third player then picks the lower line . 1 . . 2 . . etc., and imitates it two octaves higher. What we hear is intended by the composer.

There is no other culture in the world in which composers have succeeded in manipulating human auditory perception with such expertise. Baroque composers in Europe sometimes created a semblance of the I.P. effect, but due to the divisive metrical structure of European music, the emerging inherent lines never reach the rhythmic complexity and thereby their independence as they do in Kiganda historical compositions. Nevertheless, my findings in Buganda have stirred considerable interest by 20th-century art-music composers, e.g. in Japan⁴ and in Europe, notably by the late Györgi Ligeti. Ligeti had tried to experiment with I.P. effects in the realm of his own sound universe. On several occasions he acknowledged the importance my findings had for his work.⁵

From the late 1960s onwards, following Miller and Heise, cognitive psychologists also became increasingly interested in the I.P. effect without, however, being aware of my research findings in Buganda. They called the same phenomenon “auditory stream segregation” or simply “auditory streaming” (cf. Bregman 1990; Bregman and Campbell 1971; Dowling 1973; etc.). The first ethnomusicologist to bridge the gap between our independent endeavors was John Baily (1985:40), in a brief comment. Eventually, Ulrich Wegner (1993) attempted a synthesis in an article in *Ethnomusicology*, comparing my findings with the experiments conducted by cognitive psychologists. Wegner was also able to synthesize *amadinda* compositions from my transcriptions (in cipher notation), and he subjected audiences to a series of tests. He produced some of his synthetic constructions on a cassette with introductory notes (Wegner 1990).

4. A manuscript containing experiments with *amadinda*-style composition in Japan is in possession of Dr. Mitchel Strumpf, Department of Fine and Performing Arts, University of Malawi.

5. E.g. in an interview in *Die Zeit*, Feuilleton 57, no. 5, April 8, 1988.

Geographical Distribution

Compositional exploration of I.P. effects is only found in some sub-Saharan culture areas and musical genres. It is not a universal concern. In Uganda, I.P. effects are prominent in the music of Buganda and Busoga. This is connected intimately with language and a specific aesthetic of gestalt-producing polyphony. In the music of some Nilotic communities of northern Uganda and southern Sudan, I.P. effects can also be observed, e.g. in *nanga* (zither) playing among the Acooli. Other areas of Africa where such composition techniques are prominent include central Cameroon, especially as concerns *timbrh* (lamellophone) music by Vute performers (cf. Kubik 1983:385–87) and lamellophone playing by neighboring Tikar musicians (CD Track 13). To a certain extent, inherent pattern formation is also known in Zimbabwe and in the Lower Zambezi valley, especially in *mbira* (lamellophone) music of the Shona (cf. A. Tracey 1961:51, 63); in *sansi* and *malimba* (lamellophone) playing among the -Sena, -Nyungwe, -Phodzo and other peoples in Moçambique and southern-most Malaŵi; and equally in *bangwe* (zither) music of the -Sena.

Inherent patterns occur in instrumental playing in wide regions of the Congo and eastern Angola, especially in *likembe* (lamellophone) music. They are found in the music of the Mpyemõ of the Central African Republic and south-eastern Cameroon, in some pygmy music of the Upper Sangha river area and in numerous guitar music styles in Central, East and south-eastern Africa.

In West African music and in the Sudanic belt from west to East Africa, this phenomenon seems less prominent, although it may be detected in some *kora* music of Gambia, Senegal and Guinée and was apparently observed in Añlo dance drumming in Ghana (Fiagbedzi 1980a).

I.P. effects can be generated on a variety of instruments and in various tonal systems. They have been observed with flutes, rattles and drums as well as xylophones and lamellophones. They can be created by composers within tetra-, penta-, hexa- and heptatonic traditions and, of course, also on guitars with Western tunings.

One can observe I.P. effects in certain polyphonic vocal styles, as in some yodel singing among the -Lomwe and -Shirima of northern Moçambique. Inherent timbre-patterns arise from drums and rattles. To produce these is one of the secrets of correct performance of these instruments.

My comparative studies across Africa suggest that several cultures (Bantoid, Semi-Bantu and Bantu) extending in a crescent from central Cameroon across northern Congo to the northern shores of Lake Victoria constitute that African region in which auditory puzzle effects are central to musical composition. Historically, it remains to be determined why this should be so and what kind of correlation might exist between the present-day cultural distribution of such compositional techniques and events of the past.

How Inherent Patterns Are Generated

We can describe those ephemeral, oscillating patterns as a gestalt phenomenon. They are real; they exist and they are the result of musical composers' intentions, but they are subjective. In a sense they are analogous to certain optical illusions (see below). Therefore, they cannot be detected in a recording by electronic measuring devices. So far, no "thinking robot" has been able to recognize these phantom images.

Although the sonic components of such patterns as struck, plucked, blown, etc. are "objective" and traceable in recordings on audio- or videotape, the patterns themselves cannot be discovered through means such as spectrographs unless, of course, the researcher persuaded a musician to accentuate those notes which form any particular inherent pattern, or created a computer program to appropriate it. If one makes a spectrogram of an *amadinda* performance played in the standard way, i.e. *okusengejja* (cf. Chapter I), what will be seen is the sound spectrum of each sonic component, not "gestalts" as formed in the minds of listeners. We can, however, indicate inherent patterns in a musical transcription by marking in a different color those notes which the mind picks out of the total image to associate. This is the most effective way of showing students where the patterns are hidden in the structure of a composition.

Perception of music composed in this manner takes place in terms of a subjective restructuring process by the brain of the auditory stimuli. The arising patterns represent a perceptually introduced order, reflecting an existing order at the structural (non-perceptual) level of a composition. The "gestalts" thus arising are not played as such by a single performer on his or her instrument or by a single agent (hand, finger, percussion stick, etc.). As a psychological phenomenon, they are connected with structural characteristics of the perceptual apparatus itself.

Anyone can detect and hear those patterns in an *amadinda* or *embaire* xylophone piece. There are, of course, factors such as attention, general musicality, familiarity with a style, etc., to determine the speed with which an individual discovers them in a test situation.

But how did those African composers get involved in creating such a subjective universe?

Perhaps they themselves could have given us a clue, if they were still alive. In hindsight, however, it is obvious that much experimentation, trial and error, was behind those discoveries. Those who composed the instrumental accompaniment of songs had learned to organize the sonic content so that all the components of, let us say, a 24- or 36-pulse cycle would be readable in more than one direction. "Words" (patterns) would form multi-lateral relationships, in a sense comparable to the letters in the vertical and horizontal columns of a crossword puzzle. It is a kaleidoscopic approach to composition. Such an

internal order then produces a cohesive effect from which human perception cannot escape.

It is common in African cultures to think of instrumental patterns not merely in terms of abstract pitch sequences, but as carriers of verbal messages. Composers learn to construct sonic cycles that literally break down into components suggesting verbal patterns. It is as if all of a sudden several people would speak, would raise their voices from the depths of a harp or xylophone piece. Autonomous lines then begin to form in perception, carrying hidden messages. Repeated, they provide the listener with an impression of a polyphony of conversational voices, each saying something. By applying the economical technique of interlocking performance parts, and through an irregular structuring of pitch sequences in disjunct intervals, composers learned to create auditory jigsaw puzzles that would oscillate in perception. The audience then perceives patterns which were not played as such by any of the participating musicians, although they are in no way hallucinatory: each sonic component of these subjectively discerned structures can be detected in the total cycle.

Perception of these patterns is compelling; the “ear” cannot react otherwise. When for example compositions from Buganda’s ancient court music are played to subjects in an experimental situation, there may be individual differences in the focus of attention, but nothing like individual constructions of inherent patterns.

Essentially, the perception of inherent patterns is based on the auditory apparatus’s tendency to associate pitches of the same or adjacent frequencies in the tonal system, thus forming subjective perceptual groups. How broad such a cohesive band of associated neighboring pitches is depends on the kind of tonal system, and also on structural characteristics of the music composed. In near equi-pentatonic tonal systems (cf. Wachsmann 1967) such as those of Buganda and Busoga, a belt of adjacent pitches usually includes two or sometimes three neighboring steps, giving a maximum margin of 480 cents for one single belt and a minimum margin of 240 cents. Auditory perception thus splits the total image of such a composition into something like relief-layers (comparable to layer-coloring on a topographical map).

In composition, inherent patterns can be brought about by observing certain procedures:

- (1) Create a melodic line of 12, 16, 18, 24, 36, etc. notes following each other at the speed of the elementary pulsation, all of them equi-spaced, like beads threaded on a string! That can be achieved, for example, by interlocking two tone-rows, one played with the left, one with the right hand or by two players. Instrumental pieces from which inherent patterns emerge are nearly always structured so that the combination of all parts objectifies the elementary pulsation. There is an uninterrupted flow of pulse-units.

- (2) The intervals forming the melodic line should be disjunct. The “ear” will then associate pitches that are adjacent to each other. The total image splits.
- (3) The total number of pulse-units should be regular, forming cycles of regular numbers, as indicated above (under 1); but melodic accents should be irregular, asymmetric or “additive,” as A. M. Jones would have said. The melody is in irregular, disjunct intervals, and yet it is structured. There are hidden relationships in the distances between notes at different pitch levels. Creating multi-lateral relationships is the most difficult part of composition and one of the secrets of the ancient composers.
- (4) Notes within a belt of neighboring frequencies form clusters with pattern structure. Example: the notes transcribed as 4 and 3 in the *amadinda* composition “*Omusango gwa balere*” (“The Case of the Flute Players” [CD Track 14]) occur in this order:

③⑥ [4 . 3 4 . 3 4 . 3 . . 3 . 4 . . 4 . 3 4 . 4 4 .]

The pair 4 . 3 recurs at distances of 10 + 8 + 10 + 8 pulse-units. It is obvious that there is a hidden, though irregular order. The same applies to the other notes, 1, 2 and 5 in the theme (see Chapter IV for a complete transcription).

- (5) The composition must be cyclic. But the actual length of the cycles is not in itself a determinant. In *amadinda*, *akadinda* and *embaire* compositions of southern Uganda, the total image (audible result of the interlocking process) consists of a rapid pulsation elapsing within a cycle of usually 24, 36 or 48 elementary pulses, including instances of 18, 50, 54 and 70 pulses (cf. Chapter IV). However, the passages which give rise to inherent patterns can also be very short. Twelve notes or even fewer can produce the I.P. effect, if the total image is internally structured. For example the *timbrh* (lamellophone) music of the Vute of central Cameroon is usually based on a cycle number 12 (cf. Transcription Example VII at the end of this chapter).
- (6) Repetition is essential for the rise of inherent patterns. Although the “ear” becomes aware of them as soon as the full combination of parts is achieved, the cycles must be repeated several times to make them prominent in perception.
- (7) The pieces are performed at fast speed. If you slow down the speed—you can also do this experiment with a recorded piece—you will reach a threshold. Below that threshold the “ear” perceives the total image, and the inherent patterns disappear.

It may be worth mentioning that I.P. effects are created in musical cultures that have the following characteristics:

- A general preference for an equi-spatial layout of notes, drum strokes, etc. Regular strokes can be organized as interlocking tone-rows (in duple- or triple-division interlocking), creating fast pulse-lines.

- A tendency to limit the ambitus of such tone-rows to one octave. This applies to individual tone-rows as well as their combination (such as, generally, in *amadinda* music). In *akadinda* music the combination may slightly transgress the octave limit. In an equi-pentatonic system, the usual ambitus therefore does not exceed 960 cents.
- A predilection for octave duplication. This seems to enhance the appearance of the I.P. effect. The “ear” then picks inherent patterns from different octave layers. It can be that one inherent pattern is heard clearly on the two bass keys of a xylophone—why not at an octave higher, where it appears in identical shape? Selective perceptual mechanisms operate here that will have to be studied in detail on the basis of a suitable set of experiments.

Towards a Psychological Theory of the I.P. Effect

While the creation of inherent patterns is culture specific and highly developed in some musical cultures of Africa, the ability to perceive them is universal and closely linked to the neurological characteristics of the human perceptual apparatus. Perception probably operates from a neurologically determined system of adapter points which form fields defined by numerical relations. Auditory input is constantly scanned and screened by these fields. They seem to function like a scanning pattern which is projected over the external stimuli and, whenever possible, brought into congruence with them. Occasionally, our apparatus “bends” the input to conform. The moment congruence occurs between a structured inner field and a set of external stimuli, we perceive a gestalt. If congruence cannot be achieved, we experience a chaos of stimuli. Most external stimuli are unstructured and chaotic. Even music is not structured in all its acoustic dimensions, something which was deplored by 20th-century composers such as Anton Webern, creator of “serial music,” and Karl-Heinz Stockhausen, who tried to eliminate all possible coincidental sonic factors in his experiments with “electronic music.”

In *amadinda* and *akadinda* compositions, the pitch sequences and patterns seem to be structured to the last detail, but the timbre of individual xylophone keys is not uniform, and may vary on instruments used by the same musicians. Thus, certain inherent patterns contained in a composition may seem more sharply outlined on one instrument, while giving way to other auditory layers on another.

The process of screening external stimuli with the inner perceptual fields is always selective. Those elements in a multi-dimensional stimulus which fit into a grouping of adapter points are instantly associated and appreciated as a gestalt. The other simultaneous elements which do not fit into a field are “discarded,” and their perception is suppressed.

Presentation of multiple stimuli to a subject always elicits a reaction to regroup them: some of them together, others apart. Both optical and acoustic illusions can, therefore, be understood as compensatory reactions of our perceptual apparatus. As soon as something unexpected happens—for example, a violent assault on the perceptual fields by a complex stimulus which exceeds the field's capacity to register and evaluate—then the result is transient disorientation. A sequence of 24, 48, 54 and up to 70 high-speed xylophone notes elapsing in disjunct intervals lacks any kind of gestalt quality as a total image. The disorientation, however, does not become conscious to the listener, because it lasts only a fraction of a second. It is instantly compensated for, if the stimuli have some form of compelling inner order.

The I.P. effect parallels some illusions known from visual perception. In fact, while metrical inversion, as discussed in the previous section, seems to parallel the so-called figure-ground optical illusions, the I.P. effect can best be compared to some of the figures created by the Italian psychologist Gaetano Kanizsa. Figure-ground illustrations give us a choice: by exerting some willpower, we can shift between seeing a goblet or the profile of two faces. Kanizsa triangles, on the other hand, or other phantom figures such as rings etc., are inherently present. Our perception cannot escape from them.

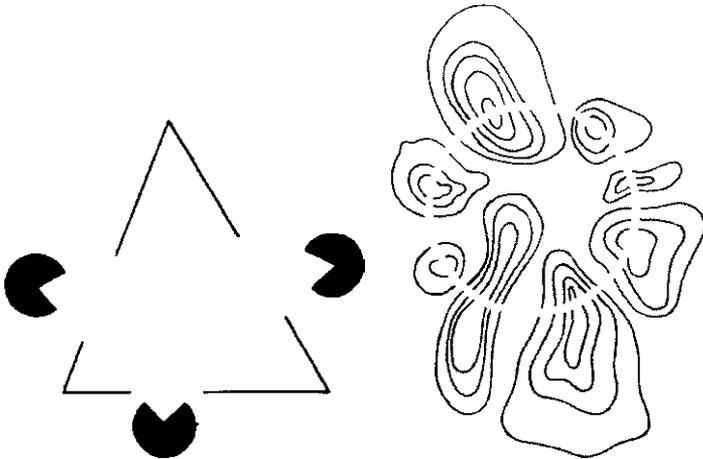


Figure 30. I.P. effect in Gaetano Kanizsa figures: phantom triangle and phantom ring (reproduced from Broad 1984:7)

Nevertheless, some individual and some culture-specific factors do possibly affect the perception of inherent patterns in music. Individual discrepancies in the identification of inherent patterns seem to be rooted in two behavioral factors:

- (1) There are normal shifts of attention, which are also demonstrated by audiences successively picking up different words or sentences in a conversation. While a musical structure is repeated, attention shifts from one area to another.
- (2) There are individual differences in ability to identify, conceptualize and express in words what has just been heard. Describing and verbalizing precisely what has been perceived depends on observational and intellectual talent.

Culture-specific factors may be linked to the nature of a tonal system, for example. With reference to the court music of Buganda, we may therefore ask two questions:

- How many neighboring pitch-lines can be processed perceptually to form an inherent pattern?
- Into how many inherent patterns can *amadinda* compositions break up?

By observing my partners on the *amadinda* in Kampala—Baganda and Basoga learners—in 1959/60, I came to the conclusion that the minimum association is between two neighboring steps and the maximum association is between three. Considering minimum association, there are, in the Kiganda musical system, five possible two-note inherent patterns within one octave. They are, however, hidden in the structure. They come out if the same piece is played in any of the five possible transpositions (*emiko* in Luganda). In each *omuko* (singular term), just two inherent patterns surface, a lower and a higher one, whereby only one of the two is based on minimum association. More often this is the lower pattern.

The lower pattern appears on the two bottom keys of the xylophone, called *amatengezzi*. For each composition, court musicians had to memorize and learn this particular inherent pattern beforehand, in order to enable them to recognize it quickly and imitate it on the two top keys.

By contrast, the second inherent pattern heard combines three notes, 5, 4, 3, and is based on maximum association. A demonstration example is “*Ennyana ekutudde*.” If one plays the standard cycle with the three-note *okwawula* part, the performers (*omunazi* and *omwawuzi*) will hear their combination clearly split up into two separate inherent melodic-rhythmic lines, the upper one combining three neighboring pitches (maximum association) and the lower one two (minimum association). (See Transcription Example VIII at the end of this chapter.)

Obviously there are reasons why the human ear (not just the “Muganda ear,” if there is any such “ethnic” thing) associates the three notes in the manner transcribed under I.P. 1 in the example mentioned, and why the note 3 in our cipher notation is not associated with the lower inherent pattern (I.P. 2).

By comparison, in another *amadinda* composition, “*Katulyeku bye pesa*,”⁶ the higher inherent pattern strictly consists of the notes 4 and 5 (in cipher notation, cf. Chapter IV).

So why is the 3 swallowed up by the higher inherent pattern in “*Ennyana ekutudde*”? I can only detect one compelling reason: if the 3 were associated with the lower I.P. 2, the result would be a melodic run between neighboring intervals covering five notes at the speed of the elementary pulsation. The human auditory perceptual apparatus cannot process this as an inherent pattern at a speed of 500–600 M.M. for the elementary pulsation. It kicks the “aliens” out.

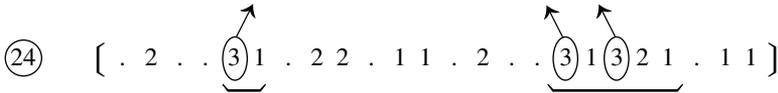


Figure 31. A perceptually impossible inherent pattern: incorporating the 3s at pulses 5 and 17–21 in “*Ennyana ekutudde*.” (compare also Transcription Example VIII)

The example recreates precisely that condition which gives rise to the I.P. effect in the first place. Five notes following each other in this manner within the total cycle must split. In this case it is the two 3s, because they stand at the upper periphery of associated pitches, which are those likely to be ejected from the gestalt. There are three reasons why these notes are easily absorbed by the higher inherent pattern (I.P. no. 1):

- (1) There are only three 3s in the whole cycle, and there is ample space between them.
- (2) The resultant gestalt of I.P. no. 1 does not contain more than three consecutive notes at the speed of the elementary pulsation.
- (3) I.P. 1 has a very attractive two-part melodic pattern structure.

The latter point is the crucial one, and with this observation we have isolated an important perceptual threshold. Horizontally, in Kiganda xylophone music at least, our perceptual apparatus forms no inherent patterns containing more than three notes following each other at minimal distance, i.e. that of the elementary pulse-units. In I.P. no. 1 the descending run of the three notes 5—4—3 (over elementary pulses 3–5 and 15–17) also constitutes the threshold. After the third note in the run there must come a gap in the structure of the inherent pattern for at least one elementary pulse-unit.

If we compare this observation with the composition rules operating in *amadinda* music (cf. Chapter IV), we learn that these unwritten rules reflect precisely the threshold, the limits of our perceptual capacity to register some-

6. This composition can be heard on Hugh Tracey’s record AMA TR-137, B2.

thing coherent. Thus, the entire cycle of “*Ennyana ekutudde*” is arranged to accommodate human auditory perception, containing what it can handle without being immersed in chaos and disorientation. Incidentally, confusion can easily be brought about in an experiment. When *okunaga* and *okwawula* are incorrectly combined, for example by missing the entrance point of the *okwawula* tone-row, the result lacks structure and there are no inherent patterns.

“*Ennyana ekutudde*” is an intrinsically arranged jigsaw puzzle. It is structured so that the 24-pitch stimuli of the total cycle (plus their octave duplication) split naturally into two complex melodic-rhythmic gestalts which share exactly half the notes struck. Each inherent pattern (I.P. 1 and 2) is made up of exactly 12 notes. Although this is not a rule that could be extended to embrace *amadinda* compositions in general, it is one more structured element demonstrating a clear objective on the part of the composers.

We have detected two thresholds in the formation of inherent patterns in Kiganda xylophone music. Vertically, three neighboring pitches present the maximum association; horizontally (i.e. in the time dimension of the elementary pulsation), the maximum association is also three notes. Inherent patterns in Kiganda xylophone music cannot contain more than three adjacent notes at the speed of the elementary pulsation. It is evident that this is connected with the characteristics of the Kiganda tonal and musical system, and I am not claiming (at this stage of our research) that these thresholds are universal in music. Considerable research will have to be undertaken, beginning with an analysis of *embaire* (xylophone) music of Busoga, where composition “rules” are similar but slightly more relaxed than those in the music of Buganda, especially with regard to unison interlocking.

But within Kiganda xylophone music it is even possible to calculate which inherent patterns listeners will detect when any of the compositions we have collected are played to them. This can be predicted and subsequently verified. As for me, I have no doubt that the ancient Baganda court music composers were able to calculate and predict listeners’ reactions by intuitive insight into how our auditory perception works.

Culture-Specific Functions of Inherent Patterns

In the worldview of many people in African cultures, the transcendental world of spirits has its share in daily life. Spirits are regularly invited to “speak”; one listens to them in dreams, and they also “speak” through musical patterns, thereby contributing to the musical process (Berliner 1975/76, 1978; Malamusi 1992).

In addition, many African cultures have developed a keen interest in divination as a way of receiving messages from the world beyond. In Angola the *muk-wakutaha* (professional diviner) looks into his *ngombo* (divining basket) to de-

tect meaning in the configurations which the little carved ideograms may take when they have been shaken (Areia 1985). In the same culture, solitary hunters have interpreted messages from ideographs drawn in sand (cf. Chapter X).

Although it has hardly been recognized in the literature, musical patterns performed by the lone player of a zither, lamellophone or other instrument also stimulate attitudes comparable to those in a diviner. The musician “reads” messages into the ever-changing oscillating patterns inherent in the cycles performed. It is not by chance that in African cultures with their metaphysical outlook we encounter numerous timbre-modifying devices on musical instruments, such as mirlitons (vibrating membranes), rattle rings, etc., whose sympathetic resonance also amplifies sound. This resonance can be manipulated to a certain extent, but its presence also serves other purposes, contributing an autonomous element of its own, like something automatic and uncontrollable which is desired as an echo or perhaps a message from elsewhere. It is also significant that in African cultures instruments are not usually built with notes of a uniform timbre, and Western instruments are often modified or “worn down” so as to eliminate such uniformity.

Inherent patterns create a complex illusion of conversational polyphony, since many of these patterns are verbalized; they say something to the solitary performer and to audiences. In this sense the creation of instrumental patterns breaking up into subjective components has two major functions:

- (1) Through the contrast between a “played” and an “auditory” image, an individual performer is able to generate a kind of indirect polyphony. Solo singers who accompany themselves relate their vocal parts to the motor patterns of their instrumental accompaniment, as the *mbira* artist Beulah Dyoko explained to me in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1989. Inherent melodic-rhythmic patterns emerging from the instrument then cross the voice part, and comment on it.
- (2) In line with a general tendency in African musical cultures to have instrumental melodies evoke an array of verbal associations in listeners (cf. Kubik 1962a, 1973b:176–82), inherent patterns are consciously employed as carriers of text phrases to be recognized and interpreted by performers and listeners alike. Quite often oscillating inherent patterns also give composers new textual ideas.

In lectures I have sometimes been asked, which is first in the composition process, inherent patterns or texts identifying these? How do musicians begin to compose: do they proceed from text-carrying patterns which are filled out by a surrounding structure, or from instrumental patterns which eventually produce inherent “gestalts,” stimulating verbal associations? In other words, are the inherent patterns instrumental renderings of text-lines or is it the other way round? Are some text-lines verbalizations of inherent patterns arising from an abstract structure?

While composition in African music may be started from either a text or an instrumental idea, the process with regard to inherent patterns is unidirectional. In my field notes across Central and East Africa, from the Azande into the Congo and to eastern Angola, Malaŵi and Uganda, I constantly observed that musicians found new text-lines or developments of an existing nuclear textual theme by listening intently to their solo-instrumental performance until they recognized certain patterns which seemed to “speak out” or suggest certain words. Verbalization of patterns can even include optical signals.

A *likembe* player in Angola tries a certain instrumental pattern, and suddenly the notes coming from his instrument seem to suggest words. This is an important process in composition, although, of course, not all text ideas derive from associations to inherent patterns. Moreover, the inherent pattern need not be elaborate for a verbal association to be evoked. It can also be fragmentary, just a few notes—perhaps in the deep register—which the performer begins to associate as a pattern. These notes form a kind of scaffolding for a basic text-line, which accompanies it in unison. The musician senses an identity between this scaffolding of pitches and his associated text melody. The text occurs to him, and he fills it in. The basic text-line of a famous eastern Angolan *likembe* song, “*Zambelela ngenzi mulikembe!*” (“Greet the Stranger with the *likembe!*”) originates in a fragmentary inherent pattern in the *ntangi* (deep-tuned notes) of the lamellophone. In 1965 this was demonstrated to me in Angola by my friend Kufuna Kandonga on his eight-note *likembe*.



Figure 32. Inherent pattern in a *likembe* piece suggesting the words of a theme

In southern Uganda and elsewhere, a new composition may be started from a short, sung text-line, which then becomes the theme of the song, as was probably the case, for example, with the early 19th-century composition “*Olutalo olw’e Nsinsi*” (“The Battle of Nsinsi”). The harpist’s right hand creates a tone-row (*okunaga*), which follows the vocal theme in unison. The next step is to find an interlocking, contrasting pattern (*okwawula*) with the left hand.

The emerging combination is complex in its accent distribution. It has an oscillating quality, leading to several inherent patterns rising up from the whole. By playing the cycle over and over, the musician gradually discovers them by listening, and suddenly new words, syllables and verbal fragments occur to him. He can now adjust the instrumental accompaniment to follow

those words even more closely. Suddenly the song develops, and new text-lines are found, such as *Batulwanako ab'edda* in the composition mentioned (cf. Chapter IV).

In Buganda, even the basic text-line may sometimes be inspired by an inherent pattern arising from instrumental combinations. This seems to be the case in the song “*Ndyegulira ekadde*” (“I Will Buy Myself an Old Woman”), where the basic words were obviously obtained from an inherent pattern heard in the deep register of the instrument. This has been demonstrated by Evaristo Muyinda with *amadinda*, in an analytical recording I made with him in January 1968 at his home in Nabbale, near Kampala (CD Track 15; see Transcription Example IX at the end of this chapter).

My sample suggests that inherent patterns precede texts and not the other way round. This connects with a general African tendency to verbalize abstract sonic structures. Verbal patterns are suggested to speakers of African languages by a variety of phenomena: work sounds, timbre-sequences in drumming (message drumming is based on verbalization) and bird “talk,” and patterns of movement in instrumental playing, walking, or even sexual intercourse, where different patterns can be described with idiophonic syllables. It is not that humans invent verbal patterns and the birds sing them later (except parrots.) Similarly, musicians do not invent text-lines to generate an inherent pattern in the accompaniment. Inherent patterns that have been contrived by the composer may later suggest text-lines for the further development of the basic vocal theme.

Answering questions posed above, we can say that

- (1) some text-lines are verbalizations of inherent patterns arising from a pre-composed instrumental structure;
- (2) inherent patterns are not instrumental renderings of text-lines preconceived by the composer;
- (3) inherent patterns, verbalized, can trigger melodic variation and text development.

Intra-Cultural Testimonies

In September 1988, the Malaŵian oral literature researchers Moya Aliya Malamusi and his sister Lidiya Malamusi, with whom I had been researching various traditions in south-east Africa since 1982, often joined me in playing *mangwilo*. This is a seven-note log xylophone, and the specimen we possess is tuned like that of the musicians Venjiwa and Jenja, whom I recorded and filmed in the Mitukwe mountains, northern Moçambique, in 1962 (cf. Kubik 1965c). We used an irregular non-scalar note layout.

When Moya, as Performer A, composed a new piece, he often began by

experimenting with instrumental patterns. On the occasion described here, he came up with a basic pattern for a new piece, in a 3:2 left-right hand relationship. My task as performer B, sitting opposite him, was to interlock, with regular equidistant strokes falling on pulse 2 of a triple-division of his left-hand beat.

As soon as I entered my part, several inherent patterns appeared. Lidiya was watching us. Hearing the patterns resulting from our combination, she became excited, spontaneously left her cooking and began to strike two notes from a position to the left of her brother, thus introducing a third performer's part (C), which she said responded to words she was hearing from our combined structure. Asked what these words were, she said, while continuing to strike her notes:

- (1) (associated with a rapid pattern emerging from our combination) *Tamapita, tamapita* . . . (“Just go! Just go! . . .”);
- (2) (associated with her own two notes in its movement) *Ndapelekeza! Ndapelekeza!* . . . (“I have accompanied somebody, I have accompanied somebody . . .”) By imitating those words, she said that she found her own part. The combination of the three parts gives a compact sound, with several inherent patterns (see Transcription Example X at the end of this chapter).

It is perhaps also significant that in content, Lidiya's word phrases are all somehow descriptive of movement and movement relationships. Later, Moya said that the words he could hear coming up from his side of the xylophone were different from those coming up from the opposite side.

Since the creation of inherent or subjective patterns plays such a significant role in various African traditions, one might expect that African composers and instrumentalists often make verbal references to them. Intra-cultural evidence through behavior is not difficult to find, but references in discussions are much more difficult to obtain, and one needs to live with musicians for some time to create the atmosphere for such topics to be discussed.

Even in a field situation, if the researcher continues to communicate in a foreign language, visiting his musician-informants only from time to time and not actually staying in the household, such topics may be withheld from conversation. It is important to realize that while the field-worker develops an opinion of his informants' mental abilities, informants do the same with regard to the field-worker. They may think that mentioning what “words” an instrument “says” is something he will not understand, because it is not in his language, the humor may be strange, or the whole matter may appear to be trivial.

Occasionally, local field-workers have been honored with precious information. For example, Charles Sekintu in the kingdom of Buganda told me in 1962 that a very old woman in the Kasubi shrine in Kampala (where the dead

kings of Buganda are buried) had told him that whenever *baakisimba* was played on the drum, the pattern sounded to her something like *Olunkutiza, olunkutiza . . .* (cf. Chapter I). This was her personal verbalization of inherent timbre-sequences, because the generally known *baakisimba* mnemonics, also rooted in verbalization of inherent timbre-sequences, are *Kabaka ali Nkuluze, mukubire mu baakisimba*.⁷

The late Joseph Kyagambiddwa, a Muganda church music composer who was instructed by Evaristo Muyinda in the playing of Kiganda instruments in the early 1950s, makes an obvious reference to inherent auditory patterns when writing about the *ennanga* (harp):

The music consists of three main parts: (1) the OKUNAGA; (2) OK-WAWULA, and (3) OKUYIMBA parts. The first two are for the hands. The third is the voice part. When the hands play their parts together, the listener can hear the voice part mysteriously looming up. (Kyagambiddwa 1955:106)

This is a revealing description, pointing to the somewhat iridescent nature of inherent patterns in Kiganda music, even their “mysterious” character. Here one wonders how his statement would be expressed in Luganda. I suspect he translated directly from his own language.

Maurice Djenda (1948–2004), the ethnologist from the Central African Republic, was familiar with the inherent pattern effect in the musical cultures of the Upper Sangha area of his country. In a joint manuscript on Mpyemō musical instruments, Djenda makes the following remarks about the etymology of drum names in Mpyemō:

Un terme intéressant est *šia* pour le tambour basse. Ce mot est une contraction de *ši-ya*. *Ši* signifie “le bas” et *ya* est “ça” en français. *Ši-ya* alors se traduit “le bas de ça.” Dans le langage courant on peut employer le mot *ši* par exemple dans la phrase *ši le* (= sous l’arbre). Mais *ši* peut être aussi très bien employé en musique. L’expression *ajae be ši* (= il répond en bas) se réfère à un rythme inhérent très bas qui s’élève de la structure totale d’une pièce. (Djenda/Kubik, unpublished manuscript)

Ajae be ši could perhaps be translated into English as “it is responding from the deep,” and it is possibly a key term in Mpyemō language by which one can refer to the phenomenon discussed. In his French manuscript, Djenda has of course adopted my term for description, rendering it in French as “rythme inhérent.” By 1966 we had already discussed this phenomenon, and he had asked me to suggest a French term for it. But it would be unfair to suggest that

7. The pattern of *baakisimba* performed by Amisi Sebunya was filmed by me in analytical cinematographic footage at Salama, southern Uganda, in 1962. (Orig. film no. 1/1962-63, Private Archive, Kubik/Malamusi.)

he might have been “influenced” by me in his perception. Rather, it was the other way round.

On one occasion in 1967, we were listening together to one of our recordings of a song performed on a *biyo* notched flute in a camp of the pygmies we had visited the year before (CD Track 16). Djenda pointed out an inherent melodic pattern which had escaped my attention. It appears in the deep register of the flute. It took me quite some time to recognize it. Djenda was surprised that I had not discovered it myself.

From Zimbabwe come remarks by Andrew Tracey, who seems to have good reasons for believing that Abraham Dumisani Maraire, the *mbira* (lamel-lophone) performer, actually refers to the I.P. phenomenon in the notes that accompany his record album. In a review of Maraire’s record Tracey writes:

He describes the kind of feeling that marks each stage, and continually stresses one point, that the *mbira* gives him back as much as he puts into it. “To me a *mbira* is a lively instrument. It amazes me whenever I hear all these different things coming out without any change in my way of playing. This is not because I am playing a different pattern without knowing what I am doing, but because as I give the *mbira* more, I get more from it. What more can I say of such an instrument but that it is a friend indeed?” It is obvious that what he is referring to here is the concept of inherent patterns. It is valuable to have this confirmation from an African musician of such an important concept in African music. (Tracey 1972:99)

The late Daniel Kachamba from Malaŵi drew my attention to inherent patterns in his guitar music. In 1972, after performing the song “*Dolosina Lumba*” for one of his films in the Encyclopaedia Cinematographica (Institute for Scientific Cinematography, Göttingen, Germany, 16 mm film no. E 2137), the soundtrack was played back to him for a final check. He listened attentively. At one point he said to me in English: “Watch the guitar!” and he pointed to a few notes on the bass-line which he had transferred in a variation to the middle register, and which could now be heard as a short repeating inherent pattern. He said, laughing: “Good voice! It has got a very short idea.” He then added with an air of self-admiration: “I can play on only one guitar for what other people in Malaŵi must have four guitars.” This was a snipe at many of the pop musicians who played electric guitars in the “rich” hotels in town.



Figure 33. Inherent pattern in Daniel Kachamba’s “*Dolosina Lumba*” (film E 2137 Encyclopaedia Cinematographic, Göttingen, at 2:01 from the beginning)



Photo 37. *Biyɔ*—notched flute with four finger holes played by Mogbolo, about 30 years old, at a camp of the Bangombe pygmies, Mpie-Nyɔɔɔ, on the right bank of the Sangha river, opposite Linjombo, in the south-western part of the Central African Republic, May 1966.—Photo: author.

of his playing (cf. DVD *African Guitar*, Kubik 1995), Moya A. Malamusi also made a significant statement. He was playing five-string guitar in the “Spanish” tuning, which is b, g, e, C and F from top to bottom. Suddenly he stopped playing and said: “It is interesting: when I play, then string nos. 1 and 2 go together, string nos. 4 and 6 help each other, while string no. 3 is alone!” Clearly he had become conscious of three autonomous pitch layers within the total image of his guitar piece, each capable of producing an inherent pattern.

More recently, I have also been able to obtain intra-cultural references to the I.P. effect from the Eastern Angolan culture area. In May/June 1988, while comparing *likembe* and guitar-accompanied song texts for a publication, my Luvale- and Luchazi-speaking co-worker, Mose Yotamu, made several unexpected references to the I.P. effect as a device which inspired song composers to find the exact wording of their texts. Yotamu then lived at Chifuwe village, Kabompo District, Zambia. Since 1971 he had worked with me for long periods in his home area, and later we travelled to East Africa, Europe and the Côte d’Ivoire.

His statements, given in 1988, are significant, because (a) Mose is a musician himself, performing on guitar and banjo (cf. Malamusi 1984:198; Kubik 1989:25–29, and DVD *African Guitar*, Kubik 1995); (b) we always communicate in Luchazi, so his statements are therefore preserved in their original wording; (c) I had never discussed my findings on inherent patterns with him, so his account must be considered independent. His comments were prompted by the following of my field recordings, published on the CD accompanying Erlmann 1991.

“*Samukoya*”—a song by the *likembe* player Tololi Mbundu. Ethnic group: VaMbwela. Language: Mbwela. Village: Kabalata, 9 km north-east of Kwitukuwanavale, south-eastern Angola, August 1965.

Song text in Mbwela:

Chivundu chavangenzi, Samukoya
 kalevu kamushomby’e, Samukoya
 plisi njija neya Samukoya
 Samukoya, vanana njia neya, Samukoya,
 Samukoya, kalevu sala wino, Samukoya,
 Samukoya plisi njija neya, Samukoya (3x)
 Samukoya we, we mama we!
 Welelele we yaya we!
 . . . etc. . . .

Translation (M.Y./G.K.):

The stiff porridge for the visitors, Samukoya,
 expert of the *shombe* game, Samukoya!

Please, with whom should I go, Samukoya?
 Samukoya, Mother with whom should I go, Samukoya?
 Samukoya, expert, stay well, Samukoya!
 Samukoya please, with whom should I go, Samukoya? (3×)
 Samukoya we, we mama we!
 Welelele we, my elder brother/sister, we!
 . . . etc. . . .

Listening to this piece and the song text, Mose Yotamu was of the opinion that Tololi Mbundu found the text simply through verbal association with a previously composed instrumental framework. Yotamu expressed it like this:

Tololi Mbundu waputukile mwaso weni omu mwakele nakwivwa kwohya chachisanzi cheni: Samukoya, Samukoya. (“Tololi Mbundu began his song text as he was hearing sound patterns coming up from his lamellophone, saying: *Samukoya, Samukoya.*”) Dispelling any doubt, he added, “Just as one can also hear birds speaking (*kuhandeka*) something.” (Personal communication, May 26, 1988)

The key term referring to inherent auditory patterns is the verb *kwohya*. From my own analysis of several Luchazi sentences referring to music, the semantic field of *kwohya* can be rendered in English as “the emerging (coming up) of sound patterns,” implying that an organized pattern appears. It contains the idea that there are coherent, acoustically perceptible patterns. The term can also refer to sounds produced by animals, as these sounds, too, are perceived as patterned: bleat, bark, coo, croak, quack, etc., according to Emil Pearson (1970:285).

In the following piece by the Angolan, Luvale-speaking guitarist Jaime Ngovu, who accompanied his songs with a homemade four-string guitar, Yotamu identified inherent timbre-and-pitch patterns as stimulants for text composition.

“*Mama mama Kateku*”—by Jaime Ngovu, ca. 18 years. Ethnic group: Va-Lwena. Language: Lwena/Luvale. Village: Nganda, west of Kazombo, eastern Angola, December 1965.

Ee! Kateku, tek, tek, tek
 tek, tek, tek, tek, tek, tek
 Mama! Mama! Ma . . . , Mama! Mama! Ma . . .
 Mama! Mama! aa! Mama Kateku, tek, tek, tek,
 tek, kateku, kateku, kateku, kateku
 tek, tek, tek (guitar) etc.

Yotamu stated that this text, based on the combination of only three syllables, *ka-te-ku*, imitates the sound of the wires of a “talking” *mbanjo* (banjo): *Ku-kavangeya chawaya muyekwohya* (“following a string as it produces sound patterns”).



Photo 38. Lwena/Luvale-speaking musician Jaime Ngovu, about 18 years old, playing a homemade four-string guitar. He is accompanied by Alfonse Kambila (also a guitarist), who strikes a time-line pattern on a spanner. In Nganda village, a few kilometers west of Kazombo, Alto Zambeze, eastern Angola, December 1965.—Photo: author.

The verb *kukavangeya* derives from *kukava* (v.) = “to follow, to pursue.” In daily usage it means: “to pursue something persistently,” “to cling” or “to adhere to something.” In music it seems to characterize a psychological disposition whereby the performer attentively follows (clings to) the timbre, melody and accent patterns which arise from his instrumental playing. Yotamu made

another significant statement. If (in his culture area) someone strikes a time-line pattern such as *kachacha* with a percussion stick and sings or speaks that pattern's mnemonic syllables, he can say about his action: *njakavangeya mukakazi* (= I have followed, pursued, imitated the [pattern of the] percussion stick). This means that in Luchazi/Luvale culture, verbal patterns in the broadest sense—whether texts with literal meaning or syllables with accentual meaning—can be conceptualized as “following,” “pursuing,” “clinging to” instrumentally performed patterns.

The text of this song has almost no verbal meaning, and demonstrates how an entire voice part consisting of a pattern of syllables is evoked in the performer's mind from his own playing. This comes about as he follows the sound and accent patterns of his instrumental framework. Audiences listening to this recording of Jaime Ngovu discover inherent timbre-and-melody patterns in the guitar part which seem to “say” exactly what the musician then sings: *Teku, teku, kateku* . . . etc.

Mose Yotamu made similar statements about text composition in other songs. In “*E ye ndambi moyo*” (“E ye! My Beloved. Greetings!”) by the *likembe* player Tololi Mbundu, he said there was no particular story that would have inspired the singer to compose his lyrics (*histori yahi* = “no history”). He was simply finding those words by following the lamellophone (*kukavangeya chisanzi*), i.e. following the instrumental framework which he played.

It is interesting that Yotamu particularly refers to inherent auditory patterns in individual music, where a solo-singer accompanies himself and begins to experiment instrumentally. Suddenly the sound patterns in the instrumental framework begin to suggest words to him. In community-based music of the same region, such as the *kalukuta* dance, which is accompanied by scrapers and axe blade, Yotamu does not mention that the leader's extensive text-lines could have an instrumental inspiration.

This suggests that the creation of the I.P. effect arises from a certain psychological state brought about by some form of meditation when listening to the depth structure of one's own solitary instrumental play.

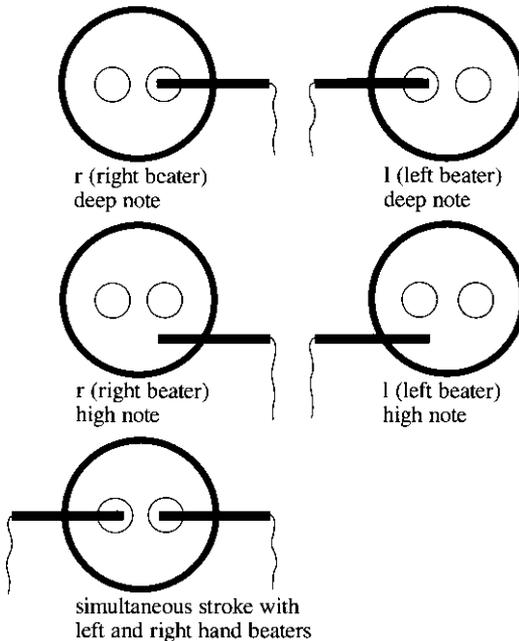
Transcriptions

Transcription Example I

Yoruba drumming patterns transcribed from lessons in Oshogbo, Nigeria, in August/September 1960. (Cf. CD Track 2.) Duration: 2:21

The instruments involved in these drum lessons were: *gudugudu*, *kanangó* and *akuba*. The *gudugudu* is the smallest of the portable drums of a *dùndún* set of hourglass-shaped drums. This particular drum is not hourglass shaped, however, and has fixed pitches. In the middle of the membrane to be struck there are usually two lumps of black wax or rubber. Two soft leather “beaters” are attached to the drum. When striking, these are kept horizontal, like the drumsticks of a snare drum. One can hit the two “eyes” in the center (the lumps of black wax) to produce a deep note, or the plain membrane in a position nearer to the performer’s body, producing a high note.

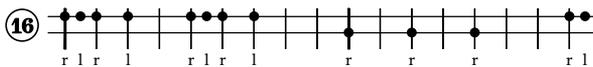
Gudugudu playing technique



The function of the *gudugudu* in the drum ensemble is to play a basic repeating pattern, which is why novice musicians have to start with this instrument.

Apan-ran - Basic pattern for gudugudu

(Rec. Ph.A. Vienna, 1960/Kubik, B 5143-5144)



“Ghana-Style” - Basic pattern for gudugudu

(Rec. Ph.A. Vienna, 1960/Kubik, B 5147)



The following transcription shows the patterns and their interrelation in *apala* music. These are the basic forms only, to be followed by variations in the *kànàngó* II and *akuba* patterns.

(c) *Apala* performance

Gudugudu	
Kànàngó I	
Kànàngó II	
Akuba	

Here, the *gudugudu* basic pattern is performed by striking the “eyes” simultaneously with the two leather beaters. *Kànàngó* I has its leather thongs tied together and produces only one pitch. *Kànàngó* II can modify its pitch by varying the pressure on the thongs with the musician’s left arm. It is expected to produce three different pitches (symbolized by the three horizontal lines), which are approximately a fifth apart from one another. The *akuba* is an imported drum, similar to Cuban drums and played with the hands.

Apala was considered a “modern” type of music in 1960. But even then it had already generated several variants and numerous deviations, such as *apala-woro* etc. The patterns given below were considered “pure” *apala* by my teachers in Oshogbo.

Transcription Example II

Transcription of Bulu percussion patterns by Pie-Claude Ngumu, Cameroon. (Reproduced from Ngumu 1975/76:23)

Délimitation des carreaux:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Endum:				<u>6</u>			<u>6</u>			<u>6</u>			<u>6</u>			<u>6</u>			<u>6</u>			<u>6</u>		
	dum			dum			dum			dum			dum			dum			dum			dum		
	/			/			/			/			/			/			/			/		
Mbe:	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	wu-lu - gu	wu-lu - gu	wu-lu - gu	wu-lu - gu	tle	tle	tle	tle																
	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Nkul:																								
	Kul'an-ga - lig	bi - lig	bi - lig	bi - dzo-go	Kul'an-ga - lig	bi - lig	bi - lig	bi - dzo-go	Kul'an-ga - lig	bi - lig	bi - lig	bi - dzo-go	Kul'an-ga - lig	bi - lig	bi - lig	bi - dzo-go	Kul'an-ga - lig	bi - lig	bi - lig	bi - dzo-go	Kul'an-ga - lig	bi - lig	bi - lig	bi - dzo-go
	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Nyas:	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha	Tcha
Nkən:	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən	Kən
	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Kob:	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe	Tsoe

The instruments involved in this 24-pulse cycle were the following: (1) xylophones, of which one, the deep-tuned *endum*, has been transcribed here, (2) *mbe* (membrane drum), (3) *ηkul* (slit drum), (4) *nyas* (plaited vessel rattle), (5) *nkey* (double bell), (6) *kob* (hand-claps).

Each pattern or series of strokes to be performed is identified both by the mnemonic syllables used for teaching and by the impact points along the time line. The sign / is used for a stroke on all the instruments except the xylophone, where only a stroke on the “dry” note with indefinite pitch is indicated by this sign, while strokes on the tuned notes are indicated by a number, in this case 6 (twice underlined, meaning a note of the lowest octave).

The xylophone ensemble of Dr. Ngumu’s main informant, Ambasa, included four *mendzān* gourd-resonated portable xylophones and the percussion instruments transcribed above.

Transcription Example III

James Koetting's transcription of percussive patterns in Ayitee's drumming lessons, Ghana. (Reproduced from Koetting 1970:132)

The transcription example refers to a combination of patterns played on bell (*gankogui*) and other percussion instruments in the dance called (fast) *Atsia*. Koetting writes:

My purpose in using the twelve-unit frame is to show in the least obstructed way the unified interrelation of patterns—the frame must be long enough to encompass at least most of the patterns and short enough to be understandable as a unit—without making a commitment before analysis to what might well be erroneous assumptions.

gankogui	H		H		H	H		H		H		H
sogo	○		○	♯	♯	♯	○		○	♯	♯	♯
kaganu		○	○		○	○		○	○		○	○
kidi	○			○			○			○		
axhatsi	D			D			D			D		

He then elaborates:

Of course, for special purposes at a later stage of analysis the researcher might wish to subdivide the frame into equal or additive groupings to show what he might feel to be internal divisions common to the various parts.

gankogui	H		H		H	H		●		●		●
sogo	○		○	♯	♯	♯	○		○	♯	♯	♯
kaganu		○	○		○	○		●	●		●	●
kidi	○			○			○	●		●		
axhatsi	D			D			D	●		●		

Transcription Example IV

“*Leñ me litós a kum džegi*” (“Give Me Good Fish, Water of the Barrage”).
 Song in Bassa, Cameroon, used for teaching simple percussive patterns to children. Transcribed by Pierre Emmanuel Njock, from Maka, Cameroon. (Reproduced from Njock 1970:22)

I 

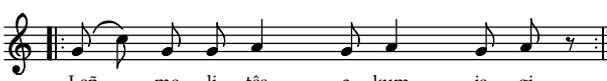
II 

III  right hand
left hand

IV  right hand
left hand

V  right hand
left hand

VI 

VII 
Leñ - me li - tès a kum - je - gi

VIII 
hé - ya

IX 
hé - ya

Njock gives the following performer’s instructions to the drummers:

◡ means that the note should be struck with the ball of the hand

▲ means that it should be struck with the finger tips.

Transcription Example V

Alternative notations of Mwenda Jean Bosco's song "Bombalaka" by David Rycroft (CD Track 11). Duration: 3:10

(a) Notation on the inverted beat (reproduced from Rycroft 1961:95)
(Extract)

$\text{♩} = 140 \text{ M.M.}$ **B O M B A L A K A**
(Gallotone GB.158dT) Mwenda Jean Bosco
(Transcribed by David Rycroft)

Guitar

[Capotasta fitted at the fifth fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written (key F).
The vocal line has been transposed in accordance: actual pitch should be one fifth lower.]

Vocal

Marie Jo - sé na kwambi-a ka - ye bwana ya - ngu.

Guitar

Vocal

Ma-rie Jo - sé na kwambi-a ka - ye bwana ya - ngu;

Vocal

Seke se - ke se - ke se - kwa nja - nja ki - o - o - ne;

The image shows a musical score with three staves. The top staff is labeled 'Vocal' and contains the lyrics: 'Bomba - la - ka, Bo - mba-la-ka, Bo - mba-la-ka, Si ki-i-e-ma!'. The middle staff is labeled 'Guitar' and contains measures 21 through 24. The bottom staff is also labeled 'Guitar' and contains measures 25 through 28. The music is written in a 4/4 time signature and features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The guitar accompaniment consists of rhythmic patterns with chords and single notes.

"Copyright, International Library of African Music."

(b) David Rycroft's revised transcription: "Bombalaka" as conceptualized by Mwenda Jean Bosco⁸

BOMBALAKA

Mwenda Jean Bosco
(Transcription by
D. Rycroft, revised
1982)

♩ = 146 M.M.

[1] GUITAR

[Capotasta fitted at fifth fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher: Key F]

[2]

VOCAL [transposed to match guitar part: actual pitch should be one fifth lower]

[3]

Marie Jo - sé na kwambi-a ka - ye bwana ya - ngu,

GUITAR

[4]

Marie Jo - sé na kwambi-a ka - ye bwana ya - ngu,

(Guitar as above)

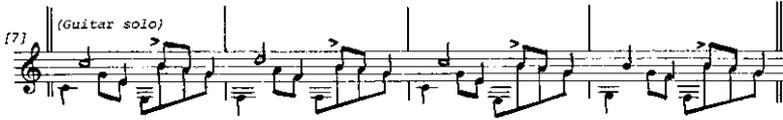
[5]

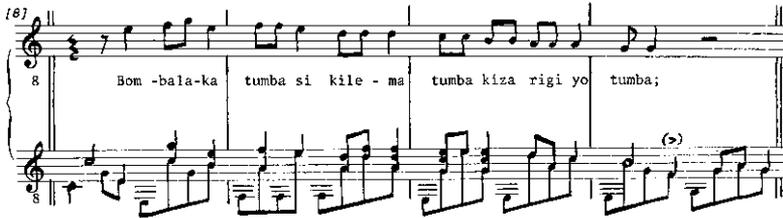
Ske se - ke se - ke sakwa nja- nja ki-a - o - na;

(Guitar as above)

8. This transcription was made by the late Dr. David Rycroft as a special gift to be included in my book.

[6] 

[7] *(Guitar solo)* 

[8] 

[9] *(Guitar solo)* 

[10]

8

1. Mama mamba-e, Seli mamba-e, Mama mamba-e, Lu-lu
 2. Mama mamba-e, Mana mamba-e, Lulu mamba-e, Ma-ma

8

[11]

8

mamba-e;
 mamba-e;

8

[12]

8

We baba Jacques i-na kwambi-a ka - ye bwana ya - ngu,

8

[13]

8

Soke se- ke se - ke sakwa nja - nja ki - a o - ne ;
 (Guitar as above)

8

Transcription Example VI

Relationship between the internal reference beat, the harmonic changes and the voice-line in Daniel Kachamba's "Woyaya," a song in the double-step dance rhythm (CD Track 12). Daniel Kachamba (guitar and vocal), Donald Kachamba (one-stringed bass, voice), Josefe Bulahamu (rattle, voice). Recorded in Blantyre, May 1967. Duration: 3:25

Correct relationship between the song's accents and the reference beat:

The image shows a musical transcription of the song "Woyaya" in 3/2 time. It consists of four staves. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef, with lyrics underneath. The second staff is the rattle part, marked with 'x' symbols. The third staff is the guitar part, showing chord changes from C to F to C to G7 to C. The bottom staff is the bass line in bass clef. The lyrics are: "I - fe ma - fa - na lo - bu - la - la ma - ha".

Voices: I - fe ma - fa - na lo - bu - la - la ma - ha
 Rattle: x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x
 Guitar: C → F → C → G7 → C
 Bass:

Song text:

Woyaya woyaya woyaya! (2×)

Ife mafana lobulala maha (2×)

Wachacha yu se simani! (2×)

Note: The text is in a mixture of Shona, English and another South African language. "Ife mafana" = we children; "lobulala maha" I'll beat you, I inflict wounds upon you, according to Donald Kachamba (interview in February 1988).

Inverted (wrong) relationship (this is how many listeners from outside the culture perceive this song):

The image shows a musical transcription of the song "Woyaya" in 3/2 time, focusing on the vocal line. The lyrics are: "I - fe ma - fa - na lo - bu - la - la ma - ha".

I - fe ma - fa - na lo - bu - la - la ma - ha

Transcription Example VII

Inherent auditory patterns arising from a performance with *timbrh* (raffia lamellophones) among the Vute, Central Cameroon. Performance by Omaru Sanda, m., ca. 30 years old, and his group; recorded at Emtse, north of Nanga-Eboko, Cameroon, February 1964. Title of the musical piece: “*Manengombe*.” (Copy of my original field recording stored in Phonogram Archive Vienna, B 8892–8893/Kubik)

The *timbrh* is a relatively large lamellophone with a wooden box-resonator and an array of lamellae made from the hard surface of a raffia-stem leaf. In smaller instruments the resonator is made of two or three hollowed-out raffia branches joined together. An ingenious device is the vibration needles attached to each lamella. The *timbrh* is tuned exclusively by attaching lumps of black wax of different quantities to the lower ends of the tongues. The tuning is basically tetratonic and in octave pairs. Using the thumbs, the performer strikes two neighboring lamellae at once, producing parallel octaves. Left and right thumbs interlock throughout in duple-division style. From the start of a performance, the total image of a *timbrh* composition breaks down into inherent melodic-rhythmic lines.

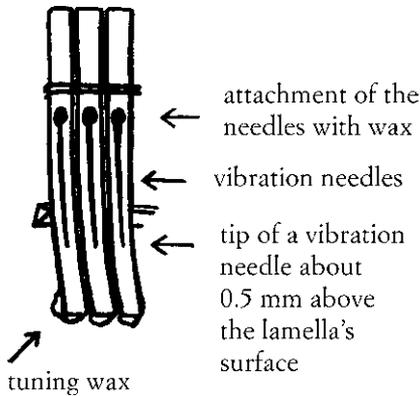
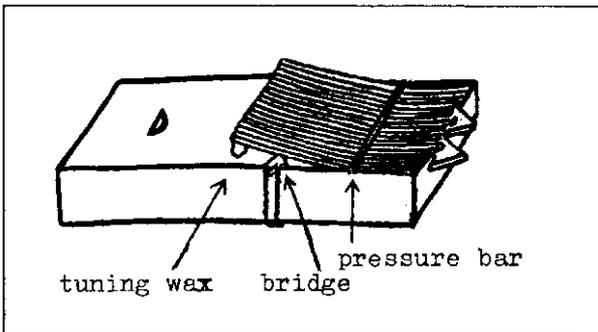
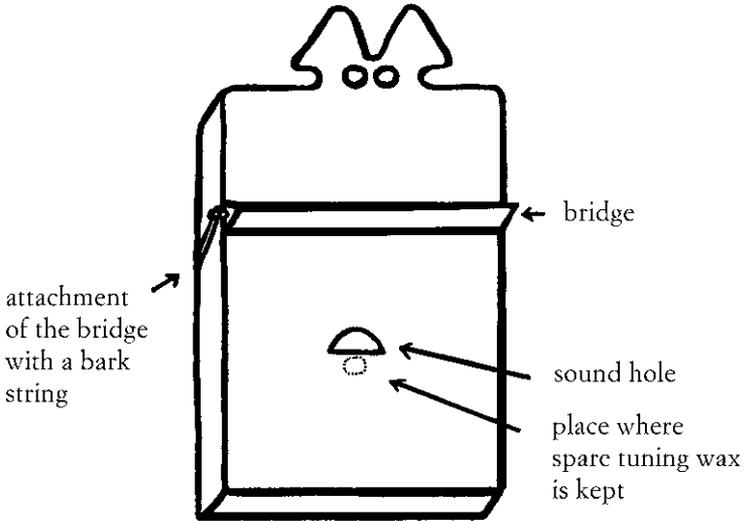
This is the tuning layout of Omaru Sanda’s *timbrh*, as I recorded the notes (Ph.A. B 8893). In the transcription I will render the notes in cipher notation, as indicated below:

1̄ 1 3̄ 3 4̄ 4 2 2̄ 2̄ 2̄ 2 4 4̄ 1 1̄ 3̄ 3 4 2̄

left thumb playing area

right thumb playing area

Example 7a. The tuning of Omaru Sanda’s *timbrh* lameollophone, relative notation; staff and cipher notation



Example 7b-d. Omaru Sanda's *timbrh* and its construction

<u>What is played:</u>		THEME	VARIATION
Right thumb:	(12)	2 . 1 . 3 . 1 . 2 . 4 .	1 . 1 . 3 . 1 . 1 . 4 .
		2 . 1 . 3 . 1 . 2 . 4 .	1 . 1 . 3 . 1 . 1 . 4 .
Left thumb:		. 2 . 3 . 1̄ . 2 . 1̄ . 1̄	. 2 . 3 . 1̄ . 2 . 1̄ . 1̄
		. 2 . 3 . 1 . 2 . 1 . 1	. 2 . 3 . 1 . 2 . 1 . 1
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ </div>			
<u>What is heard:</u>			
(Inherent patterns isolated by the ear)			
(a)	(12)	2 2 . 3 3 . . 2 2 . 4 .	. 2 . 3 3 . . 2 . . 4 .
(b)		. . 1 . . 1 1 . . 1 . 1	1 . 1 . . 1 1 . 1 1 . 1
(c)	 1̄ 1̄ . 1̄ 1̄ 1̄ . 1̄

Example 7e. Played image and auditory image in “*Manengombe*” by Omaru Sanda

Transcription Example VIII

“*Ennyana ekutudde*” (“The Calf Has Broken Loose”). Court music composition in the kingdom of Buganda; see also Chapter IV in Volume I. This is one *muko* (transposition) as played on an *amadinda* xylophone (CD Track 14; duration: 2:02). The three players are referred to as: *Omunazi* (the one who starts), *Omwawuzi* (the one who interlocks) and *Omukoonezi* (the one who picks the lowest inherent pattern, duplicating it on the two top keys of the instrument). Two inherent patterns become very audible as soon as the second player inserts his tone-row. *Omunazi* and *Omwawuzi* play their tone-rows in parallel octaves. An *amadinda* xylophone has twelve keys. In cipher notation they are represented this way:

2 1 5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1

PLAYED IMAGE:

Omukoonezi:	((playing I.P. no. 2))
Omunazi:		(24) 5 . 5 . 3 . 5 . 2 . 1 . 5 . 5 . 3 . 3 . 1 . 1 .	
Omwawuzi:		. 2 . 4 . 1 . 2 . 4 . 1 . 2 . 4 . 1 . 2 . 4 . 1	

AUDITORY IMAGES:

I.P. No. 1:	(24)	5 . 5 4 3 . 5 . . 4 . . 5 . 5 4 3 . 3 . . 4 . .
I.P. No. 2:		. 2 . . . 1 . 2 2 . 1 1 . 2 . . . 1 . 2 1 . 1 1

Example 8. Inherent patterns emerging from the *amadinda* piece “*Ennyana ekutudde*.”
 ↑ denotes starting point for the *Omwawuzi*.

Transcription Example IX

Basic text-line suggested by an inherent pattern in a Kiganda instrumental performance: “*Ndyegulira ekadde*” (“I Will Buy Myself an Old Woman”).

The relationship was demonstrated by Evaristo Muyinda, born 1914, former musician of the Kabaka (King of Buganda), on the *amadinda* log xylophone. This is part of a series of analytical recordings I made in January 1968 with Evaristo Muyinda in his house at Nabbale, about 5 km outside the city of Kampala (CD Track 15; duration: 3:18).

Muyinda began each recording with some historical remarks about the song he wanted to play and the song text contained in the instrumental arrangement. Then he played, from memory, each of the three constituent parts: 1. *okunaga* (for Player I), 2. *okwawula* (for Player II) and 3. *okukoonera* (for Player III, who picks out the inherent pattern in the bass formed by the notes written as 1 and 2 in cipher notation).

Next, the two basic parts were played in combination. As a student, I took one part, while the teacher took the other, both of us playing in parallel octaves with two beaters and combining the series in interlocking duple-division.

In this particular piece, “*Nyegulira ekadde*,” listeners become aware of an inherent pattern in the bass notes (the *amatengezzi*) of the instrument from the moment the second player enters. The point is marked by an arrow in the transcription. The pattern arises from the auditory association of all those notes struck by either player on the two lowest keys (represented with the ciphers 1 and 2), plus another note, which is attracted to and assimilated by this “gestalt,” the stroke on key 3. There is only one such stroke in this composition.

This inherent pattern vaguely suggests the words “*Nyegulira ekadde, w’eky’otolaba kye ki?*” (“I will buy myself an old woman. Why, don’t you see?”). The text refers to the complaints of a Kabaka’s musician who in his social position was unable to find a beautiful woman as a wife. The singer laments: “I have to buy myself an old woman, because every beautiful young woman is for the King, and every ugly young woman is for the chiefs . . .” (interview with E. Muyinda, January 1968). The important word “*ki*” at the end of the text-line coincides with the stroke on key 3, and is particularly emphasized by its high pitch.

The text is a vivid example of the social criticism a Kabaka’s musician could express in performances at the King’s court, provided that he presented the case in a humorous manner which would amuse the Kabaka and his retinue. The song contains sarcastic criticism of the lifestyle of 19th-century Buganda’s kings, who were often complacent and unrestrained in that they claimed all the country’s resources for themselves, including the most beautiful women. Next in the hierarchy came the chiefs, who were entitled to second-class wealth, while for the poor man nothing remained.

The present example also demonstrates how performers can enhance the

text-lines suggested by an inherent pattern by introducing a slight variation. In the recording, before Evaristo Muyinda begins to sing the words in unison with the inherent auditory pattern, he slightly varies his part by changing just one note, the sixth from the beginning. He replaces the 5 with a 1. This brings the inherent pattern even more into congruence with the associated text-line.

PLAYED IMAGE:

Player I:	Ⓣ	{	2 . 1 . 2 . 2 . 2 . 5 . 2 . 1 . 1 . 2 . 3 . 5 .	}
Player II :	Ⓣ	{	. 4 . 2 . 5 . 4 . 2 . 5 . 4 . 1 . 5 . 4 . 2 . 5	}

INHERENT PATTERNS:

(a) Ⓣ . 4 . . . 5 . 4 . . 5 5 . 4 . . . 5 . 4 . . 5 5
 (b) Ⓣ 2 . 1 2 2 . 2 . 2 2 . . 2 . 1 1 1 . 2 . 3 2 . .

SONG TEXT FOLLOWING INHERENT PATTERN ♭:

Ⓣ | 2 . 1 | 2 2 . | 2 . 2 | 2 1 . | 2 . 1 | 1 1 . | 2 . 3 | 2 . .
 N dye - gu - li - r ' e - ka - d de w ' e - ky ' o - to - la - ba kye ki ?

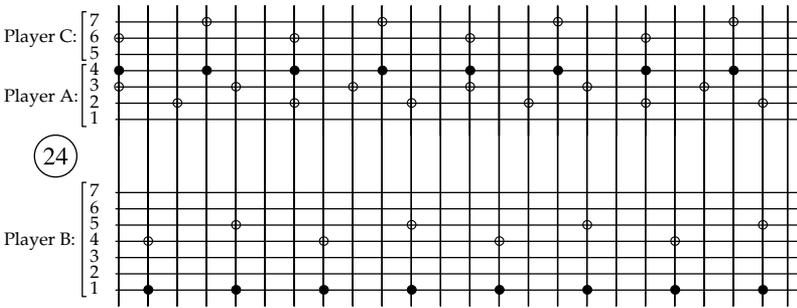
Transcription Example X

Xylophone piece composed by Moya Aliya Malamusi and Lidiya Malamusi in September 1988. The inherent patterns suggest words. Performed on a small, seven-note log xylophone built and tuned exactly like a *mangwilo* recorded and filmed in the Mitukwe mountains of northern Mozambique in 1962 (cf. Kubik 1965c). The specimen used here was constructed by Andrew Tracey, International Library of African Music, South Africa. The present performance was recorded and filmed on October 21, 1988 (8-mm sync-sound film no. 79, Private Archive Kubik/Malamusi, Vienna).

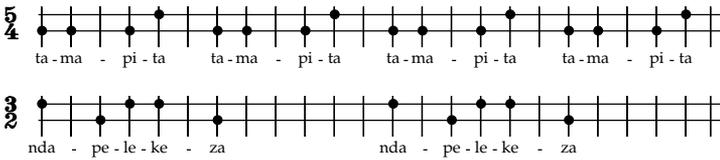
Xylophones in the so-called Nyasa/Ruvuma culture area (i.e. in Malaŵi, northern Mozambique and southernmost Tanzania) often have an irregular tuning layout. Tuning layout and position of the three performers of this particular xylophone piece can be seen in the illustration below. The lowest note (461 c.p.s.) is in the middle, key no. 4.

Slat no.	Tuning in c.p.s.	Cents	Cumulative Cents
1	850	388	1,062
2	625	1,055	529
3	579	920	394
4	461	526	0
5	512	707	181
6	752	172	846
7	579	920	394

Played Image:



Subjective auditory patterns and their verbalization by player C (Lidiya Malamusi)



Horizontal lines in this transcription system represent the xylophone slats, vertical lines the elementary pulsation (one line = one pulse-unit). Right-hand strokes in the played image are shown with rings, left-hand strokes with dots. Reinforced vertical lines indicate the beginning of a metrical scheme as conceptualized by individual performers. Please note that Player B interlocks his strokes. His internal reference beat is one pulse-unit later than that of Players A and C, whose patterns appear offbeat from his viewpoint, whereas—of course—he plays offbeat from their viewpoint.

Chapter VIII

Àlò—Yoruba Chantefables: An Integrated Approach towards West African Music and Oral Literature

Introduction

The material which forms the basis of this chapter was collected during my research work in western Nigeria in 1960 and 1963.¹ It comprises 171 items—stories containing songs—of which 132 were collected in 1960 and 39 in 1963. The total collection as such, although long written up in manuscript form, is yet unpublished. Some excerpts, focussing on the music of these chantefables, appeared in an article entitled “Àlò Yoruba Story Songs” published in 1968 in *African Music*, vol. 4, no. 2, and smaller portions appeared in Kubik 1961a,b, 1965a, 1961c and 1983 (with a transcription of “*Antere*,” story no. 34 in the collection) as well as Kubik et al. 1989.

During both stays in Nigeria I was a guest of the family of the late playwright Duro Ladipo, staying in his house in Oshogbo. My acquaintance with àlò chantefables was a result of this stay. Upon arrival in Nigeria in August 1960, I embarked on the study of some better known aspects of Yoruba music, for example *àpàlà*, and the performing techniques on drums such as *gudu-gudu* and *kànàngó* with the help of Omo-Ọba E. A. Laoye, Prince of Ede, and another tutor in Oshogbo.

Shortly thereafter, however, my Stuzzi Magnette 671 B tape recorder² broke down, and as it was impossible to get it repaired in Nigeria, àlò, a more intimate genre of music/oral literature, turned out to be a musical form into which I could venture, even without the facility of a recording machine. Technology was replaced by human aid, in the form of dozens of friends in Oshogbo and surrounding towns who demonstrated their willingness to teach me àlò by rote until I learned to sing the songs. Above all, it was members of the Duro Ladipo family who helped me, in particular Duro’s young brother Gboyega Ladipo,

1. August to October 1960, and June to September 1963.

2. This was the first battery-driven tape recorder commercially available in the decade after the Second World War. It thus became possible from the mid-fifties onwards to introduce a new style of culture-oriented fieldwork, challenging the colonial “expedition” style. I carried this recorder on my first study tour through Africa, October 1959 to October 1960, in a rucksack which was my only luggage. In this manner I travelled on foot and hitchhiked through twelve African countries in East, Central and West Africa.



Photo 39. My host, the playwright Duro Ladipo (left), with his colleague D. B. Awoniyi, who contributed *àlò* stories and songs to my studies. In Ila/via Ilesha, September 1960.—Photo: author.

who worked with me almost daily. Later, Gboyega himself collected more of the oral literature in the town of Ogbomosho, where he was employed as a teacher. (He is now a Canon at the Anglican Church in Oshogbo.) Both Duro and Gboyega introduced me to their acquaintances in the neighborhood, and my collection began to grow fast. I can also never forget Duro's twin sisters, Taiye and Kehinde Ladipo, who contributed and regularly practiced songs with me, besides teaching me the elementary lessons in the study of Yoruba.

Our excursions to neighboring towns such as Ila, via Ilesha and Ijebu-Ijesha in September 1960 proved extremely useful. Informants such as D. B. Awoniyi and his (then) eight-year-old son Akin Awoniyi, N. A. Oladeinde and others told me stories that were in Ijesha dialect and often different in musical aspects from those I had collected in Oshogbo.

The transcription of Yoruba music directly from the mouths of the narrators



Photo 40. Gboyega Ladipò, who used to teach me *àlò* almost daily and walk with me to many different places, meeting expert storytellers. In Oshogbo, September 1960.—Photo: author.

and informants was very exacting in the beginning. But with the help of the patient Gboyega, who spent many hours with me each day in the attic of Duro's one-story house at no. 40, Catholic Street, where I was living, and his willingness to check and recheck my collected materials, I gradually developed an astonishing expertise in transcribing *àlò*. I doubt whether today I would be able to do this kind of work. Even the early forms of my *àlò* song transcriptions reveal that at that time I had already begun to introduce a few modifications to conventional staff notation, in order to make it a better tool for the transcription of African music. Essentially these modifications were:

- Employment of relative notation, i.e., all the songs, mostly pentatonic, were written at the same relative pitch, thus dispensing with accidentals (# and b), and making pitch-lines more easily comparable with each other.



Photo 41. The author with the storyteller N. A. Oladeinde, walking to various compounds in the streets of Ila/via Ilesha, in September 1960.—Photo: Duro Ladipo.

- Employment of reduced bar-lines, i.e. bar-lines that do not cross the staff, which would allow one to avoid making *àlò* and other Yoruba genres look like “syncopated music.” With the use of reduced bar-lines, pitch sequences are phrased according to their apparent internal structure, regardless of the metric scheme suggested by bar-lines crossing the staff.
- Employment of the concept of a form or cycle number written at the beginning of a score, replacing the European-style time-signatures. The adoption of a cycle number such as (12), (16), (24), etc., always encircled, made it possible to write polymetric or asymmetric patterns and combinations of these without the difficulty created by having to phrase them within inferred Western-style single meters.

My transcription method for the *àlò* in those days is preserved in the scores of my 1968 publication in *African Music*. The second point is now obso-

lete, as I have since been able to develop a system that is much more convenient, because it also eliminates subjective phrasing (see Kubik 1983 and the transcriptions at the end of this chapter). But back in Oshogbo in 1960 it helped me immensely. Towards the end of my stay I could transcribe at such a fast speed from a live performance that in many cases narrators would only have to sing the song once to me; after writing down the words, I got down the melody.

Two years later, when I returned to Oshogbo and to Duro Ladipo, who in the meantime had founded his Theatre Company and the Mbari Club (replacing his Popular Club of 1960), I began to work in a manner different from my earlier style, perhaps a little more conventionally. Equipped with a new tape recorder, my major objective was then to go from house to house and record *àlò*—especially from older people—in its contextual setting. Members of



Photo 42. Catholic Street in Oshogbo, where Duro Ladipo established the Mbari Club in 1961 and began to compose his celebrated Yoruba folk operas. In Oshogbo, September 1960.—Photo: author.

Duro Ladipo's Theatre Company accompanied me on those tours, in particular Lamidi Gbadamosi³ and Yinka Adeyemi. The latter was also most helpful in transcribing some Yoruba texts from my tapes. To all of them I would like to express my gratitude.

The driving spirit of those years, Duro Ladipo, is no longer among us. I wish he could have seen some of the fruits of this work.

The Language

Today, Yoruba is the native language of more than 40 million people settled in the south-western part of Nigeria and adjacent areas in the Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomé). There is also a Yoruba diaspora in West Africa with sizeable pockets of Yoruba-speaking communities found in urban centers across Nigeria, and as far west as Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana (see Nketia 1958c). Yoruba as a language was first written down in the mid-19th century by Christian missionaries, long before the onset of modern linguistic studies in Africa. From those times, Standard Yoruba has inherited a peculiar orthography with a slightly "French" bias, in which the texts are literally studded with diacritical marks.

Like most languages, Yoruba has regional variants. For example, the so-called Ọ̀yọ̀ dialect, the language of the former kingdom of Ọ̀yọ̀, is distinct, particularly in grammar, from the kind of Yoruba spoken, for example, in the seaport of Lagos, with its agglomeration of people with extremely diverse ethnic backgrounds. The dialects of the Ijesha and Ekiti are also different from Standard Yoruba.

Yoruba possesses seven vowels: /a/, /e/, /ẹ/ (phonetically ɛ), /i/, /o/, /o/ (phonetically ɔ) and /u/. In addition, there are the nasalized vowels: /an/ (phon. ã), /on/ (phon. ò), /in/ (phon. ì) and /un/ (phon. ù). Very rare is the sound [ɛ̃], represented in Yoruba orthography as /en/. Open and closed [e] and [o] are represented in Yoruba not by means of phonetic symbols—as is the case in other West African languages, for example, Ewe—but by setting a point under the respective letters for the open variants; hence ẹ and ọ. Together with the tone marks, absolutely necessary in Yoruba, for which the "French" symbols of "accent aigu" (´) and "accent grave" (`) are used, Yoruba displays the kind of orthographic picture we find today in newspapers and books. There is a further sound represented with a dotted letter, namely [ɟ], pronounced with spread lips. This is notated as /ṣ/, an example being "Abureṣe" = a name. Nasal vowels are represented in Yoruba following a French orthographic pat-

3. Lamidi in 1963 was an actor in Duro Ladipo's theatrical group, whose very beginnings I had the privilege to live through. He has changed his name since and is now known in Nigeria as Ademola Onibonokuta, for his playing of a lithophone and an instrument composed of tuned bells.

tern, by adding an *n* to the vowel whose original sound value is maintained; for example èrin (pronounced eṛĩ), the elephant, or *dáhùn* (pronounced dahũ), to answer.

The peculiar orthography of Yoruba creates some problems for the student of West African music who wishes to compare musical terminology across the language areas of West Africa, even within the narrower framework of the so-called Kwa languages (see Greenberg 1966), among which Yoruba is classified. While Yoruba and the neighboring Fõ language spoken in the Republic of Benin and in Togo, for example, have a certain number of common musical terms, this fact may be not recognized due to different orthographic systems. At least in Togo, Fõ speakers tend to model their orthography on that of Ewe.

The orthographic variances include mnemonic syllables used in teaching. For example, one of the hallmarks of Yoruba musical structures, the 7-stroke 12-pulse asymmetric time-line pattern, often taught in Yoruba with the syllables *kọṣọ kọṣọ kọṣọ kọṣọ kọṣọ*, would have to be written in the present Yoruba orthography as “kọṣ kọṣ kọṣ kọṣ kọṣ kọṣ,” /n/ standing for [ŋ]. This is obstructive to analysis, for /n/ in Yoruba orthography also signifies nasalization of the preceding vowel. This time-line pattern is widespread along the Guinea coast, and it is as familiar from the Yoruba and Igbo of Nigeria as it is from the Akan-speaking group of peoples of Ghana and Togo (Nketia 1962, 1975). If we wish to work comparatively and, consequently, adopt a phonetic transcription method of such syllabic patterns in a Yoruba song text, we would then have two orthographic systems in the same text.

In *àlọ* songs we often encounter the use of syllabic phrases without verbal meaning, which have a playful or dance-like character and are often constituted by phonetical components similar to those in the drum-teaching syllables. In one version of the *àlọ* song “*Omọde mọta nsere*” (no. 111 in the list of collected pieces), the lead singer begins his text-line with the swinging phrase *kọṣọ kọṣọ lakọ* symbolizing the three children at play in the story, to which the chorus replies *kọṣọ kọṣọ*, maintaining this response throughout the song while the leader’s phrases are changing. Would it be appropriate, then, to write these patterns phonetically (as above), while the other text-lines, with verbal meanings, would be written in Standard Yoruba orthography?

There is almost no satisfactory solution to this problem. Another problem is created by the fact that the labio-velar plosives [kp] and [gb], which occur in many West African languages, are represented in an inconsistent manner in the present Yoruba orthography. While [gb], as in *gbàgbé* (to forget), is written in conformity with the usage in other West African orthographies, [kp] is represented in Yoruba by the sign /p/ only. The designation *àpàlà*, a familiar Yoruba music/dance genre, is therefore to be pronounced [àkpàlà]. Foreign readers unfamiliar with West African languages have to note, moreover, that

[kp] is one sound. The word must be pronounced not as “ak-pa-la” but as “a-kpa-la.” (A useful guide to West African phonetics, including Yoruba, is the booklet by Diedrich Westermann and Ida Ward [1933] ⁵1966:58–59.)

Yoruba is a language in which tone is used to extreme degrees, and therefore it has been quoted frequently as a classical example of the nature of West African tonal languages (Beier 1954; Kubik 1983). So far as we know, Yoruba possesses three distinctive tonal levels, high, middle and low. Lack of awareness or the inability to use the tonal principles properly may catapult a non-Yoruba visitor into comic situations, as happened to me in 1963 in Oshogbo; from across the street where she was standing, I attempted to call a girl from Duro Ladipo’s household named Títì by using the tonal pattern títì, which makes the word mean “street.”

A further hurdle to be overcome by the learner of Yoruba is that word accent and semantic or grammatical tone are distinctively different phenomena. In Yoruba, all syllables are accentuated approximately equally, regardless of the speech-tones they carry. Vowels remain distinctive in all parts of a word, irrespective of their position in the beginning, middle or end of a word. They have to be articulated identically and with a completely even accent.

Yoruba Literary and Musical Genres

Studies based on Western categories projected onto Yoruba oral literature and music are bound to yield limited if not distorted results. Taxonomy and categorization of literary and musical genres in Yoruba most often have no counterparts in Western languages. In “Africa and the Folklorist,” Richard M. Dorson (1972:16–17) points to “the vexing matter of folk-narrative categories and those slippery terms myth, legend, and folktale,” and concludes that “in the light of contemporary scholarship, myth, legend, and folktale have little utility as conceptual categories.”

Even the paramount terms “music” and “oral literature” are no less vexing. In the Yoruba language there is no comparable categorization, and these realms are, in fact, so intimately connected that any evaluation of Yoruba material within the framework of such categories can easily lead the student away from reality. The discussion should therefore be based on categories found in the Yoruba language itself, which should remain untranslated, with only a descriptive and brief explanation in English attached to them. Only by proceeding from the terminology in the language will the student have a chance to penetrate the Yoruba cognitive world. An intra-cultural approach of this kind (see Kubik 1984) is not easy to initiate or maintain, if the student also attempts to communicate his or her results cross-culturally, i.e. by writing them up not in Yoruba but in another language. Since none of the Yoruba

terms have English equivalents that are absolutely congruent in their semantic field, any translation, even a descriptive one, is merely a crutch.

This problem has also been realized by several folklorists and oral literature specialists who are native speakers of Yoruba. Avoiding the term “oral literature,” Ayodele Ogundipe (1972:213), in “Yoruba Tongue Twisters,” distinguishes the following “verbal forms in folklore” among the Yoruba; the list is by no means exhaustive, and translations are approximate:

- alo apagbe* (folktales)
- itan* (myths and legends)
- owe* (proverbs)
- orin* (songs)
- epe* (curses)
- ofò* (incantations)

Apparently, Ogundipe, who was educated at Indiana University, Bloomington, collected her material in so-called low-literacy areas of Lagos: Ajegunle, Somolu and Apapa.

For a comparison, Ulli Beier and Gerald Moore in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1974:238) enumerate the following Yoruba categories under the English paramount term “poetic forms”; they hold that “the Yoruba distinguish between praise names (*oriki*); the poetry of lineages and towns (*orile*); oracle verse (*odu*); hunters’ songs (*ijala*); the poetry of masquerades (*iwi*); incantations (*ofo*); songs (*orin*); and improvisations (*rara*).”

More categories reported by other authors could be added, for example *ìmò*, a most interesting verbal play in question/answer form serving to promote knowledge. This little-known literary genre, not to be confused with riddles, was communicated to me by Raji Lawani and Chief Saloro at Ila/via Ilesha in September 1960 (no. 119 in the total collection).

Many of the major categories can be further subdivided. For example, Duro and Gboyega Ladipo said to me in 1960 that the category *orin* (translated as “songs”) could be subcategorized in the following manner:

- àlò* (stories with songs)
- orin iyawo* (songs for marriage ceremonies)
- orin ikomo* (untranslatable)
- orin apala* (songs of the *apala* dance)
- orin şekere* (songs to be accompanied by *şekere*, externally agitated calabash rattle)
- etc.

Often the semantic fields of certain categories overlap. Note, for example, that the term *àlò*, with which the present chapter is concerned, appears as a basic category in Ayodele Ogundipe’s taxonomy, and as a subcategory of *orin*

in the taxonomy provided by Duro and Gboyega Ladipo. Such discrepancies are not necessarily contradictory, nor do they indicate any lack of a systematic approach in the “folk taxonomies.” They simply express the fact that one may classify the same matter simultaneously from different angles.

What Is *Àlò*?

The term *àlò* in Yoruba may refer to two different genres of oral literary activity:

- (1) that which may be translated through the French term as *chantefables*, stories or tales containing a song to be performed by the storyteller, and the audience responding to him or her. It is understood in this sense in the Yoruba towns of Oshogbo, Ogbomosho, Iragbidji, Ilesha and others where I collected the material I will discuss here; and
- (2) riddles, which in certain zones of the Yoruba-speaking area is the better known meaning of the term. R. C. Abraham in his *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* ([1958] 1973:52) only refers to this meaning:

àlò (1) riddle: conundrum (lò A) (2) *àlò o!* Here is a riddle to solve! reply is—*àlò!* (3) (a) ó pàlò fún mi, he told me a riddle . . .

Some of Ulli Beier’s acquaintances in Ibadan also understand the term *àlò* as “riddles.” Some others proposed to call the material which I had collected *orin itan omode* (songs from stories for children) (letter by Ulli Beier dated December 25, 1960).

However, it is remarkable that all the storytellers and informants from whom I collected material in Oshogbo and surrounding areas in 1960 and 1963 insisted on calling their stories not only *ìtàn*, which is the broader, more generic term for any kind of narrative, but specifically *àlò*. This word was also part of the opening formula with which the teller of a Yoruba *chantefable* begins his or her performance (see for example copies of my 1963 recordings B 8579, 8583–8591, etc. in the Phonogram Archives, Vienna). The differences in opinion among informants from different areas of Yorubaland with regard to terminology certainly reflect the diversity of Yoruba culture and its culture-and-language internal interpretation, calling to mind that my collection of texts is in various dialects of Yoruba.

The word *àlò* itself seems to come from the opening formula, which is the same in riddles and *chantefables*. And this probably also explains its usage as a designation for these two different genres. In a riddle session of children and youth, each riddle is introduced with the exclamation *àlò o!* to which the other children who accept the challenge reply *àlò!* (see my recording of a riddle session on a farm near Oshogbo, 1963, copy in ph. a. Vienna B 8984). In storytell-

ing sessions the narrator begins each chantefable with the same exclamation, and the community replies in the same manner.

In 1960 and 1963, chantefables were still told everywhere in the backstreets of Oshogbo, some of whose houses were impluvium buildings with tiny courtyards, such as the house of the mother of Lamidi Gbadamosi. As a rule, children and older people used to assemble in the house beneath the light from an oil lamp or in the courtyard after sunset. Whoever knew a story began to exclaim “Àlò o!”—and the assembled community replied “Àlò” (in low tones).



Figure 35. Opening formula of *àlò*

Having thus won the attention and agreement of his audience, the narrator can now begin the story. First, however, he or she has to continue the opening formula with the following words:

Alo mi da firi o dá gba o da gbo o dá leri.

My *àlò* begins firrrri, and it lands gggbà on.

At this point the narrator begins the story. At whatever point a song occurs, the community joins in with singing and hand-clapping. *Àlò* songs may be unaccompanied, or accompanied by hand-clapping; musical instruments or other percussion equipment is not normally used. However, as we shall see later, certain Yoruba percussive patterns may be structurally implied and present in the back of the mind of all participants, although no one actually strikes them. Only in one of my recordings was there instrumental accompaniment. The narrator accompanied his story with an *agidigbo* lamellophone (rec. B 8983, on Gbadamosi’s farm near Oshogbo, 1963/Kubik, ph. a. Vienna).

At the end of the story the narrator sometimes explains what it is intended to teach, and then is expected to say:

Bí mo bá kurọ, ka gogo mi o ma rò, bí nko bá kurọ, ka gogo mi o lẹmeta ttó—ttó—ttó!

If I have not told the truth, let my bell not ring, if I have said the truth, let my bell ring ttó—ttó—ttó!

The “bell” (*gogo*) is not to be understood as a real iron bell, but the term refers here to a sound “like a bell,” which the narrator produces as follows: At

the end of the sentence spoken, he or she puts the right index finger into the mouth; presses the tip of the finger, bent like a hook, against the inner part of the left cheek, just behind the corner of the mouth; and plucks the skin of the mouth's corner with lips closed, pulling the finger quickly out. The result is a sound similar to that of a cork pulled out of a champagne bottle. One has to repeat this three times—*ttó, ttó, ttó!*—then everyone is satisfied, and acknowledges that this story must be a “true one,” that is, one transmitted by tradition and not perhaps something invented by the storyteller.

If the narrator had lied, he or she would have betrayed him- or herself by laughing, because it is impossible, while laughing, to let the “bell ring” in that manner. Departing from the literal translation of the sentence above, we can say that it communicates to the audience the following message (as expressed by my good friend and colleague Dr. Mosunmọla Omibiyi-Obidike): “If I have not narrated the true story as it is, let me be disgraced!”

As soon as the first storyteller has finished narrating, the next one begins. Some are experts, although the telling of *àlọ*, in contrast with some other forms of oral literature/music, is not considered a professional exercise among the Yoruba. It is an activity in which the role of the narrator can be taken over by anyone in the community who knows a story, irrespective of age, gender or social position. While some aged, experienced storytellers, such as Mrs. Aminatu Amọpe from Oshogbo, who was 73 years old when I recorded her in 1963 (ph. a. nos. B 8959, 8962–8966, 8972–8973), may display the highest degree of perfection in storytelling and really captivate an audience, a chance must also be given to the youngest children of the community to come forward and show what they have learned of the art (CD Track 17).

The Content of *Àlọ* Chantefables

A content analysis of the *àlọ* is of equal interest to researchers of oral literature, Africanists, linguists, psychologists, educationists, social scientists and historians. In many of the stories an image of life in a pre-colonial Yoruba society is depicted, which is highly urbanized. Indirectly, from the kind of environment in which the plots are set, we may gain important details about Yoruba cultural history.

From the 18th century onwards, the Yoruba kingdom of Ọ̀yọ̀ had intensive trade connections with the north that extended through the Nupe and the Hausa states up to the transfer points along the southern edge of the Sahara, such as Gao, Jenne and Timbuktu. Along these trade routes much cultural interaction took place, and Yoruba culture did not remain unaffected. Most people began to live in towns, with their plantations located within a radius of several kilometers outside the town limits. A monetary economy had been introduced long ago. In times of economic distress caused by drought or war, everything had to

be paid for, even water. Individuals who for some reason had decided to stay permanently outside the town controlled certain aspects of the economy. For example, in “*Baba ol’òdò*,” àlò no. 104 in our collection, we learn that a small river or watercourse could have an owner.

In town, strict customs of social behavior used to prevail. In a sense the Oba (traditional ruler of a Yoruba town) and his counsellors had absolute authority, although the Yoruba system of government could be described from various angles as monarchy, oligarchy and also democracy, all in one (Ulli Beier, in a lecture at IWALEWA House, Bayreuth, January 14, 1982). The power of the Oba and his staff included juridical authority. This is testified and illustrated in the plots of many àlò stories.

Thus, many of the àlò reveal to us something about social circumstances in pre-colonial Yorubaland and confirm, by their mentioning of cultural objects that are now obsolete, that the narrative must have some antiquity. For instance, in the story “*Ará òrun ará òrun o*” (“Inhabitants of Heaven, Inhabitants of Heaven,” no. 43), we learn something about the value of cowrie shells (Yoruba money) in relation to a cup of palm wine, which the hero tries to sell to the inhabitants of heaven.

The educational value and function of àlò are obvious. Àlò make strong impressions on the mind of a growing child and his or her emerging worldview. Through symbols, some of the stories show how one may cope with unknown forces in one’s own soul; these forces appear personified in the stories. The moral of a story shows what was (and sometimes still is) the expected normative behavior in Yoruba society. The stories, however, not only reflect social values, but also point to areas of conflict in Yoruba society. It is possible to sub-categorize the material which I collected according to content, protagonists or motifs, although such categorizations were not proposed by any of my informants. Here it comes to light that under the term àlò many different types of stories are embraced which would sometimes, from a Western viewpoint, even be treated like different genres. While the category àlò itself was clearly defined in my research area as a narrative introduced by an opening formula, closed by an ending formula and, most important, containing a song and some other distinguishing features, it is useful to remind ourselves that some would be described as trickster stories in academic terminology, others as “myths” or even “etiological myths” and still others as none of these categories.

The main figure in the trickster stories is *ahun* or *alábahun* (also pronounced *alábaun*), the tortoise, richly represented in our sample. This character occasionally appears with an opponent or adversary, such as *ajá*, the dog, who is a kind of secondary trickster figure (see “*Ajá ajá o ran mi leru*,” no. 2 in the collection, transcribed in Kubik 1961b:199 [CD Track 18]). Important characteristics of the trickster are his guile, his intrigues and his ability to find an exit in the most muddled situations; these qualities are combined with

greediness, egoism and recklessness. On the socio-psychological function of the trickster figure in Yoruba society, Ulli Beier and Gerald Moore remark:

The Yoruba consciously poke fun at their own faults when they tell stories of the tortoise-trickster. Sometimes the tortoise's cunning defeats itself, as, for example, in the delightful tale in which the tortoise steals from the gods a calabash that contains all the wisdom in the world. He hangs it around his neck and is so eager to get home with it that, when he comes to a tree trunk lying across the road he is unable to cross it because the calabash gets in his way; and in his anxiety he fails to think of putting it on his back. Frustrated, the tortoise smashes the calabash, and so, ever since that day, wisdom has been scattered all over the world in tiny pieces. (Beier and Moore 1974:238)

In the fictitious figure of the tortoise (the word *ahun* also means "miser"), a facet of repressed, asocial behavior is revitalized and reenacted at the level of fantasy.

A major part of the *àlò* does not belong to the trickster category. In this part we find a wide range of highly diverse content motifs. For example, in one story ("*Kinkin*," no. 4 in the collection) we learn about a boy who shoots a magic bird despite warnings he receives from his parents, and he dies after eating it. In another story, "*Ero ti nr'Ojeje*" ("Travellers Are Going to Oje Market," nos. 49 and 125), we learn about a childless woman who receives medicine from an *Ifá* priest for giving birth to a child. After her child is born, she fails to live up to the conditions under which the medicine was given to her. There are stories in which the motif of devouring occurs, sometimes in the form of a child-swallowing python or a crab; and there is a story about a hunter whose three dogs can speak ("*Adú ajá mi o*," no. 121).

Not only are humans victims of their own lack of reason and the ill will of their fellow humans, but also they are thought to be exposed to evil forces from a superhuman world. In particular, defenseless and unsupervised children live in a dangerous environment, as is shown in the story "*Adejumo*" (no. 105 in the collection). As in so many other *àlò*, the didactical message in this story is that parents should never leave their small children behind without someone to look after them. The story aims at underscoring the thoughtlessness and lack of care of some parents. The audience notices from the first few sentences of the story where the injustice lies, namely that the father had gone on a journey, leaving his seven children behind on a farm for many days without any guardian. However, a wizard living inside a papaya tree near the house takes advantage of this. Every day he comes to kidnap one of the children. What exactly he does with the children remains unsaid in the story; but the children never come back, so it is obvious that he eats them up.

The father, returning from his trip, employs a magical device to debilitate the wizard: he claps a pot without bottom on his head. The wizard, however,

is stronger, so it does not work. Eventually the father tries the same method with the papaya tree in which the wizard lives and which therefore is within his magic zone. But he only reaps mockery, as the wizard compares the father to God. This part of the story is based on dream symbolism. Whatever the father tries to undertake, he is condemned to fail. In this manner the mistake, once committed, is punished irrevocably. The father loses all his children except one; no revision of this fate is possible. The same outcome applies to several other Yoruba stories, such as the one of a woman who leaves her child behind in the rain.

A fantastic horror motif which appears in some of the *àlọ* is the borrowing of body parts from animals or plants in the forest by creatures from another world (*òrun*), who—so equipped—appear as human beings in the world of man. Gullible individuals, who follow these attractive beings into the bush, discover with dismay how these creatures gradually disintegrate, by giving back all their borrowed body parts to the original owners. This archetypal motif appears in “*Mahinlola d’ èhin o!*” (no. 59) and “*Adeyo d’ èhin o!*” (no. 117), two stories which are merely variants of the same theme. It has also entered modern Yoruba literature (Fagunwa 1949a,b), and Amos Tutuola has used it in his novels (*The Palm-Wine Drinkard* [1952], *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* [1954]). Here, much of the content-motif repertoire of the *àlọ* has been worked into longer narratives and made available to a foreign readership in a kind of English that is spoken in the streets of western Nigerian towns and that is very different from the Standard English used by Western-educated Nigerian writers.

The idea of *òrun* (the other world) occurs in several narratives, for example in “*Ará òrun ará òrun o*” (no. 43; CD Track 22), “*Ol’oko d’ èhin*” (no. 53) and “*Retenrete*” (no. 114). It is difficult to render its full meaning in English. Christians have used the term to express the idea of “heaven.” However, the Yoruba “heavens” are rarely populated by angels, and more frequently by strange extraterrestrials, such as observed by the tortoise in the story about the palm-wine tapper Agbelugogo (no. 43). Sometimes *òrun* is thought to be a world located up in the sky, in which case *Ol’òrun*—generally understood as the Yoruba notion of a Supreme Being—can be translated as “the owner of the sky.” But this is not always so. In one story, “*Ol’okọ d’ èhin*” (no. 53), *òrun* is a world, normally inaccessible to man, which can be reached by crossing rivers, an indigo river and a river of blood. It is populated by awesome and extremely aggressive creatures who do not permit a human being to enter their domain. On the other hand, some of these creatures can visit the world of man by assuming human shape through the borrowing of body parts from animals and plants.

Some *àlọ* would not be called stories or folktales from the viewpoint of Western literary taxonomy, but would instead be categorized as myths; for example the story of *Ol’òrun*, the owner of the sky, and *Aiyé*, the earth crea-

ture (*Retenrete*, no. 114). In this story it is explained why sky and solid ground (earth) are separated from each other today. There are many *àlò* containing themes which bring them close to etiological myths; for example, stories mentioned earlier of the woman who receives a child from the *bàbaláwo*, the priest of the *Ifá* oracle, which can only subsist on eggs (nos. 49 and 125). When she leaves it alone with the second wife of her husband, the latter gives it bitter water yam to eat. The dying child then follows his mother to the market, where she is selling goods, and in a dramatic scene—reinforced by the story’s song—it gradually sinks into the ground. The mother wants to save her child and hold it back, but by doing so she tears off its head. For a long time the mother then wanders about with the head of her dead child. Every tree to which she offers it as a present refuses to accept it, until at last the oil palm (*òpẹ*) feels pity for the woman and takes it. The head of the dead child transforms into the fruit of the oil palm, which plays such an important role in Yoruba economic life.

In a performance of *àlò* at the fireplace in the evening, literary, musical and sometimes even theatre-like aspects play an equally important role in the event. Some of these aspects have been made use of in modern Yoruba theatre, such as the plays of Kola Ogunmola and Duro Ladipo, and among them one may point out the division of roles between leader and chorus. In *àlò* the voices of the leader and the responding chorus may represent conflicting personalities in the plot, and/or different characters in the story. For example in the story “*Ajá ajá o ran mi leru!*” (no. 2; CD Track 18), the dog’s reply to the tortoise’s demand that it help carry the load is performed by the chorus. In the story “*Ará òrun ará òrun o!*” (no. 43), the lead singer changes his role, once singing with the voice of the palm-wine seller, then with that of the heavenly inhabitants, to whom the merchant wishes to sell his products. The audience (chorus) then assumes the role of the “onlookers” or “people,” who witness the event from outside, like in a theatre. It is interesting that the chorus in some of the historical plays by the late Duro Ladipo, such as “*Ọba kòso*” (“The King Did Not Hang Himself”), also often assumes such a role. Recently, his widow and principal actress, Abiodun Duro-Ladipo, has published a lucid account of this work (cf. Duro-Ladipo and Gbóyèga Kóláwolé 1997).

Organization and Function of the *Àlò* Songs

As in other cultures, a major function of the story songs in *àlò* is to emphasize dramatic situations. Within a plot, a song therefore often appears at moments of crisis or at turning points. Sometimes it portrays the character of a protagonist by textual and/or musical means. Frequently, its content articulates, hints at or leaks something which must not or could not be said in ordinary language. The story song in such cases makes the “voice” of another

stratum of the human psyche audible, warning the hero and passing to him a truth he either cannot see or cannot see yet, as he is captivated by the things of a superficial reality and thus is catapulting himself into immeasurable dangers. Things to come are reflected back into the present, and the audience realizes what the hero is in for.

Similarly, the tortoise in one of the stories (no. 19) actually reveals to the dull elephant that it will have to die. The tortoise sings: “Tomorrow at this time the cooking pot will smell pleasantly and blood will be spilled.” The audience understands the announcement, but the elephant in the story notices nothing. Or in the story song “*Adeyo d’ èhin o!*” (no. 117, “Adeyo Go Back!”), it is said that the ghost-elephant is returning to the forest. Without directly pronouncing that this “beautiful man” will give back his borrowed, fascinating body parts to their owners, this is hinted at by metaphors such as the following: “The teeth of the mouth are like the gourd,” “The skin of the body is like a banana,” “The staff of money is like the *ìròkò* tree.”

As a rule the *àlò* chantefables contain only one song. According to how the plot develops, the song may recur either in its basic form or in a textual variant. Generally, songs are in leader-chorus form, because one of the objectives is indeed to promote audience participation, keep everyone attentive, and thus prevent the audience’s losing interest and getting tired. Some *àlò* also have extensive solo passages in their songs; for example “*Ọba ni a tu’şọ pebẹ*” (“The King Has Told Us to Take Off Our Clothes,” no. 124).

The chorus phrase remains completely or essentially unchanged throughout the song. It can therefore be learned by the audience relatively quickly, and occasionally the narrator assists, teaching those who do not know the song how they should reply. On the other hand the leader of the song, who is also the narrator of the story, develops his text-lines according to the plot.

In principle, *àlò* songs have fixed texts, and they are little changed by the same narrator in subsequent performances. In contrast with *oriki* (described as “praise names,” “praise poems”) and several other types of Yoruba oral literature, there is hardly room for improvisation in the *àlò* songs. However, one can observe considerable variation from person to person and from place to place. This is well demonstrated in our recordings, when I had an opportunity to record the same *àlò* several times—for example “*Ajá ajá o rán mi leru*” in 1960 and 1963 (CD Track 18), and “*Antere*” in 1960 and 1963 (CD Track 20). (For the latter, see also transcription in Kubik 1983:375–78.)

Many chorus phrases do not have verbal meaning, as they consist of syllable sequences. However, these are not “nonsense syllables”; they do have a meaning, in that they may stimulate by their timbre and rhythmic character and their tonality certain associations in Yoruba speakers. In some instances these are difficult to identify and to define in precise terminology; in others the associations are easier to detect. Often word elements from the leader’s text-lines are woven into the chorus phrase, producing dance-like, movement-stimulating

patterns of syllables. Examples include the phrase *Ijumọ kenkẹ ijumọ re* in the story “*Adejumo*” (no. 105); here the word Adejumo, the name of the father of the seven children kidnapped by a wizard, is woven into a dance-like pattern. Also, *d’ẹhin* (go back) in the story of the girl Mahinlola, who follows disguised spirits into the bush, is worked into the chorus phrase: *D’ẹhin n terere d’ẹhin* (no. 59). In a similar manner another chorus phrase, namely *Erin yéyè erin yèyè* in the story of the dull elephant following the tortoise which traps it, contains the word *ẹrin* (elephant), while the syllables “yéyè . . . yèyè,” which have no verbal meaning, vividly depict the clumsy movements of the elephant soon to meet his fate (no. 19 [CD Track 21]).

The interlacing of syllables with a few real words in the chorus phrases also allows for subtle allusions. The chorus phrase *Tere natere* in the story “*Baba ol’ódò*” (“Owner of the Watercourse,” no. 104) has been constructed using syllables from the name of the physical father of the young girl in the story, Ládẹjo Awẹlé Oniterena, who eventually gives in to the advances of the owner of the watercourse where she went to fetch water. The last three syllables of the name Oniterena have been worked into *Tere natere*.

Sometimes the verbal meaning of a chorus phrase is no longer known to the contemporary storyteller, as is the case with the reply *Sinda wá eregeko* in the story of the hunter and his three dogs: “*Adú aja mi o!*” (no. 121). My informants were unable to explain such chorus phrases, and it is possible that they are in lesser-known dialects of Yoruba or come from neighboring languages, which would be a worthy suggestion of the migration of a story; alternatively, they are composed of ancient and now obsolete word elements. Such questions can only be pursued from case to case.

A good number of chorus phrases in the *àlọ* songs are constructed on onomatopoeic idiophones. These can characterize a person, a plot or even a certain motional pattern. *Gbinrin* is one such example, representing in the story of the three kings’ daughters, “*Mo ri kẹkẹ kan*” (no. 41 [CD Track 19]), the sound of metal or iron falling to the ground; in the actual story it represents an iron hoop or wheel (perhaps from an old bicycle) used by the three girls for playing. In the chorus phrase of the song, the onomatopoeia is processed into the phrase “*Gbinrin ajalubale gbinrin*” (rec. Ph. A. no. B 5183).

Ordinarily, the leader’s phrase and the reply by the chorus follow each other immediately, but sometimes they overlap. Extensive overlapping can be found, for example, in the story “*Eleluju*” (no. 47) from Igbajo near Ilesha. As a result, simultaneous sounds emerge.

Tonal and Harmonic Patterns

In the culture area of what once was the kingdom of Ọyọ̀, including the town of Oshogbo, which developed from a military camp of the kingdom

in the 19th century, the tonal system is pentatonic. The Yoruba share this system with several other peoples in the Savannah region of West Africa, for example the Fõ, and it may be an old Western Sudanic heritage. However, not all Yoruba sing in a pentatonic system, and it is possible that heptatonic styles were more widespread in the past. The type of pentatonic singing (with much employment of melisma) which we are finding today in musical genres such as *şakara*, *àpàlà*, etc. is based on Islamic-Arabic traits that were filtering into Yorubaland via the Hausa culture area in the north. This style is quite different from that encountered in our sample of *àlò* songs.

With the extension of power of the Òyò kingdom, the Islamic-Arabic style of pentatonic music gained considerable ground during the 19th century at the expense of heptatonic Yoruba musical styles, today confined to the south-eastern Yoruba speakers (Ijesha, Ekiti, etc.). However, in most instances we can write down the Yoruba pentatonic system quite comfortably in staff notation with the notes C, D, E, G, A or C, D, F, G, A (even C, D, F, G, B-flat), because whole tones and minor thirds are clearly treated as different interval sizes by the singers within a scalar pattern. On the other hand, the relationship between these intervals and Yoruba speech-tones is flexible, allowing for a relatively wide margin of tolerance.

The Òyò tradition of Yoruba music is represented in our collection by most of the *àlò* songs, due to the fact that the material mainly comes from Oshogbo and its surroundings. In its present distribution area, however, the pentatonic zone in Yorubaland ends rather abruptly in the vicinity of the town Ilesha. Here is something like an invisible border separating the south-eastern Yoruba speakers from those in the area mentioned. It was here at the fringe of the southern Nigerian forests where the conquests of the Òyò kings and later the cavalry regiments of the Fulbe came to a halt because of insurmountable environmental barriers.

From Ilesha up to the area of Benin city and into the Niger Delta, there is then a zone of predominantly hexatonic and heptatonic music combined with multipart singing, in two or often three parallel lines. The tonal system behind this multipart harmony has not yet been completely clarified musicologically, nor has its history. However, there seem to be tendencies towards equal treatment of parallel thirds in their intervals, as is also found in the musical cultures of other West African peoples living in a forest environment. This means that the “thirdness” of an interval as such is the significant quality; major and minor thirds, although measurable in recordings, may be exchangeable in some of these cultures, in that they are conceptualized not as important distinctions, but rather as intervals that can be either substituted for each other or approximated in intonation towards each other. However, whereas in Baule music of Côte d’Ivoire, for example, there are definitely neutral thirds (neither major nor minor), this is not necessarily so in all the West African heptatonic multipart styles.

Examples of *àlò* songs from the Ijesha-speaking area in western Nigeria include:

- (1) “*Yè só mu ’ru fin ‘mi?’*” (“Who Will Give Me My Tail?” no. 39), from Ijebu-Ijesha. This song displays what we may call a kind of “resultant heptatonic scale,” i.e. all the combining voices together constitute the heptatonic range of this tonal system; but individual voices of the leader and chorus do not exceed the range of a fourth or fifth (see also Fig. 36 below). This could be a significant trait, and it could contain a clue to understanding the genesis of this system and its history. The chorus in this song displays parallel harmony in thirds.
- (2) “*Eleluju ma mā ku o!*” (no. 47), from Igbajo near Ilesha. The tonal material in this song is hexatonic, with intervals allowing us to render the notes as E”, D”, C’, B’, A’, plus a somewhat dampened G’. Leader and chorus overlap extensively. Except when using the basic text phrase *Ma mā ku o!* the leader resumes his singing immediately after the middle of the chorus phrase is reached by the responding audience. The resulting simultaneous harmonic sounds should not be explained solely as a consequence of the overlap between leader’s and chorus’s voice parts. Although formal and rhythmic concepts seem to be the point of departure in this particular case, leading to the configuration discussed, it is also true that among the Ijesha people harmonic ideas are so deeply entrenched in their musical culture that any kind of vocal overlapping would automatically adjust to consonantal ideas. This is in contrast with explicitly unison- and octave-oriented musical cultures. It is evident, therefore, that the consonant sound combinations in this song are present not merely by chance.
- (3) “*Adú, aja mi o!*” (“Adú, My Dog!” no. 121). This *àlò* song contained in the beautiful story of a hunter and his three dogs, which was told to us by N. A. Oladeinde from Ijebu-Ijesha, contains elements pointing to the beginnings of *juju* music in western Nigeria. (On the regional history of *juju*, see Chris Waterman’s book [1990a].) Mr. Oladeinde told me that he had learned the story and its song in 1935. In the chorus phrase we suddenly discover what may be interpreted as a rumba rhythm, and also, most strikingly, we find a kind of diatonic melodic line. In contrast with the “traditional” Ijesha heptatonic system, here it is one voice by itself, specifically the leader’s voice, which runs through the whole range of one octave. The chorus is sung in unison, which is perhaps a sign that this song marked the penetration of a heptatonic tradition into western Nigeria which was different structurally from the local one, thus making the traditional harmonic singing style difficult to apply.

One question which has been posed with regard to the older style of Ijesha multipart singing (see Euba 1967:70) is whether there is a kind of basic or main voice-line in the chorus to which the other singers would add, either

above or below, further parallel lines, or whether all the voices in this multipart system are to be regarded as equivalent. There is one method for finding an answer to this question. One may ask an informant to demonstrate the leader's voice and the chorus response separately. That chorus-line or pitch level which he unconsciously selects among the three to four possible pitch-lines running parallel in a multipart performance is the basic or main one. By this experiment one can also discover instantly that the basic pitch-line of the chorus links with the leader's phrase at the same level. Incidentally, this is analogous to the musical behavior we shall discuss further below when looking at transposition of a chorus phrase provoked by a leader's changing his or her pitch level. In the Ilesha multipart singing style the basic chorus phrase, to which harmonically parallel lines may be added above and below, is the one in the middle, standing at the same pitch level with the leader's phrase. We can show this by reproducing a short extract from the *àlò* song "Yè só mu 'rú fín 'mi?" (no. 39). (On the system of notation used, see my explanations in the transcription section of this chapter, further on.) The basic form of the chorus phrase in relation to the leader's basic phrase is as follows:

Leader: Elementary pulsation: 320 M.M.

Yè só mu 'rú fín 'mi? etc.

Chorus: I-ba-ra - ti-e-le o - lo - ye i-ba-ra - ti-e-le

Figure 36. Extract: "Yè só mu 'rú fín 'mi?"

The basic chorus-line is the one with which a chorus member singing alone would invariably link "in unison" with the leader's phrase. As other chorus members join in, more voices are then added above and below in intervals perceived as consonant. These additional voices are essentially euphonic in concept; they are equivalent to the basic one, but are only collaterally dependent on the voice of the leader.

Leader: Elementary pulsation: 320 M.M.

Yè só mu 'rú fín 'mi? etc.

Chorus: I-ba-ra - ti-e-le o - lo - ye i-ba-ra - ti-e-le

Figure 37. Parallel harmony in "Yè só mu 'rú fín 'mi?"

If only one harmonic line is added to the basic chorus line, then, at least in this song, it is the lower third. Parallelism of the lines is obligatory in this musical tradition because of the highly tonal nature of the Yoruba language.

An interesting phenomenon in the *àlò*, perhaps related to tonal relationships even in the pentatonic and unison singing areas of Yorubaland, is melodic transposition. In some songs the chorus phrase may suddenly be transposed a fifth upwards during a performance to follow the changing tonality of the leader. In one song of our collection, “*Ọl’ókọ d’ẹhin*” (“Hoe Seller Go Back!” no. 53), the leader’s text-line usually ends on a note I have transcribed as D”. Suddenly, he introduces another text-line with the words *kan ’dò kan ’ró* and the last syllable ending on the high note G. The chorus immediately follows the leader’s changed pitch level by transposing its response, *D’ ẹhin terere d’ ẹhin*, a fifth higher (text remaining unchanged). With the leader’s next phrase ending on C” with the word *ẹjẹ*, the leader then returns to his former level. This ending makes it easy for the chorus to revert to its former pitch level.

Leader: Elementary pulsation: 225 M.M.

Chorus: D'ẹ - hin te - re - re d'ẹ - hin

Leader:

Chorus: D'ẹ - hin te - re - re d'ẹ - hin

Figure 38. Extract: “*Ọl’ókọ d’ẹhin*” (“Hoe Seller Go Back!”). Basic leader-chorus tonal level (top), and transposition of chorus phrase provoked by new leader’s phrase ending on a high note (bottom)

It seems that this transposition model is firmly established in the pentatonic tradition in which most of the *àlò* songs operate. Besides the example given above, it also occurs here and there in some other songs. The scheme is that the note written as a C” becomes a G” in transposition, and D” turns into an A”. If there is an E”, it must be transposed a sixth upwards, becoming a C””. Transposition takes place within the tonal framework of the specific type of pentatonic system on which Yoruba music is based, i.e. a system allowing for two interval

sizes between neighboring steps, whole tones and minor thirds. Transposition of the chorus phrase is induced by a leader's text-line ending on a word with high notes. A systematic screening of my material has revealed that in many of the pentatonic songs from the Òyò culture area, leader's phrases usually end on a C" or D" (in our notation). Then the chorus joins by what we may call unison linkage, i.e. singing on the same note. If a leader's phrase, as a result of the tonal structure of a changing text, ends on another note, the chorus reacts by following the leader to the new pitch level, transposing its response.

Speech-Tones and Pitch-Line

In their pitch-lines the *àlò* story songs follow more or less strictly the principles of the tonal character of Yoruba (Phillips 1953). One can show this impressively with the song "*Mo ri kèkè kan*" (no. 41, rec. Ph. A. Vienna no. B 5183; CD Track 19). The story's plot is about three kings' daughters, among whom two have personal names which are identical in their consonants and vowels. Only by the speech-tones can they be distinguished. The two daughters are called Opobípòbí and Òpòbìpòbì. To keep the names distinct, the tones have to be maintained in the song melodically; otherwise the audience would not understand which of the two daughters is being referred to.

On the other hand, there is also a certain liberty or perhaps margin of tolerance with regard to the tone principle when a Yoruba text is to be sung. One cannot derive the melody of a song to be composed directly from the speech-tones of the words in the text, in the sense of a rigid text-melody relationship. The actually sung (or set) pitches are thus not absolutely predictable in terms of the text. The sung intervals are, in fact, preconditioned only approximately by the three speech-tones distinguished in Yoruba (high, middle and low), and the singer can be irresolute as to whether he would aim at the interval of a whole tone or a minor third, for example. One singer may prefer this rendering, while another may favor a different rendering of a text. Ulli Beier, in his article "Yoruba Vocal Music," states:

The singer has liberty . . . to increase or decrease the intervals between the various tones, and he may also change the pitch of the entire tone pattern from one phrase to another, all that is required is that the basic tone pattern shall be preserved. (Beier 1956:23)

A study of variants in the performance of the same song, by either the same or different singers, can provide us with more insight. In 1960 I had a chance to collect the *àlò* song "*Èrò ti nr'Ojeje*" from two different informants (nos. 49 and 125). In both cases, the melody of the sung lines follows the curve of the speech-tones but only as far as it is necessary to avoid textual misunderstand-

ings—one does not have to set all the tone marks in a printed Yoruba text, only where it is not unambiguously clear from the context of a sentence what is meant. The tonal language thus determines most of the melodic movements in terms of their direction, but not in terms of the actual size of the intervals. Etundayo Phillips expresses this point with the following words:

Yoruba speech is supposed to have only three tones. There are some who go further to assert that these three tones are fixed and can be represented by Doh, Me and Soh. These ideas are quite erroneous. The positions of the tones may be principally three, but not only may each of these, especially the medium, be slightly higher or lower, but the speech tones do not strictly follow the three Solfa tones. (Phillips 1953:1)

In the *àlò* song “Èrò ti nr’Ojeje” (“Travelers Are Going to Oje Market”), the same text was sung to me on two different occasions by two different narrators from the same town. In each case the chorus adjusted its response melodically to the intervals each singer preferred.

Elementary pulsation: 290 M.M.

Leader: Chorus:

E - rò ti nr' O - je - je O - je - je etc.

x x

Figure 39. “Èrò ti nr’Ojeje” as sung by Regina Olusola from Oshogbo (no. 49)

Leader: Chorus:

E - rò ti nr' O - je - je O - je - je etc.

x x

Figure 40. “Èrò ti nr’Ojeje” as sung by Taiye Ladipo from Oshogbo (no. 125)

Time-Line Patterns

Another no less interesting subject is the rhythm of the *àlò* songs. Rhythmically, the story songs develop along an implicit or actually performed series of hand-claps. Sometimes the narrator who is also the lead singer begins to clap hands alone, and the audience may join in from the moment it enters with the response phrase. Even when there is no actual hand-clapping—as in most *àlò* I have recorded—the songs are mentally referred to a clap beat, or just a series of reference points in time.

It was startling, however, when I found that one can add to most of the *àlò* songs one or another of the so-called asymmetric time-line patterns known in Yoruba music and elsewhere in West Africa. One can merely “think” them or actually strike them, and they fit perfectly. This I discovered not through abstract analysis of rhythm-patterns from transcriptions in the study, but through informants, Gboyega Ladipo in particular, who suggested such patterns to me while teaching me *àlò* songs. Obviously, this was a teaching device, and Gboyega said to me on more than one occasion that such time-line patterns could be struck to accompany the songs. It is remarkable, however, that in actual performances, none of the participants usually struck a time line on objects. I only have three tape recordings where this happens: “*Antere*” (Ph. A. B 8974, 8975) and “*Oba Alaran bewe, Kinkin!*” (B 8981, no. 4), all made in 1963. In all my other recordings, accompaniment—if there is any at all—takes the form of clapping a simple regular beat. Nevertheless, the complex, asymmetric time-line patterns somehow are implicitly present, as a possibility, as a guiding accentual pattern, and they are, without doubt, vaguely in the performers’ minds. Moreover, they steer the rhythmic shaping of the leader’s phrases and the motional response of the participating community. In my transcription, I have paid attention to this and notated the time-line patterns, even if they are not objectified by actual performance.

A typical time line which one can put underneath some *àlò* songs is the ubiquitous 7-stroke 12-pulse pattern, often referred to in Yoruba with the word *omele* (usually translated as “accompanying rhythm” or “accompaniment”; see also Chapter VI). The melodic accents of the leader and the chorus run sometimes parallel to, sometimes against the implied time-line pattern. The time line is a most important concept in the music of speakers of Kwa languages in West Africa, as well as in the Western strain of the speakers of Benue Congo languages (from eastern Nigeria up to southern Congo and Angola). It is defined by J. H. Kwabena Nketia as follows:

Because of the difficulty of keeping subjective metronomic time . . . African traditions facilitate this process by externalizing the basic pulse. . . the guideline which is related to the time span in this manner has come to be described as a time line. Because the time line is sounded as part of the music, it is regarded as an accompanying rhythm and a means by which rhythmic motion is sustained. Hence, instead of a time line that represents simple regular beats reflecting the basic pulse, a more complex form may be used. It may be designed as a rhythmic pattern in additive or divisive form, embodying the basic pulse or regulative beat as well as the density referent. Instead of a regular group of four notes, groups of five, six, and seven notes may be used in duple or triple rhythmic patterns. (Nketia 1974:131–32)

Shifting a Phrase

One tonal unit (mora) in the syllabic sequences of the *àlò* texts normally corresponds with one elementary pulse in the music (symbolized by the vertical lines through the staff in our transcriptions), i.e. the smallest rhythmic unit in the musical event. The elementary pulsation has been described by various terms in the literature, by A. M. Jones (1954a) as “smallest units,” by me as “elementary pulses” (Kubik 1972b), as “fastest pulse” by Koetting (1970) and as “density referent” by Mantle Hood (1971).⁴

From the above relationship it follows that the text phrases, with their diverse lengths and internal structures covering various numbers of elementary pulse-units, are not necessarily metrically related to the hand-claps. The word syllables evenly strung together and forming a short text-line may, for example, cover an uneven number of pulse-units. If such a text-line with a syllabic number of, let us say, 7, 9, 13, etc. units is repeated without a caesura (empty pulse) between, it follows that in the repetition its relationship to the beat has totally changed. From this comes the impression, often gathered by observers who are unaware of the text component and only look at the “rhythm,” that different metrical entities seem to alternate and follow each other irregularly.

The truth, however, is that entire phrases of a specific internal structure are shifted against the beat or hand-claps in defiance of even the boundaries of the cycle number of usually 12, 16 or 24 elementary pulses. In the performers’ conceptualization, these text-lines are coherent entities. They are not conceived as being composed of metrical particles, such as 2 + 3 + 2 etc. (see the theory of “additive rhythms” by A. M. Jones [1954a], [1959b]), nor are they to be understood as hemiola-style duple-triple alternations.

There are many examples in my *àlò* collection where some leader’s or chorus’s phrases are shifted as a whole against the beat (see “*Ará òrun ará òrun o*,” no. 43 [CD Track 22], or “*Ol’òkò d’èhin*,” no. 53). A particularly instructive example for this compositional technique is the chorus phrase *Èrin yéyé èrin yèyè* in the story about the dull elephant who succumbs to the dirty tricks of the tortoise (no. 19 [CD Track 21]). As the elephant walks along in the plot, the responding community sings the phrase *èrin yéyé* (“Elephant, yéyé!”) in repetition, but the second time with different notes for *yèyè*. The phrase covers exactly 7 pulses, which is an uneven number. Together with its repetition, therefore, it covers 14 pulses and crosses the beat of the $2 \times 12 = 24$ -pulse cycle.

4. The latter term, although it has been used both by J. H. Kwabena Nketia (1974:132) and by Robert Kauffman (1980:396), incorporates the notion of “density,” which is an idea alien to African kinetic conceptualizations. Translated into Yoruba and probably any other African language, the term “density referent” would sound strange.

One can observe in my transcription below how the words “èrin yeye” are shifted against the beat in the repetition. The result is (a) an offbeat effect and (b) in this particular case a rhythmic corroboration by the voice-line of the 12-pulse time-line pattern mentally present in the participants (not actually struck).

Leader: Elementary pulsation: 240 M.M.

Chorus: È - rin yé - yé è - rin yè - yé

Hand-clapping: x x x x x x

Time-line pattern: x . x . x x . x . x . x x . x . x x

(only mentally present)

Figure 41. Extract: “Èrin yéyé, èrin yèyè (“Elephant yéyé, Elephant yèyè”)

Timbre-Sequences and Accentuation

A further technique leading to offbeat accentuation in the *àlô* and many other Yoruba and West African song genres is the constructive use of timbre-sequences in rhythmic structure. Timbre-sequences arise naturally by the sound repertoire of any spoken language. This implies that any melody sung to words also displays patterns of timbre-sequences imposing an accentual structuring on the vocal-line and creating the impression of “melodic phrasing.” Accentuation in Yoruba music is often created this way, i.e. by exploiting the configurations of timbre-values constituting the syllabic sequences of a text-line, rather than by physical stress. For this reason, it makes an essential difference whether one sings a Yoruba song to its proper words or not.

Language, timbre and rhythm are closely interrelated in Yoruba musical culture. Even the organization of rhythm, timbre and accent sequences, apart from the tonal aspects of melody, is intimately linked with structural characteristics of the Yoruba language, in particular with phonology. This is not limited to Yoruba, but has been observed in the broader realm of the Kwa family of languages and beyond. Nketia stressed that

[there is] the distinct colouration of vocal timbre which is a concomitant of the phonetic characteristics of the language in which songs are sung. The structure of a tone language, particularly in respect of pitch levels, and the use of such features as on-and-off glides of pronounced

falling and rising tones of varying speeds may be reflected in the singing where vocal music follows intonation closely.

Similarly speakers of a language with a high incidence of nasality due to the presence of nasal vowels and a high percentage of nasal consonants, or one with pronounced glotalization which is allowed free rein in the music, or a language with certain consonantal features which are marked in speech cannot but show this peculiarity in their singing, unless like Pygmies and Bushmen they sing mainly to “vocables.” Just as one may identify a spoken language through sheer memory of the impressions of its sounds, so may one identify the vocal style of an ethnic group from the memory of the total sound impression formed by a combination of musical and phonetic features of the texts of the music.

Apart from the actual quality of sounds, there is also the interesting problem of syllable durations and other prosodic features which may control the rhythmic organization of the song, and the rate of utterance which may affect tempo or encourage the stylistic use of tempo differences in the delivery of texts, especially in accompanied recitations and story-songs. (Nketia 1970:7)

My own research has confirmed that there is a habit in Yoruba music to let nasal sounds such as [m], [n] or [ŋ] preferably coincide with the clap beat. This always has a remarkable effect on the rhythmic structure of a text-line or vocal melody. Such nasals have syllabic value in Yoruba music, and they carry one tonal unit (mora) each. In the temporal dimension they represent one elementary pulse. Their timbre is muted, or dampened, if compared with the aggressive plosives ([p], [t], [k]). Their falling on the clap pulse is, of course, brought about deliberately by Yoruba composers. And since the nasal consonants appear muted in their timbre quality, they also appear unaccented, and human auditory perception recognizes such a note as almost a rest. The immediate result is that, by contrast, the neighboring syllables in the text-line seem to gain considerable prominence. A syllable commencing with a plosive gains extra prominence if it is preceded by a syllabic nasal. It appears to be accented and sharper in timbre. Sound combinations such as [m]-[te], [n]-[ta], [ŋ]-[kɔ], etc. are treated as consisting of two syllables in Yoruba, unlike some Bantu languages where nasal plus plosive may be homorganic.

This can be demonstrated by examples from our *àlò* collection. For example, in one of the songs, “*Ọmọdẹ mẹta nserẹ*” (“Three Children Are Playing,” second version, no. 118), a verbally meaningless phrase is sung at the beginning of the story song, based on syllables also used in teaching time-line patterns *kɔ-ŋ-kɔ-lɔ-la-kɔ* to which the chorus replies *kɔ-ŋ-kɔ-la*. These are related to the clap beat in such a manner that the nasal [ŋ] falls on a clap beat.

The accents generated by the plosive [k] then come out prominently, and the result is a lively offbeat phrasing:

Leader: Elementary pulsation: 300 M.M.

Kò-n-kò-lò-la-kò Kò-n-kò-lò-la-kò Q-mọ-dẹ me-tà n-sẹ-rẹ etc.

Chorus: Kò-n-kò-la Kò-n-kò-la Kò-n-kò-

Hand-clapping: x x x x x x x x x

Time-line pattern: x . x x . x . x . x x . x . x x . x . x . x

(only mentally present)

Figure 42. Extract: “*Qmọdẹ meta nsẹrẹ*” (“Three Children Are Playing,” no. 118). Syllables are written here in phonetic script, not in the Standard Yoruba orthography

Many more examples could be added. Similarly, in the story of *Olúrómí* (“Olú Will Bear Children,” no. 56), the nasal [m] in this word is syllabic and falls on the beat:

Solo: (extract) Elementary pulsation: 225 M.M.

O - lú - ró - m - bí jé - jẹ ọ - mọ rẹ ọ - mọ rẹ a - pọn bí e - po etc.

Hand-clapping: x x x x x x x x

Figure 43. Extract: “*Olúrómí*” (“Olú Will Bear Children,” no. 56)

A further formative effect on the structure of the vocal rhythm comes from vowel juxtaposition. Equal or different vowels, if they carry the same speech-tones, merge musically into one note (see syllables 13–14 and 16–17 in Fig. 43). This may be expressed in staff notation by the tie, though it disguises the fact that the notes tied together are sung to syllables having different timbre. When vowels are tied together in a song, i.e. follow each other seamlessly, each one retains its rhythmic value; but the first vowel tends to stand out more prominently in auditory perception.

If it is placed off the beat, and if this placement is shifted and recurs several times within a text-line, the result is a complex rhythmic structure, actually only created by melodic and timbre accents. Figure 44 shows an elaborate vocal rhythmic-melodic text-line which is to a great extent the result of juxtaposed vowels. The example below is taken from one of the tortoise trickster stories, “*El’èrè ip’ònà e kú èwọ o!*” (“Owner of the Beans Near the Road, Greetings!” no. 36 in the collection, rec. Ph. A. B 5177).

irregular forms, such as in “*Ọba ni a tu ‘şọ pẹbẹ*” (no. 124), and more rarely, forms that may be called strophic.

In many àlò songs the first line of the leader’s text assumes a central or key role, almost like a title. It provides the basic theme and is, therefore, often repeated. After several textual deliberations it usually recurs at the end of the story song, forming a kind of frame (“*Ọmọde męta nşere*,” no. 111, and “*Ará ọrun ará ọrun o!*,” no. 43). One àlò in our collection, “*Baba ol’ódò*” (no. 104), has a strophic form with three lines, each containing a leader’s phrase followed by a chorus’s response. This is strangely reminiscent of a blues form, and was the subject of some thoughts in an early paper of mine (Kubik 1961a) and more recently in my book *Africa and the Blues* (1999). The àlò song “*Ma d’enia*” (no. 44), the humorous story of the monkey who wanted to become a human being, also has a strophic form—in this case with four lines, in this order: A A B A, the last line being sung by the chorus. Here, however, as in any study pursuing the historical ramifications of a musical tradition or of individual traits, general problems of stability and change have to be taken into account (see Kubik 1986c). For example, to what extent has the àlò tradition as a whole been stable during past centuries, and in which specific realms has it changed? What internal innovative changes took place, and which borrowings were made at different times from other West African (or Nigerian) cultures?

This is very difficult to assess, if one has a synchronous regional sample at hand, such as the stories I collected from different narrators in 1960 and 1963 in a relatively small area of the Yoruba-speaking country. It is only possible to gain some clues by examining variants of the same stories in the collection, and assess the relative degree of diverging development. Here it is important to note that the songs in a story with a relatively fixed text always serve the individual narrator as a kind of memory aid. It is easier to remember the wording of songs than that of a narrative. If someone forgets a story, it is then often possible for him to recall it with the help of the song which he remembers. The songs, therefore, greatly contribute to stability and conformity of the tradition, although they are not unchangeable. The extraordinary variety and richness of motifs and song types, as well as the existence of numerous variants of the same story, clearly demonstrate that àlò is not a historically rigid tradition among the Yoruba, but one that has been capable of innovation and regeneration at any point in history, and of assimilating contemporary trends in Yoruba music.

Acknowledgements

I should like to express my gratitude to Dr. Mosunmola Omibiyi-Obidike, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan (Nigeria), for having

looked at parts of the manuscript for possible inaccuracies in Yoruba spelling and translation; to Dr. David Rycroft, London, for having checked the linguistic sections for terminology; and to Mrs. Elizabeth Glasser, London, for editorial reading of this manuscript.

Transcriptions

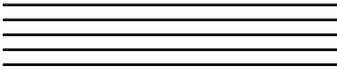
Àlò, like many other types of oral literature in Africa, do not have what may be called titles. In conversation with Yoruba speakers, a story (*itàn*) is often identified by a short descriptive indication of its content, for example “*Ìtàn omoge kan ti gbogbo enia fe lati fe*” (“The Story of the Marriage of a Much-Desired Girl with a Moth” (rec. B 8584/1963, Kubik, Ph. A. Vienna). It is also possible to identify a story by the first line of the leader’s phrase in the song belonging with it, i.e. “*Ajá ajá o ran mi leru*” (“Dog, Dog, Help Me to Carry!” no. 2). Finally, one can use the chorus phrase for identification in some stories. Lacking a “traditional” title, I have therefore used in the transcriptions usually the song’s first text-line for identification. These headings are meant as a help for the reader to refer to each story quickly, if necessary, and obtain the minimum information about narrator, tape references, etc. Six examples of *àlò* have been recorded on the companion CD for this book (CD Tracks 17–22).

With regard to the transcription of *àlò* songs, my aim has been to transcribe them “emically correct.” Working from this background, my present transcription methods are based on the following reflections: Any musical culture or performance style operates within an intra-culturally accepted margin of tolerance, allowing for variation or deviations from an unstated norm to the extent that the identity of the tradition is not lost. From one performer to the next and even in performances by the same persons on consecutive days, there are allowances for deviations. There may be differences in pitch intonation (sometimes up to a semi-tone), in rhythm, in the order of text-lines, in the tempo, in the accentuations and so on.

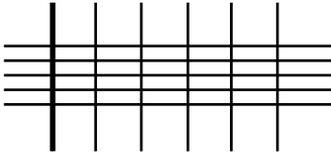
Unless one aims at the specific study of the margin of tolerance, it is pointless to transcribe what is considered insignificant from the conceptual angle of the culture concerned. For example, if pitch fluctuations of up to 20 cents \pm are acceptable to a singer on different occasions, there is no point in accounting for them in a transcription. Omotayo Adeyemi, an old lady in Oshogbo who in 1963 told us the story of the lame boy “*Abureṣe*” (copy of the recording in Ph. A. Vienna B 8586) used an interval in one place during her song which came very close to a semi-tone. In the next repetition, this interval was much wider. Obviously, in this case there was no concept of semi-tones in the pentatonic system in which she performed this particular song. The “semi-tone” was the maximum deviation from a norm of interval relationships

that were relatively broadly conceptualized. It was just the limit of what was still acceptable.

In an emically correct transcription, it is necessary to base one's assessment on what is significant in the culture itself and on what the culture itself distinguishes as different entities or categories of intervals, sounds, patterns, etc. In the present case I am using an adapted form of staff notation, devised earlier (see Kubik 1983), which is suitable for the notation of several kinds of African music. Problems, especially in phrasing, created by the durational values and the duple-division character of traditional Western staff notation are eliminated by the present system, which uses the following symbols:



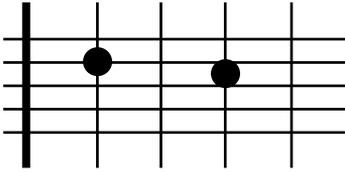
The five lines in this transcription system have the same pitch meanings as in Western music, since the Yoruba pentatonic scale, in particular, is virtually indistinguishable from the Western notes C, D, E, G, A. However, the notation is relative, i.e., only the intervals are represented correctly; the overall pitch level can be changed ad lib.



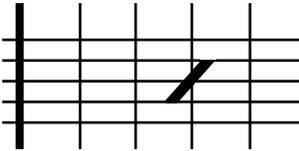
The vertical lines, crossing the staff, represent the elementary pulsation, i.e., the smallest time-units in an African musical piece. Reinforced vertical lines have a function similar to bar-lines and indicate the inception of a metrical series.

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The number at the beginning of the staff, always encircled, is the form or cycle number (see Kubik 1961b:199). In notations of African music it replaces the conventional Western time-signatures, indicating the number of elementary pulse-units covered by the cycle on which the composition is built.



A dot in the appropriate place on a line or between lines indicates pitch and marks the note to be sung. This is not different from Western staff notation. However, here this symbol does not express duration. No stems or flags are attached to the dots. The note suggested by the dot is to be sung at the exact point of time marked by the vertical line which crosses it. And it is to be held until its validity is revoked by a new symbol. The new symbol may be another dot anywhere on the staff or the sign for stop.



This is the sign for stop. Where it is set, the sound-producing action is to be interrupted up to the appearance of a new dot on the staff. Although dot and stop signs are not durational symbols, they do have a minimum durational value, namely one elementary pulse-unit.

This system guarantees accuracy of timing and allows for accurate reproduction of the *àlô* songs so transcribed. It also removes the phantom of “syn-copation” arising when conventional staff notation is used for the transcription of African music. In this system the factual duration of a note is exclusively determined by the position of the following symbol.

Vocal melisma is a prominent trait in other forms of Yoruba music, e.g. *şakara*, but does not play a significant role in the *àlô* story songs. Its virtual absence in this tradition underlines my suggestion that there existed “pre-Islamic” pentatonic styles in Yoruba-speaking areas. In our notation system, therefore, additional symbols expressing melismatic techniques were dispensable.

In this chapter a small selection of nine *àlô* stories and songs is published, with the narrative texts only in English, but the songs in both Yoruba and English. This may suffice to introduce the student to the subject and stimulate further research.

I. “Ará òrun ará òrun o!” (“Inhabitants of Heaven, Inhabitants of Heaven!”). No. 43 in the collection. Sung by Gboyega Ladipò, m., 20 years old, told by Duro Ladipò, m., 30 years old; recorded in Oshogbo, August 1960. Tape recording of the song, no. B 5185 in the Phonogram Archives, Vienna (CD Track 22).

Once there lived a palm-wine tapper called Agbelugogo. He was not very successful in selling his product and therefore not very wealthy. Somebody advised him to try and sell his palm wine at the door to the heavens and thus win the heavenly inhabitants as his regular clients.

Agbelugogo took a few calabashes full of palm wine, travelled to the gates of heaven and began to sing:

Yoruba text:

Translation:

Leader: Ará òrun ará òrun o!

Inhabitants of heaven, inhabitants of heaven!

Chorus: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Ará òrun ará òrun o!

Inhabitants of heaven, inhabitants of heaven!

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Tani np’ará òrun o?

Who is calling the inhabitants of heaven?

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Emi Agbelugogo!

It is me, Agbelugogo!

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Kil’o wa şe nilẹ yi o?

What did you come to do in this town?

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Ẹmu ni mo gbé wa.

I have brought palm wine.

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Èl’èlo l’ẹmu rẹ o?

What is the price of your palm wine?

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Ọkọ kàn ẹgbẹ’wá.

Each calabash costs 2000 cowries.

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Gb’ẹmu s’ilẹ ki oma lọ o!

Put down the palm wine and go!

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

L.: Ará òrun ará òrun o!

Inhabitants of heaven, inhabitants of heaven!

Ch.: Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Inanga ntere guntere inanga ntere.

Agbelugogo put his palm wine in front of the heavenly gate and went home. When he came back the next day, he found 2000 cowrie-shells. From that day

forward he brought palm wine every day, and very soon he became a rich man. He did not tell anybody about the source of his income.

Many people wondered how this poor man could have become so rich in a very short time, and they became inquisitive. The tortoise in particular was plagued by envy and very annoyed. He went to Agbelugogo, offering his friendship. The tortoise was not satisfied until the palm-wine tapper agreed to take him to the gates of heaven.

As usual, after arrival at the heavenly gates he sang his song and then left, together with the tortoise. But the tortoise was still unsatisfied. He also wanted to see the people who would drink the palm wine. In the meantime he had learned the song. Secretly, on the next day, he went alone to the gates of heaven, put a calabash with palm wine down and began to sing.

[repetition of the song]

When the tortoise was told to leave the palm wine there and retreat, he did not really go away, but hid behind a bush. The heavenly inhabitants came out, and the tortoise discovered that these people were very different from all beings he had seen on earth. Some had two heads, some others only one leg, some had eight eyes. . . . The tortoise found them all ugly, and he began to roar with laughter. “Hey, eight eyes! Hey, ten heads! Whatever do you look like? Ha!” The heavenly inhabitants heard the laughter and were very sad. They found the tortoise behind the bush and killed him.

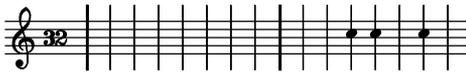
From that moment on, Agbelugogo’s trade was destroyed. When he came back to the heavenly gates the next time and sang his song, nobody opened them, and he never saw any of the heavenly inhabitants again.

Note: This story contains many indirect references to the culture history of the Yoruba. According to the centuries-old urban culture of the Yoruba, heaven with its inhabitants is also imagined as a town, similar to traditional Yoruba towns. The monetary unit was the cowrie shell, and Agbelugogo sells his palm wine to the inhabitants of heaven at the fantastic price of 2000 cowries per calabash.

Elementary pulsation: 300 M.M.

Leader: 

A - rá ò-run a - rá ò-run o!

Chorus: 

I - na - nga
x x

Hand-clapping:



A - rá ò-run a - rá ò-run o!

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga
x x x x x x x x x x



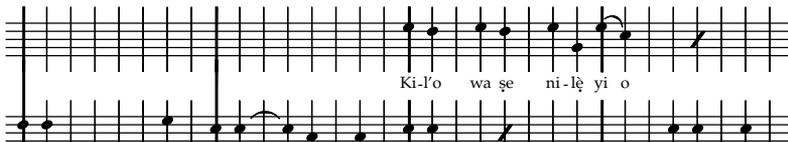
Ta - ni np'a - rá ò-run o!

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga
x x x x x x x x x x



E-mi A-gbe-lu - go - go

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga
x x x x x x x x x x



Ki-l'o wa se ni-lẹ yi o

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga
x x x x x x x x x x

E-mu ni mo gbé wa

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga

x x x x x x x x x x

E-l'è - lo l'è - mu rẹ o?

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga

x x x x x x x x x x

Q-kọ - kan ẹ - gbe wá

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga

x x x x x x x x x x

Gb'ẹ mu s'i-lẹ ki o-ma lo o

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga

x x x x x x x x x x

A - rá ò-run a - rá ò-run o!

nte-re gu - nte-re i - na - nga nte-re I - na - nga

x x x x x x x x x x

II. “Adejumo” (“Adejumo”). No. 105 in the collection. Told by Gboyega Ladipò, m., ca. 20 years old; collected by the narrator in Ogbomosho in September 1960.

There was once a man whose name was Adejumo and who had seven children. Next to their house stood a papaya tree, and in this tree lived a wizard. One day Adejumo went on a long journey and left his children behind. In the evening all the children sat by the fire and ate their yam. The wizard came out of the papaya tree and appeared before the door of the house, believing that Father was there. He began to sing:

Yoruba text:

Leader: ‘Dejumo o! Ijumọre
 Chorus: Ijumo kenke Ijumọre
 L.: ‘Dejumo o! Ijumọre
 Ch.: Ijumọ kenke Ijumọre
 L.: Ò bá bun mi lomọ kan! Ijumọre.
 Ch.: Ijumo kenke Ijumọre
 L.: O di pì, mo gbé kan! Ijumọre.
 Ch.: Ijumọ kenke Ijumọre

Translation:

‘Dejumo o! Ijumọre
 Ijumọ kenke Ijumọre
 ‘Dejumo o! Ijumọre
 Ijumọ kenke Ijumọre
 Please give me a child! Ijumọre.
 Ijumọ kenke Ijumọre
 I am taking one! Ijumọre.
 Ijumọ kenke Ijumọre.

While singing this song, the wizard caught one of the seven children and kidnapped it.

On the next day Adejumo was not yet back. The wizard came again and took the second child. From that day forward he came every day, and each time he kidnapped one more child. On the seventh day—after six children had disappeared—Father came home late in the evening. The only boy who had been spared told him everything. His six brothers had all been kidnapped by the wizard.

That day Adejumo decided to hide near the house, behind a shrub. The wizard did not know and came back to kidnap the last child. As he arrived he began to sing as usual. He had not yet finished, when Adejumo burst out from his hiding-place with a big pot in his hand which had no bottom, just a hole in the middle. He threw this pot over the head of the wizard. The wizard seemed to be defenseless, because his head was stuck in the pot without bottom and he could no longer see. However, he succeeded in breaking it and throwing it down. Then he escaped. As soon as he had disappeared, Adejumo went to the papaya tree because he thought that the wizard had disappeared in there, and he clapped another pot on the papaya tree. But suddenly the wizard appeared from a different direction, laughing terribly and he sang:

Yoruba text:

Solo: Ọl’ ọrun sé ngò si nbè, o gbe
 gbòngúdú gbòngúdú b’ọl ọrun!

Translation:

The owner of the sky did it, but I
 was not there. He took a broken

pot. He clapped a broken pot on his neck.

With these words the wizard mocked the man by comparing him with *Ol'orun* (the owner of the sky, God of Heavens). Adejumo was frightened, because he had thought that the wizard was inside the papaya tree. He ran away in terror. This is the end. He had lost his six children for good. The story teaches us: Never go on a journey without leaving your children in the care of somebody!

Note: gbòngú dú—basically means the broken neck of a pot. A pot equipped with a skin can also be used as a drum.

Elementary pulsation: 315 M.M.

Leader:

III. “Adeyo d’èhin o!” (“Adeyo, Go Back!”). No. 117 in the collection.
Told by Grace Tinu Ladipo, f., ca. 35 years old; recorded in Oshogbo in
September 1960.

There was a man who had only one daughter. The girl’s name was Adeyo, and she was so beautiful that many men wanted to marry her. One day, two spirits of the other world (*orun*), an elephant and a buffalo, transformed into human beings and came to visit Adeyo. When they arrived, the spirit-elephant—followed by the buffalo—said he desired to marry her. Adeyo replied she would like to think about it.

After both had left, the girl called on her father and told him that she had found a husband. The father said he would like to see the aspirant. The following day, both men came back, the transformed spirit-elephant and his companion, the spirit-buffalo. The girl introduced the elephant to her father.

The father, however, had serious objections. He said that he did not want his daughter to marry an unknown stranger, but rather someone whom he knew. Adeyo was very sad, and she decided to enforce her marriage. Her father said that in this case he would not be responsible for anything that would happen to her.

Shortly afterwards, the girl followed the two strangers. As they walked along the path to an unknown destination, the spirit-elephant and his companion began to sing:

Yoruba text:

Translation:

Leader: Adeyo d’èhin o!

Adeyo, go back!

Chorus: Mele d’èhin.

I cannot go back.

L.: Adeyo d’èhin o!

Adeyo, go back!

Ch.: Mele d’èhin.

I cannot go back.

L.: Èrin ni nre gbo hun.

The elephant is going into that forest.

Ch.: Mele d’èhin.

I cannot go back.

L.: Eḡon ni nṛo dan hun.

The buffalo is going into that grassland.

Ch.: Mele d’èhin.

I cannot go back.

L.: Elin ẹnu ti t’òrò.

The teeth of the mouth are like the gourd.

Ch.: Mele d’èhin.

I cannot go back.

L.: Awọ ara t’ogèdè.

The skin of the body is like a banana.

Ch.: Mele d’èhin.

I cannot go back.

L.: Opa ajé t’ìròkò.

The staff of money is like the ìròkò tree.

Ch.: Mele d’èhin.

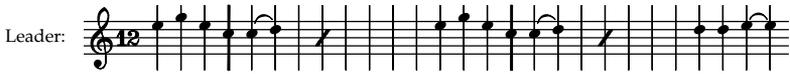
I cannot go back.

This song served to warn Adeyo and to let her know that the two men were not human beings. Up to that point they had walked along the main road, but now they branched off and entered a forest which had no end. The two strangers began to give back their borrowed body parts to the owners. The spirit-elephant stripped off his beautiful human skin and gave it back to the banana. The teeth in his mouth he gave back to the gourd, and the staff of money, which the handsome young man had carried, transformed into an *ìròkò* tree.

After they reached their dwellings, the spirit-elephant and the spirit-buffalo called all their companions together. They killed the girl and ate her up.

Note: *Opá ajé* is a traditional staff of money which the handsome man, into whom the spirit-elephant in the story had turned, carried along. *Ìròko* is a huge tree thought to house a spirit (*orò*). Bot. *Chlorophora excelsa*, Moraceae, or “African teak.”

Elementary pulsation: 240 M.M.

Leader: 

Chorus: 

Hand-clapping: x x x x x x x x x x x

Time-line pattern: x . x . x x . x . x x . x . x . x . x





x x x x x x x x x x x x

x . x . x x . x . x x . x . x . x . x





x x x x x x x x x x x x

x . x . x x . x . x x . x . x . x . x

IV. “Retenrete” (“Retenrete”). No. 114 in the collection. Told and sung by Gboyega Ladipò, m., 20 years old; collected by the narrator in Ogbomosho. Recorded in Oshogbo in September 1960.

There was a time when *Ol’orun* (the owner of the sky) and *Aiyé* (the earth divinity) both lived in the other world (*orun*). At that time the solid ground (*ilẹ aiyé*) was already separated from the sky. On earth there lived a king who was very rich.

However, in all the countries no food could be found, including the other world. A terrible famine had broken out. The only person who possessed food was the rich king. *Ol’orun* and *Aiyé* discussed the matter, and they decided that one of them should travel to earth to fetch food from the king. However, there was one disagreement. *Ol’orun* said that *Aiyé* should go, but *Aiyé* refused, because she claimed to be the senior and had existed before *Ol’orun*.

After many arguments, *Ol’orun* set out on the journey. When he arrived on earth he found the king and began to sing the following song:

<i>Yoruba text:</i>	<i>Translation:</i>
Leader: Retenrete.	Retenrete.
Chorus: Ajanreteja.	Ajanreteja.
L.: Retenrete.	Retenrete.
Ch.: Ajanreteja.	Ajanreteja.
L.: Omoge gún’mu ṣmu gbẹ.	The breasts of the girls thrust out; the breasts dry up.
Ch.: Ajanreteja.	Ajanreteja.
L.: Won lo soko won p’eku emó kan.	They went to the plantation and killed one rat.
Ch.: Ajanreteja.	Ajanreteja.
L.: Gbogbo igi so o gbẹ.	All trees bear fruit and dry.
Ch.: Ajanreteja.	Ajanreteja.
L.: Retenrete.	Retenrete.
Ch.: Ajanreteja.	Ajanreteja.

The king gave *Ol’orun* all the food he possessed. After *Ol’orun* returned to the other world he did not share the food with *Aiyé*, but said to her that she should go to earth by herself and fetch some from the king.

Aiyé descended and went to the king, but the king said that all food was now finished. *Aiyé* became very weak, and could not move again. She had to stay on earth (*ilẹ aiyé*), and *Ol’orun* remained alone in the other world. This is why earth and sky are permanently separated. Now *Aiyé* realized that she was the younger one and that the owner of the sky (*Ol’orun*) had preceded her.

Elementary pulsation: 255 M.M.

Leader:

Chorus:

Hand-clapping: x x x x x x x x
 Time-line pattern: x . x . x x . x . x x . x . x . x

-ja A-jan - re - te - ja A-jan - re - te - ja A-jan - re - te -
 x
 x . x . x x . x . x . x x . x . x . x

-ja A-jan - re - te - ja
 x x x x x
 x . x . x x . x . x . x x

V. “Elelujú má mǎ ku o!” (“Elelujú Don’t Die!”). No. 47 in the collection. Told and sung by Aduḳe Labintan, f., ca. 30 years old, from Igbajo near Ilesha. Recorded in Oshogbo in September 1960.

There was once a man whose name was Elelujú and who had only one son. His son, Eluju, often noticed that the father left their home late in the evening and stayed away for the whole night. He never allowed his son to follow him, because he was meeting with the members of a secret society to which he belonged. The meetings took place in a lonely area in the bush which could only be reached by climbing over seven hills. . . .

The people of that society hated Elelujú, and they were planning secretly to kill him. One day the father once again climbed over the seven hills, but this time his son Eluju followed him. However, Eluju was late, and when he reached the secret place his father had already left for home. The other members were still there, so Eluju hid behind a nearby bush to find out the real purpose of this society.

Suddenly he heard the members talk about his father, and he became a witness of their secret agreement to kill him. The men stood up and began to dig a big hole on the spot where the father normally sat. Then they put a costly mat on top of it to make it unrecognizable. They cooked a soup from the meat of a vulture, which is forbidden to be eaten, and into the red color of camwood, which the society members used to paint their bodies, they mixed a pot of liquid pepper. In this manner they prepared a torturous death for the boy’s father.

After Eluju had watched all this, he hurriedly left his hiding place and went home. Totally exhausted he arrived there, only to hear from his mother that the father had once again set out on the journey to meet the members of the secret society. The boy was in despair. He knew now that all depended on whether he was able to intercept his father before he arrived there. He set out again on the journey over the seven hills. From one of the peaks he recognized his father as he was climbing the fifth hill, and the boy began to sing:

Yoruba text:

Translation:

Leader: Elelujú má mǎ ku o!
 Chorus: Eluju, fẹṛẹ kunfẹ, Eluju!
 L.: Ma mǎ ku o!
 Ch.: Eluju, fẹṛẹ kunfẹ, Eluju!
 L.: A figín se ẹ má mǎ je o!
 Ch.: Eluju, fẹṛẹ kunfẹ, Eluju!
 L.: A fata sosùn má mǎ kun o!
 Ch.: Eluju, fẹṛẹ kunfẹ, Eluju!

Elelujú do not die!
 Eluju, hurry up, Eluyu!
 Do not die!
 Eluju, hurry up, Eluyu!
 If we cook vulture soup—do not eat!
 Eluju, hurry up, Eluju!
 If we mix pepper in the camwood—
 do not paint your body with it!
 Eluju, hurry up, Eluju!

L.: A ɽɛni pupa má jōko le!	If we spread a red mat—do not sit on it!
Ch.: Eluju, fẹrẹ kunfẹ, Eluju!	Eluju, hurry up, Eluju!

The father, Eleluju, had a dog with him. The keen ears of the dog heard the song of Eluju. The dog stopped, and it did not want to move from the spot. The father, beginning to pay attention to the dog's strange behavior, suddenly recognized his son in the distance and became aware of the faint words of the song.

When his son arrived at the fifth hill, he told him the truth of what he had seen. Then he returned home. The father continued alone, accompanied by his dog, well prepared for everything, until he reached the meeting place of the secret society behind the seventh hill.

The people there greeted him and put the vulture soup in front of him on the mat, where he was expected to sit. Eleluju refused to sit down. Then the other people said he should paint his body. One of the men took the pot with the red color mixed with pepper to pour it over Eleluju, but the father refused. He threw onto the mat a few pieces of food, after which the dog jumped, the mat gave way and the dog fell into the hole.

The people of the secret society were now extremely frightened. They left everything and ran away in panic. Thus, Eleluju had been saved by his son. When he arrived back home, he called his boy and thanked him, asking him to forgive him for the mistake he had made of not informing him about his membership in that society. This story teaches us that one must trust one's son.

Notes: The chorus phrase *Eluju fẹrẹ kunfẹ Eluju* is a rhythmic pattern which cannot be translated literally, but the implication is that the son Eluju should hurry up.

Camwood (in Yoruba *osùn*) is of red color, and when pounded, the powder can be used to make a red paint for body decoration in rituals. In the story it also functions as a symbol of danger, explained Mrs. Aduke Labintan, the narrator of this story.

Among the Yoruba, two secret societies are relatively well known in the ethnographic literature: *ogbóni*, a men's cult of the earth, which even had certain political power over the king, and the *orò* association, in which a bull roarer is used as the voice of a "spirit" to scare away non-members and frighten the novices during the initiation ceremonies.

A te - ni pu - pa má jō - ko le!

fe - re kun - fe E - lu - ju E - lu - ju

x . . x . . x . . x . . x . . x . . x . . x . . x . . x . . x . . x . .

fe - re kun - fe E - lu - ju

x . . x . . x . . x . . x . . x . .

VI. “Adú, aja mi o!” (“Adú, My Dog!”). No. 121 in the collection. Told by N. A. Oladeinde, m., ca. 45 years old; recorded at Ijebu-Ijesha in September 1960. The narrator said that he had learned this story and song in 1935.

Once there was a hunter. He often went into the forests while his wife stayed behind and kept the household. On his long excursions he always took his three dogs with him: *Adú* (meaning: black), *Qwàrà* (meaning: steady) and *Méjeun-oni* (meaning: I don’t take food from anybody).

One day he came to the forbidden forest where no hunter had ever tried to go. After he had entered this zone, he suddenly saw a very beautiful woman. She was so attractive that he desired to take her as a second wife. However, this woman stubbornly refused all his advances.

After a long talk he succeeded in persuading her to follow him to his home. Then, for some time, the hunter and his two wives lived happily. One day, the new wife told her husband that it was time for her to visit her relatives. The man agreed and said he would accompany her. As usual, he wanted to take his three dogs on the journey through the forests, but the new wife objected fervently and demanded of him that he leave his dogs at home. She insisted that he lock them in the innermost part of his house, which is called *àkòdi*.

Hesitantly, the hunter gave in to the desire of his second wife, but he put his hunter’s whistle into his pocket, because somehow he had become suspicious. “Why does she ask me to lock my dogs in the *àkòdi*?” he asked himself.

The hunter and his new wife set out. After they had walked for a long time, they came to the terrible forbidden zone called: *igbó méjè—eluju méjè* (the seven bigger and the seven smaller forests). As soon as they had entered this zone, his new wife transformed into a fat and ugly old witch, sitting on a huge tree. Immediately she tried to catch the hunter. He escaped and took refuge on another tree. Now the woman struck her belly, and two hundred men with axes came out. She ordered them to cut up the tree which the hunter had climbed. They almost succeeded, but the hunter knew a magic word formula (*igèdè*) which he pronounced in order to strengthen the tree.

Thus, the woman struck her belly for the second time. Another two hundred men with axes came out. When the hunter saw that they were becoming too numerous and would soon overpower him, he blew his whistle to call his three dogs.

Yoruba text:

Leader: Adú, aja mi o! Eregeko.
 Chorus: Sinda wá eregeko.
 L.: Qwàrà, aja mi o! Eregeko.
 Ch.: Sinda wá eregeko.
 L.: Méjeun-oni, o aja mi o!
 Ch.: Sinda wá eregeko.

Translation:

Adú, my dog! Eregeko.
 Sinda wá eregeko.
 Qwàrà, my dog! Eregeko.
 Sinda wà eregeko.
 Méjeun-oni, my dog!
 Sinda wá eregeko.

L.: Sinda wá eregeko.

Sinda wá eregeko.

Ch.: Sinda wá eregeko.

Sinda wá eregeko.

The dogs were locked in the innermost part of the house (*àkòdi*). They heard the voice of their master. *Adú* was the first who tried to open the door. When he saw that this was not possible, he ran into the door with his head until it burst open and he died. Now *Qwàrà* tried to open the second door. He also ran into it with his head until it burst open and died. *Méjeun-oni* was the only one of the three dogs who had never accepted food from the new wife. He ran into the third door and he opened it, breaking through.

Now *Méjeun-oni* blew into the noses of *Adú* and *Qwàrà*, and they woke up again. All three dogs hurried in the direction from where the sounds of the whistle came. When they reached the tree on which the hunter was sitting, they killed all four hundred men with their axes, one by one. Only the witch was spared, and she was still sitting on the huge tree. The dogs began to crack and crush this tree with their teeth until it collapsed.

The hunter and this ghastly woman fought each other for life or death. *Adú* jumped at her. She killed the dog with an axe. *Qwàrà* jumped at her, and she killed him. Now *Méjeun-oni* pronounced the words of a magic formula (*igèdè*):

The day when the king of this town died, I was not there!

This means: “The death of my master can never occur in my presence.” With these words the third dog jumped at the throat of the witch and killed her. The witch dropped dead and transformed into a huge dead animal. *Méjeun-oni* blew into the noses of his comrades, and both woke up. Then the hunter and his three dogs carried the cadaver home.

When they arrived, the hunter’s first wife wondered about the size of the animal. She asked herself how her husband could have carried such a large animal alone, and she became inquisitive. She did not know that the three dogs had helped him to carry it. Before they reached home, the dogs had asked the hunter never to reveal to anyone the secret that they could speak like human beings.

On the next day, the hunter and his wife organized a big feast. After he had drunk much palm wine (*opé*), she pressed him very hard to tell her how he had carried this large animal. He did not want to say, but his wife asked incessantly. At last, the hunter said to her: “*Adú*, *Qwàrà* and *Méjeun-oni* carried it. They were talking like human beings. When my dogs had killed the witch, they asked me not to tell anybody.”

When the woman heard this, she said to herself: “If this is so, then these useless dogs could also do my housework in the future!” So once, when the man was not at home, she called them in like servants. The dogs did not answer. This annoyed her greatly, and she uttered terrible insults. “You useless creatures, when your master is here you work for him, but so far as I’m concerned,

you only like to eat my food, you don't want to do something for me as well. Go to the river and fetch water!"

The dogs refused, and they knew now that their master had revealed the secret. *Adú* was very sad. He set out to follow the traces of the hunter, but he did not get far and died on the way. *Qwàrà* set out to follow the traces of the hunter. He passed the place where *Adú* had died and came to a forking of the path, from where three smaller paths ran in different directions. Since he had eaten food from the woman, he could not recognize which way his master had taken, and so he died there.

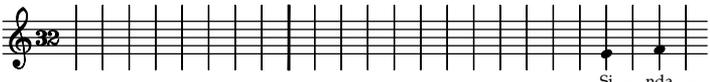
Méjeun-oni was the strongest of the three dogs. He alone reached the plantation to which his master had gone, but he could not see him and he only shouted the following words across the fields: "You have revealed our secret! From this day forward, no animal will ever speak again." And then *Méjeun-oni* died. The hunter heard these words from afar. When he came to the spot, his dog was already dead.

Notes: *Àkòdì* is the open, uncovered, innermost space in a traditional rectangular Yoruba house. This small inner "courtyard" is enclosed by a kind of inner veranda, onto which lead the inner doors of the house. Many of these houses also have an impluvium: a still smaller space, not covered, into which rainwater flows from the roofs and may be collected in a barrel.

Igèdè is a Yoruba term usually translated into English as "incantation." It is a magic word formula whose pronunciation may impose or dissolve a ban. The speaker formulates his desire in such a manner, as if it were a fact which had already happened. Hence the past tense in the sentence of the dog *Méjeun-oni*: "The day when the king of this town died . . ."

Elementary pulsation: 300 M.M.

Leader:  A - dú a - ja mi o! E - re-ge - ko

Chorus:  Si - nda -

Time-line pattern: . . . x . x

 Q-wà - rà a - ja mi o! E - re-ge - ko

-wá e - re-ge - ko Si - nda -

x . . . x . . . x x x x x x

 Mé-je - un q - ni o a - ja mi o!

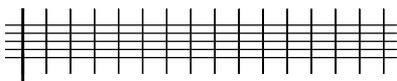
-wá e - re-ge - ko Si - nda -

x . . . x . . . x x x x x x

 Si - nda - wá e - re-ge - ko

-wá e - re-ge - ko Si - nda -

x . . . x . . . x x x x x x

 -wá e - re-ge - ko

x . . . x . . . x x

VII. “Ọba ni a tu’ sọ pẹbẹ” (“The King Asked Us to Take Off Our Clothes”). No. 124 in the collection. Sung by Kehinde Ladipo, f., ca. 25. Recorded in Oshogbo in September 1960. The story was not told by Miss Ladipo, but was later sent to me in a letter dated July 1, 1961, by Gboyega Ladipo.

There was once a king who had fifty wives. The youngest among them always ran away when the king approached her. She did not want him to “play” with her. The reason was that she had no vagina. Therefore, she preferred to take her bath in a secret place.

One day a slave of the king watched her, and he saw the secret. Immediately he reported this to the king’s senior wife. Early next morning the senior wife went to the king to let him know what she had heard. The king was very angry and said that he would have the slave killed if this news were untrue.

To clarify the case, the senior wife advised the king to call all his wives together in seven days in order to come and appear naked before him. This was decided, and after the seven days had passed, the women gathered and the king ordered them to take off their clothes and pass before him naked, one by one. Each woman, as she passed by the king, intoned the following song:

Yoruba text:

Translation:

Leader: Ọba ni a tu’ sọ pẹbẹ

The king asked us to take off our clothes.

Chorus: Ayaba!

Queen!

L.: Ai tu’ sọ gbàbú.

We do not take off the cloth.

Ch.: Ọlẹlẹ!

Ọlẹlẹ!

Solo: Igi ọdan yi l’a ba ge

Let us cut the ọdan-tree!

k’emi rin, k’emi yan,

I shall walk, I shall walk with a swagger,

k’emi yanrin-yanrin,

I swagger along,

k’emi digbo l’ọba.

I shall bump into the king.

Ch.: Orere!

Orere!

S.: K’emi digbo l’ọba.

I shall bump into the king.

The parade of the women began with the senior wife. Then followed the second, third, fourth and all the other women until the fiftieth, who was the youngest. When it was the youngest woman’s turn, she was extremely timid, and her lips trembled with fear. Only the king and his senior wife knew the reason why all the women should appear naked before him. The other women, who did not know the reason, were just waiting to see what would happen. When the youngest woman refused to take off her clothes, she was forced, and she also sang the same song, appearing naked before the king. . . .

[repetition of song]

Her secret was revealed, and the other, jealous women jeered at her and

made her ashamed. The king gave the order that she should be killed. To the faithful slave he gave five pieces of gold, five pieces of silver, five garments, five pairs of shoes, five servants and five houses.

Note: Numerical symbolism plays an important role in many of the *àlò* stories. The number 5 may symbolize death and also betrayal. Although the story in Gboyega's writing does not end with a moral, it is evident that the sympathy of the audience belongs to the unfortunate girl, rather than the treacherous slave who denounced her before the king for a vile profit.

Elementary pulses: 210 M.M.

Leader: 

Chorus: 

Hand-clapping: x x x x x x x x



x x x x x x x x x x x x



x x x x x

VIII. “Baba ol’ódò” (“Father of the River”). No. 104 in the collection.
Told by Gboyega Ladipo, m., ca. 20 years old; collected by the narrator in Ogbomosho in September 1960.

Once there lived a man who owned a small river. During the dry season, all the rivers in the vicinity had dried up; only the small river of this man carried some water. One day, a girl from the nearby town arrived there to draw water. When she arrived, she asked the owner of the watercourse for a pot. The man saw that the girl was very beautiful, and he gave her the pot without asking money for it.

The girl drew water and wanted to set out for her journey home. The man, however, was so fascinated by her beauty that he asked her whether she would allow him to follow her. The girl said she could never agree to such a thing, but the man followed her without her consent. Halfway to the town, she stopped and ordered the man to turn back. He refused. It was against all rules of good customs that a girl should take a stranger with her to the town.

For the second time she asked the man to turn back, but he refused. When they arrived at her house, she put the pot with the water into her bathroom and began to sing:

Yoruba text:

Translation:

Leader: Wẹ ná o, wẹ ná, baba ol’ódò!

Wash now, wash now, Father of the River!

Chorus: Tere natere.

Tere natere.

L.: Wẹ ná o, wẹ ná, baba ol’ódò!

Wash now, wash now, Father of the River!

Ch.: Tere natere.

Tere natere.

L.: Erù òb’òmọ Ládẹjọ Àwẹlé
Oniterena.

Fear does not worry the daughter
of Àwẹlé Oniterena.

Ch.: Tere natere.

Tere natere.

Thereafter the owner of the river took a bath. The girl prepared *ẹkọ* for the man to eat and began to sing again:

Yoruba text:

Translation:

Leader: J’ẹkọ o, j’ẹkọ, baba ol’ódò!

Eat ẹkọ, eat ẹkọ, Father of the river!

Chorus: Tere natere.

Tere natere.

L.: J’ẹkọ o, j’ẹkọ, baba ol’ódò!

Eat ẹkọ, eat ẹkọ, Father of the river!

Ch.: Tere natere.

Tere natere.

L.: Erù òb’òmọ Ládẹjọ Àwẹlé
Oniterena.

Fear does not worry the daughter
of Ládẹjọ Àwẹlé Oniterena.

Ch.: Tere natere.

Tere natere.

The man began to eat, and after he had finished, the girl began to sing for the third time:

Yoruba text:

Translation:

Leader: Sùn ná o, sùn ná, baba ol'ódò! Sleep now, sleep now, Father of the river!

Chorus: Tere natere. Tere natere.

L.: Sùn ná o, sùn ná, baba ol'ódò! Sleep now, sleep now, Father of the river!

Ch.: Tere natere. Tere natere.

L.: Erù ò b'òmọ Ládèjọ Àwẹlé
Oniterena. Fear does not worry the daughter
of Ládèjọ Àwẹlé Oniterena.

Ch.: Tere natere. Tere natere.

Somebody in the town had watched the man as he entered the house of the girl. He went to the king and reported to him that he knew a girl who harbored a stranger. Thereupon the king called one of his bodyguards, gave him a sword and ordered him to check on the house of that girl; and if he found the man, he should behead him.

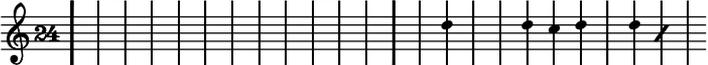
When the king's servant entered the house, he found both of them sleeping on the same bed, and so he killed the man. The story teaches us: one must not violate the good customs.

Note: Eko—main staple food in Yorubaland, made from fine maize flour. It is usually eaten together with *ẹfọ*, a kind of vegetable.

Elementary pulses = 250 M.M.

Leader: 

1. Wè ná_o wẹ ná ba-ba_o - l'ó - dò!
 2. J'ẹ - kọ_o j'ẹ - kọ ba-ba_o - l'ó - dò!
 3. Sùn ná_o sùn ná ba-ba_o - l'ó - dò!

Chorus: 

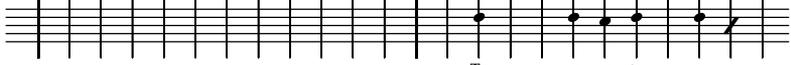
Te - re na-te - re

Hand-clapping: x x x x x x x x



Wè ná_o wẹ ná ba-ba_o - l'ó - dò!
 J'ẹ - kọ_o j'ẹ - kọ ba-ba_o - l'ó - dò!
 Sùn ná_o sùn ná ba-ba_o - l'ó - dò!

Te - re na-te - re



x x x x x x x x



b'q-mq Lá - ẹ - jọ A - wẹ - le - O - ni - te - re - na

Te - re na-te - re



x x x x x x x x

IX. “Ma d’enia, ma d’enia” (“*I am Becoming a Human Being, I am Becoming a Human Being*”). No. 44 in the collection. Told by a visitor to the *Ladipo* family, ca. 40 years old, unidentified. Recorded in *Oshogbo* in September 1960.

Monkeys have human feelings. A monkey went to *Orunmilà*, the wise man of the *Ifá* oracle, and asked: “How could I become a human being?” *Orunmilà* said to him: “You have to lock yourself in a dark room inside a house and remain there for seven days, without talking to anyone. For no reason should you open the door or windows and talk to people.”

For five days the monkey remained in the dark room and prayed to God. On the morning of the sixth day, he noticed how his monkey hair began to disappear in the palms of his hands and feet and in his face, and in the evening he could suddenly stand upright.

The room in which the monkey had locked himself was in a house situated near the main road. As it was Saturday, people were preparing festivities. At 7 o’clock in the evening it happened that *dùndún* drummers passed by. The monkey became very excited. For one moment, he forgot what *Orunmilà* had told him and he opened the door a little bit, looking out eagerly to discover what was going on. He got very excited by the festivities he saw. He now opened the window and called to the drummers, asking them to wait for him. “What do you want?” the drummers asked. “Play something for me!” the monkey said. The drummers replied: “Alright, we shall compose a new song.” They began their drumming, and the monkey came out into the street to dance and sing.

Yoruba text:

Translation:

Leader: Ma d’enia, ma d’enia!
(monkey)

I am becoming a human being,
I am becoming a human being!

Ma d’enia, ma d’enia!

I am becoming a human being, I am
becoming a human being!

Iwòyí ọ̀lẹ́ o ma d’enia!

Tomorrow at this time, I will be a
human being!

Ma d’enia, ma d’enia!

I am becoming a human being, I am
becoming a human being!

Chorus: Ma d’enia, ma d’enia!
(all)

I am becoming a human being,
I am becoming a human being!

For hours the drummers only played this song. It was the hit of the day. The monkey, happy that he was close to becoming a human being, got drunk with palm wine and gave a big dance show to the people in the street, until *Orunmilà* heard the strange noises from afar. The Wise Man of the *Ifá* oracle was very annoyed and made the monkey into what he is today: almost a human being. So now one can see that some monkeys have areas on the face

and hands which are free from hair. It is because of lack of patience that the monkey occupies today a place a little bit behind human beings!

Note: The name *Orunmilà* derives from: *orun mon eni tí yíòḍ là* (only Heaven knows who will be saved) (see Abraham [1958] 1973:274). *Orunmilà* is considered the power behind the *Ifá* oracle, and a personality fulfilled with the wisdom of the Supreme Being (*Olódùmare*).

Elementary pulses = 240 M.M.

Solo:

Ma d'e-ni-a ma d'e-ni-a Ma d'e-ni-a ma d'e-ni-a

Time-line: x . x x . x . x . x x . x . x x . x . x . x . x

Mnemonics: kɔn kɔ lɔ kɔn kɔn kɔ lɔ

I - wò - yí - o la - o ma - d'e - ni - a Ma d'e - ni - a ma d'e - ni - a

x . x . x x . x . x . x x . x . x x . x . x . x . x

Chapter IX

Genealogy of a Malaŵian Musician Family: Daniel J. Kachamba (1947–1987) and His Associates

Chileka Guitar

Musician families are encountered in many societies. Famous musician-composers often turn out to be part of an environment in which their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters or cousins are all musically active. In this chapter I will look at the life and creative work of the most prominent member of a musician family in Malaŵi, Daniel J. Kachamba (1947–1987), and also discuss his family and musical background.

I first met Daniel Kachamba and his young brother Donald on February 25, 1967, when their itinerant trio gave a *kwela* performance on a street corner in Blantyre. Ever since that date I have been closely associated with their relatives. At the time I met them, the two outstanding personalities in the group were Daniel (on the guitar), who composed most of the songs, and his young brother Donald (on the flute), who later would pursue an independent career. Daniel was about 20 years old, Donald about 14. They were assisted by various other boys, playing instruments such as the one-stringed bass or the rattle, in particular Labisoni Bulahamu, 14, and Moya A. Malamusi, then 8 years old (on the rattle), all resident at Singano village, near Chileka.

In the extended family of the Kachamba brothers, there was and still is a high incidence of musical talent. Musicianship as a profession, however, is not hereditary, but sustained by interest and self-training along with challenges from peers. Therefore, any comparison with some of the guilds of *griots* in the western Sudan would seem to be misleading. In contrast to Mali and Guinée, southern Malaŵi is a society with a matrilineal social organization in which the relationship between maternal uncle and nephew is very important, as well as that between cross-cousins.

Singano village is about 1½ kilometers from Chileka International Airport in Blantyre District, Malaŵi. With its immigrant population of Amaŵanja, Wayao, Alomwe and others, Chileka became a fertile, semi-urban breeding ground for “modern” music in the 1940s and 1950s, and in a sense has been so ever since.

James Kachamba, the father of the Kachamba brothers, and several others from Chileka were first-generation guitarists in southern Malaŵi during the

1940s. Etinala B. Gwede, their mother, was an expert player of the *ŋkangala* mouth-resonated musical bow, and so was Nasibeko, the elder sister. Among cousins and other relatives, including friends attracted to this place, there is also a high incidence of musicianship and musical interest.¹ In a comprehensive paper, Moya A. Malamusi (1994) has reported vividly about his childhood experiences in the band of Daniel and Donald Kachamba, as well as about other ancestral guitarists in the area such as Mofolo Chilimbwalo, Soza Molezi, Chinyama, Piasoni and others, and the emerging guitar styles in Chileka of the 1950s.

Many young men from rural areas in southern Malaŵi used to work in the mines of South Africa, including Malamusi's father, and on the Copper Belt in Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia). Many more had industrial jobs in Harare and Lusaka. When their contracts expired and they returned to their home areas, they brought with them some of the new urban musical styles liked by miners and industrial workers. Moreover, 78-rpm records and, from the early 1960s, 45-rpm records of this new music became increasingly available in townships of southern Malaŵi. Large audiences in urban centers and rural areas were exposed to the new music through radio broadcasts.

Chileka in Blantyre District, southern Malaŵi, is located on the old main road from Blantyre/Limbe to Mwanza and Tete (in Moçambique) and to Harare (Zimbabwe). The presence of an airport since 1933, as well as its proximity to one of Malaŵi's oldest cities, Blantyre (chosen as a mission site by the Church of Scotland in 1876), made Chileka an economically active area and thus attractive to migrant populations. Entertainment establishments began to mushroom next to Chileka Airport after World War II, as well as a few steps from Singano village and along the road from Chileka to Blantyre. During the 1950s and 1960s there were numerous beer bars in the area, some of them open all night. Long-distance drivers from Harare to Blantyre/Limbe were regularly stopping at Chileka. The entertainment facilities were geared towards indigenous use; foreign tourists were and still are rarely seen in Chileka, except at the airport.

Chileka musicians operated, of course, not only in Chileka itself, but also in the whole area up to Lunzu, Chirimba, and even Mwanza and the city of Blantyre. The geographical expansion of potential markets for music created the phenomenon of roaming solo performers and bands, such as the Kachamba Brothers, who became the leading group in 1966.

1. In 2000 to 2004, Singano village witnessed another creative breakthrough triggered by the extraordinary talent of two relatives and students of the late Donald J. Kachamba: Sinosi Mlendo on flute and guitar, and Khilizibe, alias Christopher Gerald, with his song texts. Their new compositions bring *kwela* even closer to various jazz forms. Sinosi Mlendo has expanded considerably his repertoire of chords, and he uses the A A B A chorus form and the 12-bar blues form besides the more traditional short cycles. (Cf. CD *Donald Kachamba's Kwela Heritage Jazzband 2004*, TOL 60011, Vienna Series in Ethnomusicology.)

The guitarist White Chinyama, who died in 1979, was a relative of the Kachamba family. He was a son of Ndidiyeni Chinyama, an experienced storyteller at Singano village. Ndidiyeni's brother was also a musician, a *bangwe* player. Chinyama from Singano village and Piasoni Chinkango from Nkata village, another guitarist of the 1950s (who died in October 1988), used to play songs in *saba-saba* style, which we recorded in 1967. Piasoni and White Chinyama (then 26 years old) did not normally play together. The immediate reason for their joint appearance during one particular recording session in October 1967 (see Photo 44) was a beer party at Singano village. This party had been financed by members of the Kachamba family, including the mother, Etinala B. Gwede, who was recorded playing the *ŋkangala* mouth bow just half an hour earlier (CD Track 23). At that time, Piasoni Chinkango was about 30 years old and was staying in the area of Mwanza. He had learned to play guitar in 1953. The woman who sang with him was Flora Lekisitala.

Saba-saba (or *tsaba-tsaba*) was a popular dance in southern Africa in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was known throughout the former Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Piasoni's guitar style, even in 1967, was already considered *zachikalekale* (of long ago or passé) according to Moya A. Malamusi. This demonstrates that urban styles, including performances with banjo, accordions and guitars, have a comparatively long history in the area of Chileka.

White Chinyama's guitar playing in songs such as "*Tinalemba kalata*" and "Conductor," as recorded in 1967, and that of Piasoni in "*Matenda*" (CD Track 24) is today a matter of history. By 1967 neither Chinyama nor Piasoni possessed instruments of their own any longer, instead borrowing Daniel Kachamba's guitars. These were of the South African trademark TREK, which was popular in the area because of its narrow fingerboard and what seemed to be a superb sound. A narrow fingerboard is important to African finger-guitar styles, in which the thumb of the left hand is used for stopping the sixth string, in contrast with "classical," or Spanish, guitar fingering.

Hugh Tracey was the first musicologist to record extensively in Malaŵi, then Nyasaland. During his recording tour in 1949, he reported that guitar and banjo music were widely found in the urban and semi-urban areas. Obviously, these instruments had been at least partly introduced by migrant workers returning from the mines in South Africa. Already in 1948 (before his journey to Nyasaland), Tracey had recorded in Bulawayo the musicians Banti Chapola and M. Lipata from the Chileka area (cf. unpublished field notes by Hugh Tracey, in the International Library of African Music, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, no. 1023, "Ganda," by Banti Chapola and M. Lipato, recorded April 30, 1948).

Two modes of playing *bangwe* can be seen in southern Malaŵi. One way is to play the instrument with the thumbs and index fingers of both hands. In the other playing technique, the strings are struck with the right index finger

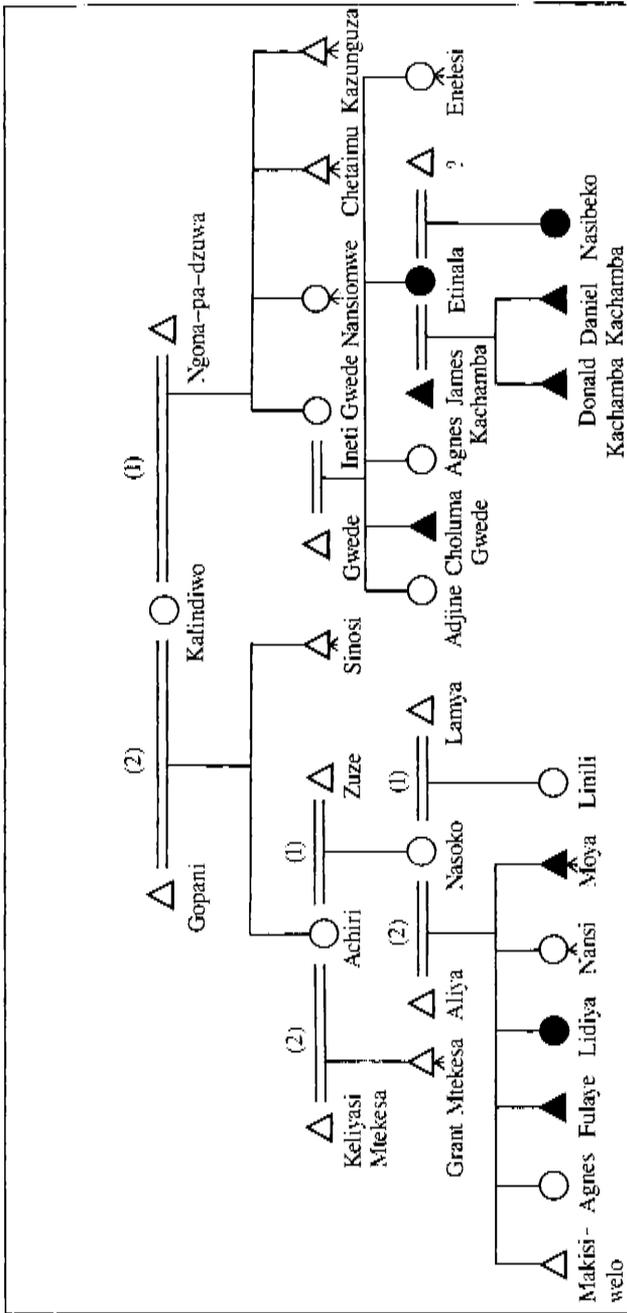


Figure 45. The extended family of the Kachamba brothers (descendants of Mrs. Kalindiwo). Genealogical table compiled by Moya A. Malamusi



Photo 43. The Kachamba Brothers band a month after I first met them. From left to right: Josefe Bulahamu on the rattle; Daniel Kachamba, guitar; and Donald posing with his B-flat Hohner flute. In Blantyre, March 1967.—Photo: Maurice Djenda.

in a pendulum motion, while the left-hand fingers open or stop the strings, thereby obtaining different chords. Thus, there is in *bangwe* playing, as in guitar playing, something like a “finger style” and a “vamping style,” to use expressions coined by John Low with regard to acoustic guitar playing (Low 1982b:8). In Malaŵi, playing techniques used in playing the *bangwe* seem to have reinforced comparable techniques in playing of the guitar.

Although there seem to be no direct historical links between *bangwe* and guitar music in Malaŵi, there was certainly a relationship of “reinterpretation” in the sense used by Herskovits (1941). After the guitar was imported to the region, musicians began to compose songs in local languages. The experience of the *bangwe* in fingering technique, tunings, song texts, and social function was projected by some musicians on the guitar, noticeable in songs which have pentatonic melodies, like “*Wanyamulidwa Esinati*” (“She Has Been Carried Away, Esinati”) by Sosa Molese.

Soza Molese Chisale from Temani village is one of the legendary musicians in the Chileka area. For many years, during the 1960s and 1970s, Soza was “missing in action”; no one knew his whereabouts. In 1972, the then 19-year-old Donald Kachamba tried to reconstruct Soza’s music from childhood memories, employing a playback recording technique. These reconstructions can be compared with the music of the original Soza, because in



Photo 44. Piasoni Chinkango (left) and White Chinyama (right) were the ancestral guitarists in the family of the Kachamba brothers. In the early 1960s, Daniel Kachamba occasionally played in White Chinyama's group. The woman in the center is Mrs. Flora Lekisitala from Neno in Mwanza District, Piasoni Chinkango's wife. In Singano village, T. A. Kuntaja, Blantyre District, October 1967.—Photo: Maurice Djenda.



Photo 45. Guitarist Soza Molesi, who used to play both *gitala yokodola* (finger-picking style) and *mokhwacha* (“vamping” style). At the time we photographed and recorded him, he was long out of business, superseded by groups with electrically amplified guitars. In Singano village, T. A. Kuntaja, Blantyre District, November 13, 1984.—Photo: Moya A. Malamusi.

1983 we were successful in tracing him and bringing him back to Chileka for recordings.

Soza used to live in the Khombwe River area, south-west of the Michiru mountains which mark the skyline of Chileka. Moya A. Malamusi and Donald provided him with a guitar, recorded his music and interviewed him on November 13, 1983. According to Soza and a number of other historical guitarists, Chileka became a center of popular urban music largely through the influence of a legendary guitarist named Mofolo Chilim'bwalo, who began to play guitar in 1945. On July 12, 1987, we also recorded the legendary Mofolo, who lived at Nkata village and played music for personal enjoyment on a homemade banjo. Like so many among the old guitarists, he possessed no guitar. Moya conducted a long interview with him, of no less than 53 minutes, interspersed with some runs on the guitar and three solo voice and banjo performances (see also his account in Malamusi 1994).

According to another Chileka veteran musician, Deko Asani Sato, extensively interviewed by Moya in 1983 and 1994 (cf. Malamusi 1994), the 1940s and early 1950s were the years of the *jole* dance. Described as *dansi yobvina atagwirana* (a dance in which the partners used to hold each other), it is hardly remembered today. Possibly, the word *jole* comes from the English “jolly.” This dance expresses an aspect of the region’s colonial past, when ballroom dancing in the European style first gained a foothold.

In Hugh Tracey’s Sound of Africa record series, there is one recording of a “*njole* dance with clapping” by “young boys and girls” in Chikwawa, southern Malaŵi. But there are no guitars. Tracey identified this group as the offspring of “Chikunda emigrants into the region from the Zambezi valley” (Tracey 1973:186; recording AMA TR-89, A-7). It is not clear whether there is any historical relationship with Deko Asani’s *jole*.

Chileka’s music has gone through several successive stages through the years. The earliest period was marked by *saba-saba*, the *jole* dance, the *hauyani* “bottleneck” guitar style, and other popular genres of the 1940s and 1950s. In the early 1960s, with the Kachamba Brothers as the leading musicians, popular music in southern Malaŵi switched to *kwela* flute music from South Africa (CD Track 25). Later, *simanje-manje* became essential, with the Kachamba Brothers developing a highly individual style which Daniel Kachamba at one time wanted to call *limbika* music (Kubik 1974a:70–71). In Chichewa, *kulimbika* indicates a state of doing something with strength or determination.

Although the idea to use this word as a name for a musical style was probably Daniel’s, the term *kulimbika* had appeared in a song text before 1972. Moya remembers that an electric guitar band recorded by the MBC (Malaŵi Broadcasting Corporation) at that time had come out with a song text to instigate people to do more farming (*kulima*). The song went: *Limbikani ee, limbikani. Lim-*

bikani e inu AMalawi! (“Be Determined, Be Determined, You Malaŵians!”) (personal communication by Moya A. Malamusi, September 23, 1988).

The following table presents an overview of the wider contemporary environment of Daniel and Donald Kachamba’s music:

Inception	The “Mofolo” line	The “James Kachamba” line
Ca. 1946 ca. 1950	Mofolo Chilimbwalo Soza Molesi, Fred Binya, Chinyama, Piasoni and others	
ca. 1961	“Daniel Kachamba and His Brothers”	
ca. 1970	“Donald Kachamba’s <i>Kwela</i> Band”	

Table 4. The “ancestral” line of Chileka guitarists and dance bands

James Kachamba: (1922–January 10, 1988)

The biological father of the Kachamba brothers was himself a musician and a key personality in the development of guitar and banjo music in southern Malaŵi during the 1940s. James Kachamba, a modest and polite man, did not reveal this fact to acquaintances until we discovered it by chance. I had known the Kachamba brothers’ father and mother almost as long as I had known the brothers, and occasionally, such as in 1973, I had closer contact with their father. At this time he was working as a driver for the Malaŵi Housing Corporation and staying in a house provided by the company in Soche township, within Blantyre City. Donald and I once visited him, and to my surprise I saw on one wall of his house a framed photograph showing him as a young man playing guitar, performing with a friend on the banjo. The photograph obviously dated back to the 1940s.

In 1983, during a nine-month joint research project,² Moya began to work on the history of guitar music in the Chileka area. On December 23, 1983, after James Kachamba had shown us the negatives of his precious photographs, Moya conducted a lengthy interview with him (orig. tape no. A 223, copy archived in the Musikethnologische Abteilung, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin).

2. No. 4977, “Systems of Traditional Education . . .,” financed by the Fonds zur Förderung der Wissenschaftlichen Forschung, Vienna, and carried out in cooperation with the Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi.

So far as I know, this interview is the only one in existence that father Kachamba ever gave. The original text transcribed by Moya is in an old style of Chichewa which—according to the transcriber—is no longer spoken by anyone in the area of Chileka. It would distract us too much from our subject, were we to reproduce the original text in this book, as it would involve us in issues of linguistics and Chichewa literature.

For this reason I am giving here the following summary of what James Kachamba told us. He said that his parents came from a place called Ntengo waMbalame near Mpanyira in Moçambique. This is a small place just across the border from Ntcheu in Malaŵi. Mpanyira could be what is written as “Vila Coutinho” on some maps, says Moya. Ethnically, Kachamba identified himself as Ngoni. His father was a migrant worker in the service of Europeans. Working in what was then Nyasaland, he got “hooked up” (*kuchona*) in the area of Blantyre. James himself was born in 1922 at Nthengela, the name of a small administrative post in the same area in Moçambique. His first son, Daniel Kachamba, was born in Limbe “with the assistance of Dr. Lahabe,” a female gynecologist. Donald was born at the hospital of Che Wesele, at Ntenjera near Lunzu (Blantyre District).

Regarding music, James Kachamba recalled that he began to play guitars he made himself in 1941, travelling with his band in the whole area of Lunzu to Ntenjera and to Chief Makata’s place. Some of their songs were taken from popular records, and others were composed by them. Most of these records, then on the market, had titles in South African languages, but James Kachamba mentioned some performers such as “Achebole” and “Blacki” (probably Black Pseli) that had texts in Cinyanja (today called Chichewa). The band could not understand the song texts in the South African languages, and yet they played the tunes and gave them Chichewa texts. James Kachamba mentioned one of those hits of long ago—“*Alinili mwanawe*” (“Linile, You Child”)—as one of those songs they liked to play. The dance style was dancing in pairs (*kogwirana*), “holding to each other.”

In much of the interview Kachamba related how he played with his banjoist (whom he had taught), Damiyano Chipala, and talked about his service in the K.A.R. (King’s African Rifles) soldiers during World War II. He described his travels to Nairobi, Mombasa, Bombay and Ranchi on their way to fight in Burma. After the war ended, he was not immediately returned to Africa. He remembered the date when he arrived home in Nyasaland (Malaŵi): March 3, 1946. But from the moment he was at home, he was also out of work. That forced him to travel as a migrant worker to Johannesburg until, eventually, he found work at the Nyasaland Railways in Limbe. In that company, he told us, he worked from 1948 to 1954.

He indicated 1954 as the year when the family moved to Harare (Zimbabwe). And he confirmed that by that year both brothers had already been born.

The elder brother, Daniel, learned guitar first and later began to teach the younger one, Donald to play flute and the one-string bass. Regarding Harare, he confirmed that he was not teaching the boys guitar there, but that they learned from other contacts. He mentioned also that because of their life in a foreign country, his sons changed their manners and behavior as they moved from place to place.

He stated in the interview that he did not teach Daniel and Donald guitar, such as telling them, “put your fingers here, put your fingers there”; but that his children, when they saw those instruments, tried it themselves, applying their own “intelligence” (*nzeru*). He used to go to work while his children stayed at home.

At the time of the interview, James Kachamba was still a driver working for the Malawi Housing Corporation. His contact with his former wife and his offspring was casual. It seems that with his youngest son, Donald, father Kachamba had the best relationship. Asked in the interview whether he could still play on the guitar some of the songs he had played in the 1940s, his response was very lively: “Yes, up to now I can still play them without failure.” But a few weeks later he seemed more reluctant. We tried several times to persuade him to play for us, but he declined, saying that he would need a lot of practice.

Continuing our research work in Malaŵi in June 1987, we began to systematically record the key figures of mid-1940s guitar music in Chileka. From the interviews with James Kachamba and Mofolo Chilim’bwalo (interview with Mofolo on July 12, 1987, tape no. 15/II-1-5), it is evident that these two personalities were the father figures of guitar music in the Chileka area. Our recording campaign posed many problems, however, because acoustic guitars were no longer available in Blantyre shops—not even the strings for them. The only way to record some of the playing styles of these old men was to provide them with guitars, and even then they would first require daily practice.

In 1987 we tried once again to persuade James Kachamba, who was now retired and settled in Lunzu, some 12 kilometers from Chileka, to play just a short piece for a recording. At a certain stage it looked as if this would be possible, but for various reasons the meeting was always postponed. After I left for Europe in November of that year, Moya remained for another six months with the intention of recording James Kachamba during that period. However, his inquiries in Lunzu in December 1987 produced the response that Kachamba had “disappeared.” When it became evident from rumors that he was seriously ill, inquiries were made at Mulambe Hospital, Lunzu, and Queen Elisabeth Hospital, Blantyre, to no avail. It turned out later that James Kachamba had travelled to Zomba, Malaŵi’s university city, upon discovering that he was seriously ill. He had worked there long before as a soldier, and



Photo 46. James Kachamba, father of the Kachamba brothers, playing six-string solo guitar during the late 1940s, after his return from service in World War II. The photograph shows Kachamba playing in the two-finger technique that was used by guitarists all over Central and East Africa. Photographer unknown; reprinted by permission of Moya A. Malamusi.



Photo 47. James Kachamba performing on a guitar model available in southern Africa during the 1940s. The banjo player was identified as Mr. Damiyano Chipala from Zomba. Reproduced from a negative kept by James Kachamba. Reprinted by permission of Moya A. Malamusi.

now sought treatment in the hospital facilities for war veterans. On January 12, 1988, we received a telegram in Vienna from Moya, informing us that James Kachamba had died on January 10. It was my task to convey the message to Donald Kachamba, who was just arriving by plane from Portugal, where he had taught church songs in Chichewa to a choir at St. Amaro de Oeiras, near Lisbon.

The only person now left with a musical memory of at least the general style of James Kachamba's guitar playing was Donald, his youngest son. In the week after the father's death, Donald revealed to me that during the last few years, his father had sometimes come to visit him in Singano village to try his hand at one of the guitars there. Donald said, "He did not play in the style of Soza, but an older style for guitar and banjo, as in the photographs" (note, January 1988).

The opportunity to put a sample, however small, of James Kachamba's guitar style on record for posterity has been lost forever. What we do possess, however, is a recording of his voice during a lively interview in which he tells us about the origins of his interest in music and about life in what was then the Nyasaland Protectorate during the 1940s. Many of his experiences must have been typical among young men of his generation.

For over forty years, wherever he went, James Kachamba carried with him a wallet that contained a dozen negatives, some of which showed him playing guitar as a young man. I think that subjectively, these negatives must have symbolized for him his innermost self, his life as such. The pictures published here (Photos 46 and 47) were reproduced from these negatives, with permission, in 1984. Thereafter, I returned the negatives to him.

It is likely that James Kachamba's personal possessions were buried with him in January 1988, in accordance with custom. It must also be noted here that, also in accordance with tradition in this culture area, all photographs of a person are to be destroyed upon his or her death. The idea is that such images, if kept by the surviving relatives, would bring sad memories to them and, according to Donald Kachamba, "the dead person could not be forgotten." This is why it may be difficult in southern Malaŵi to find photographs in a family's possession of any important personalities who are no longer alive. Needless to say, traditional custom in this case stands in direct conflict with the exigencies of historical research that demand the conservation of all documents.

* * *

Daniel J. Kachamba: Autobiographical note and his career until 1987

My name is Daniel J. Kachamba, [I come] from Malaŵi [and live] near Chileka Airport. My music I started like this: I was in Rhodesia with my father and mother. My father was working there as a policeman. This was in 1957. At that time I was a young boy, so I had a friend; his name was Robert. This man was a music teacher in Rhodesia, Stodat Hall. And he was coming to our house to visit me and I was going to his school and he was teaching me how to play guitar and penny-whistle. When I knew this I started to teach my young brother. I began to teach my brother in 1960. When we came back to Malaŵi from Rhodesia I bought guitars and pennywhistles and a tea chest to make a string bass. This was in 1962. So we made our band in that year. At that time we were four boys, two were my cousins. But after two years they took all our instruments to go and sell them. I didn't say anything to them, I just went somewhere to ask for a job. After I had worked for three months I bought a new guitar, and I went 44 miles away to another boy to help us play other instruments. This was Joseph [Labisoni Bulahamu], and since then he stayed with us until 1967, when we met Dr. Gerhard Kubik in Blantyre town. This man was very interested in our music and recorded us with his tape recorder.

In 1961 and 1962 I played on Saturdays and Sundays to get money for school fees and books and copy books, and that is why I like my music very much, because it helps me in many ways: like food, clothes

and many things I get from my music. And since I was born I have only worked once, because I wanted to buy guitars, but now I don't think that I will work again, because I am getting anything I want.

And my music is near to jazz, but it is not real jazz. Composing a song it only takes me ten minutes to compose. And my music is not for reading on the paper, no! And I can't forget the sound of any song, I can remember to sing 269 songs per day. Tunings: "LG," *howyan*, Spanish, "KG High Six," Paynel, "CG," "Half C." Types of music: Twist, Cha cha, *lumba*, Rock and roll, *sinjonjo*, Shake shake and Jive. Speeds: 45 or 78. The name of the band is the Kachamba Brothers' Band, because we are all brothers. (Autobiographical note by Daniel Kachamba, 1972)

That was Daniel, the "Sunny Boy," as an elderly couple in Europe once called him, onstage, with that unforgettable broad smile and manner in which he talked to English-speaking audiences, remembering "269 songs per day." He was a wonderful showman to experience in the very limited surviving cinematographic footage of his performances. There are a few photographs that have also captured that spirit with his audiences, as have some audio recordings of concerts, and perhaps Mike Kamwendo's obituary, "Daniel James Kachamba: The Giant Lives On," in *Quest Magazine*, 3 (3):34–7, Blantyre.

The notes I have reproduced above were taken from a manuscript Daniel began to write in 1972 while he was in Vienna, and which is partly in English and partly in Chichewa. He never completed it.

Daniel Kachamba has written autobiographical notes, memoirs, anecdotes and stories. Some of this material, written in either Chichewa or English, is preserved. The English texts are in Malaŵian "township English." With his own peculiar charm, he describes in these notes the social and personal background of his music and puts forward some of his musical (and non-musical) ideas.

According to his own narrative, he was born in 1947 in Limbe, Malaŵi. Like his father, he claimed adherence to the Ngoni ethnic group, a patrilineal group of 19th-century migrants to Malaŵi from South Africa. To what extent these claims were based on real Ngoni descent is difficult to determine, because at times it was popular—and also a means of self-protection from the Ngoni warriors—to claim "tribal" membership with them. The language spoken at Singano village and in the area of Chileka is the southern version of Cinyanja, now officially called Chichewa in Malaŵi.

Daniel writes that the family had lived in Singano village since 1954, and that they went to Salisbury (Harare) in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1957. This conflicts with the account of his father, who indicated 1954 as the year of their departure to Harare. Whichever information may be correct, it is clear that it was in Harare that Daniel and his young brother Donald first became



Photo 48. Daniel Kachamba at the 1972 Festival in Viktring, Austria, which attracted more than 9,000 young people to the music of Dollar Brand, Don Cherry, Daniel Kachamba and others. In Viktring, Austria, September 18, 1972.—Photo: Archive Kubik/Malamusi, Vienna.

acquainted with the urban music of southern Africa, particularly with South African *kwela*, or “pennywhistle jive,” music.

In 1959 Daniel started to learn the guitar. Apparently, he was guided in his initial steps by a person of British descent, whom he remembers as Mr. Robert and describes as a music teacher. For long, there had been a certain mystery about the identity of this Mr. Robert and the way he was supposed to have shown the techniques of Western instruments to young boys like Daniel in 1959. Daniel mentioned “Stodat Hall,” i.e., Stodart Hall in Harare township, Salisbury, and said that many African children had access to guitars and other musical instruments. Stodart Hall was indeed a center of African music. Willard Rhodes (1958:82–84) also mentions the hall. It was a community center.

It was only more recently that I was able to get a clearer picture. The opportunity to learn something about the young Daniel Kachamba’s “Zimbabwean past” came for me in July 1989 during an invitation to Harare by the Ethnomusicology Programme of the Zimbabwe College of Music and the Department of African Languages and Literature of the University of Zimbabwe. With the help of program director Mitchel Strumpf and Tutani Simangaliso of the same

college, I was able to see Stodart Hall and the localities frequented by young musicians like Daniel, and even meet the legendary “Mr. Robert.”

He identified himself as Mr. Desmond Francis Roberts, and I was able to conduct a lengthy interview with him in which he revealed that he had been Senior Community Services Officer in those days, and as such the administration’s link to township children and their welfare. He did not remember Daniel. He said that after Stodart Hall was ceremonially opened in 1958 in what was then “Harare township” (now Mbare), there were at one time exactly 1,499 child members of Youth Clubs associated with the Hall. The subscription fee was 1 shilling. Daniel Kachamba must have been one boy among those 1,499. However, Mr. Roberts also confirmed that he used to assist musicians in purchasing instruments in city shops, but he did not teach them.



Photo 49. The legendary mentor of the teenage Daniel: Mr. Desmond Francis Roberts, who had been Senior Community Services Officer in Harare township, Salisbury, Rhodesia, during the 1950s. Standing next to him is Tutani Simangaliso of the Zimbabwe College of Music. In Harare, July 1989.—Photo: author.

From Mr. Robert's lengthy interview, it is clear that he must have been very popular among the children because of his friendliness, goodwill and knowledge of the Shona language. That Daniel Kachamba remembered him is in a sense also an acknowledgement.

During my visit, it became clear that Tutani Simangaliso (b. 1942) had been the major figure involved in music teaching at Stodart Hall. Most likely, he knew Daniel Kachamba. Simangaliso said he used to teach there in 1960–61. At that time Daniel Kachamba was thirteen, and the family was about to return to Nyasaland (Malawi).

Exposed to the contemporary popular music genres of southern Africa such as *saba-saba*, *sinjonjo*, *vula matambo*, “jive” and *kwela*, Daniel began to train his brother Donald on the pennywhistle flute while they were still in Harare. He told me that his principal inspiration at that stage in Harare had been records of a group called “Bogadi Brothers.” At first, I had a feeling that the name could have been derived from Humphrey Bogart, whose film “Casablanca” was very popular in South Africa; but it long remained a mystery just who those brothers were. Eventually, the American researcher Doug Seroff, an expert on South African choirs and other urban styles, found the records in his own private collection. He copied the music for me on a cassette. Listening to the stuff, we were all in for a great surprise. Unfortunately, Daniel was no longer alive to comment, but Moya was as amazed as I to discover that those young boys who were calling themselves Bogard Brothers—the lead singer perhaps only 12 years old—were indeed the group which the early Kachamba Brothers had emulated. No wonder, as they must have been about the same age, and so the music of the successful group became a powerful model. But the most interesting fact is, perhaps, that this was probably one of the very few groups of street musicians recorded in South Africa which was not all too rigidly forced into joint recordings with “professional” musicians on drums and bass provided by the record company. Only in the rock 'n' roll pieces was there clearly some producer interference; otherwise, the Bogard Brothers had succeeded in defending and retaining their proper style, including the one-stringed bass, a hallmark of the original street band music called *jive*, *kwela*, *phata-phata*, etc. We were surprised, however, that this group did not employ flutes.

We discovered that Daniel Kachamba's “*Chipiloni chanjamile*” was virtually an adaptation of the Bogard Brothers' rock 'n' roll number “She Keeps on Knocking” (reissued in Global Village C 2001 Flying Rock—South African Rock 'n' Roll 1990). The text was phonetically reinterpreted, and the 12-bar blues form had been reduced by Daniel to a 10-bar form, omitting the first two measures on the tonic. It probably came about as a reaction to the Bogard Brothers' ambivalence towards the 12-bar blues form. They lengthened and shortened it occasionally.

And the Bogard Brothers' “*Siyale*” (HMV JP 715) became Daniel Ka-

chamba's "High *Sinjonjo*" (cf. Kubik 1974b:61–62), changing the rhythm, but retaining a phonetic imitation of the text of the vocal-line, whose language the Kachamba Brothers did not understand. Among the most impressive pieces by the Bogard Brothers are those that show no interference at all by studio personnel, especially "*Tobetsa*" (JP 750), "*Che Boogie Here*" (JP 750) and "*Ba-Emedi-Khoneng*" (JP 771), with the boys' voices and the wonderful one stringed bass. It is clear that the bass-lines were serving Daniel's younger brother Donald as a model for the development of his own style and expertise on the string bass. From the *phata-phata* number "*Ba-Emedi-Khoneng*" (JP 771), Donald picked the bass-line for the rhythm, which the Kachamba Brothers would call "double-step" and later *simanje-manje*. The variations heard in this recording recur in many performances of the Kachamba Brothers with Donald on the one-stringed bass. They became standard variations.

After the family's return to Chileka in 1961, Daniel Kachamba bought his first guitar. He said that a famous Kenyan guitar record, "*Julieta uko wapi*" by Isaya Mwinamo (C.M.S. African Records, QB 152), inspired him to do so. This must have been sometime in the early 1960s. It is probably about that time also that he became more acquainted with East and Central African techniques of solo guitar playing, and that Rumba music (for both solo and



Photo 50. The Kachamba brothers in 1967 with their complete *kwela*-style band. From left to right: Daniel Kachamba (five-string guitar), Donald Kachamba (B-flat flute), Bulandisoni Kapirikitsa (one-stringed bass) and Moya A. Malamusi (rattle). In Singano village, Chileka, Blantyre District, Malaŵi, June 1967.—Photo: Maurice Djenda.

band guitar) from these areas became firmly established within his musical repertoire. The “Julietta archetype” was still influential in 1967, when I first met him, and is obvious in some of his *lumba* recordings, for example in the song “*Lumba ele lumba, lumba ya Malawi*,” especially in the bass-line of the interplay between the two guitars. (This song was performed at a concert given by the Kachamba Brothers in September 1967 at the German Embassy, Limbe, orig. tape no. A 123; CD Track 26.)

The early Chileka guitarists may have had some influence on Daniel’s initial steps in solo guitar playing, but even as an adolescent he had already adopted a style heavily leaning towards the more recent (South African) fashions of those days. When the family returned to Malaŵi, he formed a band together with White Chinyama. Later, however, Daniel and Chinyama separated, with Daniel forming an itinerant *kwela*-style performance group of three members, with his young brother Donald on the flute. Through the early 1960s, they were often invited to perform in various places of southern Malaŵi. According to Daniel’s narratives, they were once invited by the police to perform in Mulanje. In 1964 they played in Ntcheu and Mwanza, in 1965 in Chikwawa, in 1966 in Chikuli (Blantyre District) and in early 1967 once again in Ntcheu. Often they also went to Chilomoni near Blantyre, where the family has relatives. Daniel told me in 1967 that the group was once recorded by the MBC (Malawi Broadcasting Corporation) in 1966. It is not known whether any such recordings still exist. Closer to home, the group travelled from place to place in the urban and semi-urban areas around the twin cities of Blantyre and Limbe, performing under the motto “A Tickey per Record” (a three-pence coin for each song) at street corners, public pubs, bus stations and markets.

It was during such an open-air performance near the bus park of Blantyre that I met Daniel and his group for the first time on February 25, 1967. At that stage their repertoire included not only dance-patterns of South African provenance, but also some Rumba (Daniel used to say *lumba*) and Chachacha pieces. There were a few songs in Kiswahili, learned from East African records.

The foundation for the Kachamba Brothers’ international career was laid in 1967, when the then German ambassador to Malaŵi, Dr. Johannes Balser, and I began to look for ways of promoting their extraordinary talents. Trying to help the group, the German Embassy in Limbe became instrumental in organizing several public concerts during that year in Kwacha Hall, in the German Embassy and in the Presbyterian Mission, Blantyre, as well as at a lecture in Mzedi Secondary School.

In 1972 I was able to obtain invitations for Daniel and Donald Kachamba to perform at the Goethe Institutes in Nairobi and Addis Ababa. I joined the two brothers as a third performer on this tour. In the same year we obtained

an invitation from the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Graz, Austria, to attend an international conference on jazz research. In this manner, Daniel and Donald's first travels overseas came about. A European concert tour was organized in 1972, with performances arranged by the Africa Centre of Arthur Benseler, Freiberg a./Neckar, near Stuttgart (Germany), recordings at the headquarters of Deutsche Welle (Voice of Germany) in Cologne and appearances on television. In the following years, Daniel Kachamba was invited, either as a solo guitarist or assisted by his brother Donald, to numerous educational institutions in African and European countries to perform.

There were invitations from the Goethe-Institute Dar es Salaam in 1976 and again from the Africa Centre of Arthur Benseler in 1978. In 1981 the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Graz, on the initiative of Alfons M. Dauer, invited him as a solo guitarist for performances and workshops.

In 1984 Daniel was once again invited to the Federal Republic of Germany, this time by a class of schoolchildren and their teacher in the state of Baden-Württemberg, who went to the streets to collect money for his airfare. Daniel spent about two months as a solo guitarist in Germany, performing for the schoolchildren and other audiences. This was Daniel Kachamba's last trip overseas. Back in Malaŵi he continued performing but, according to observers such as Dr. Kings Phiri of the University of Malaŵi (conversation in Zomba, 1985), on a somewhat reduced scale. One of his last performances in front of an international audience was at the UNESCO Conference in Blantyre, on April 10, 1987.

Daniel Kachamba died at his home village Singano near Chileka on July 25, 1987, in the presence of some of his former band members, including me. He was taken back there by his younger brother, Donald, a day before his death and in a state of coma, when it became apparent that hospital treatment had failed. His premature death at the age of only 40 years was considered a national loss. His status as an eminent musical personality was recognized not only by friends, colleagues and students, but also officially by his country as well. Several members of parliament, two government ministers and the official hostess, Mama Cecilia Tamanda Kadzamira, attended the funeral ceremonies on Monday, July 27, amidst a crowd of about 4,000 people. His death, however, is shrouded in mystery. With medical reports unavailable, the exact cause of his physical breakdown remains unknown.

The Person and the Music

Daniel Kachamba's work is perhaps best appreciated by considering the two performance aspects of his personality. There is Daniel Kachamba as a band guitarist and amusing showman, an extrovert propelled by apparently

inexhaustible energy resources. Mike Kamwendo, a close friend of Daniel's, was one of the last persons to visit and speak to him, while he was in the hospital in Blantyre. In his obituary he describes him like this:

I remember when he opened for Oliver Lake and Jump Up (an American jazz fusion group) at Mount Soche Hotel in 1982. He ambled on to the stage as if he was not in the mood to perform—shuffled, picked his guitar and looked somewhat lost, uncertain. He then tuned his guitar and tested the microphone. Next, without uttering a word, he smiled, and the audience broke into a hearty applause; and thus was set the warm tone and rapport characteristic of all his performances. Such was the magic of his big smile, the unforgettable smile of Dr. Kachamba.

His last show was sometime in May [1987] at Julia-O-Fasa night club in Lunzu. Thereafter he was too ill to play. (Kamwendo 1987:34, 37).

This was Daniel, the “Sunny Boy.” This nickname was incorporated into the text of a song that had its premiere in front of some 9,000 young people at the Fourth International Music Forum in Viktring, Austria, on September 18, 1972.

However, those who knew him more intimately also knew the other side of Daniel's personality: the depressions he suffered, his daily struggle for survival, his inability to administer his daily life and wisely invest the remarkable wealth he used to accumulate on each overseas tour, and his inability to reach a consensus with friends, relatives and possible band members. His solo guitar music somehow symbolizes this other side of his personality—his experiences as a person left out in the cold, alone. This side also is intensely reflected in the lyrics of his solo guitar songs.

The young Daniel Kachamba in the 1960s still believed in his capacity to master any situation by simply being better than others, producing more than others, and sometimes also by wielding sheer force and authoritarian power. The later Kachamba, however, gradually discovered that his approach to society as a man who could set the pace and “win,” neglecting the often legitimate interests of others, did not work.

This is, of course, only one of the explanatory models we can apply. Another observation is that audiences in Malaŵi obviously encouraged him in singing depressive lyrics. Moya says that once Daniel Kachamba had come out with one song of this type, lamenting about society and singing about the “graveyard,” audiences liked it very much and reconfirmed his choice of themes. This is plausible, because he was by all means a person who quickly responded to the demands of audiences—always modifying, but never losing his personal style. He once said to me in 1972, “Never play the music you like, always play the music the audience likes.”

His first band—which I observed for almost nine months in 1967—was

characterized by the highly centralized, authoritarian power of Daniel, then aged 20, and the total submission of his younger brother Donald and the boy Josefe Bulahamu. For their contribution to the band, the two were paid less than a “minimal wage” from the band’s earnings, quite often only the remains of one Ascot cigarette that had first been smoked by the elder brother.

For the Kachamba brothers, there was no other authority besides the elder brother, Daniel. Both brothers were, in a sense, deprived of parental care. The marriage of their mother and father seemed to be on and off, mainly due to the mother’s capricious nature, which was very difficult for the righteous James Kachamba to accept. A portrait of the violence and struggles, as well as the wish-fulfilling fantasies, in the life of the young Daniel Kachamba is transmitted through his early narratives. It is probably irrelevant to the issue at hand whether some of the adventure stories he told me in March 1967 were true or imagined. Probably, they were both, that is, based on real events but interpreted by the author to fulfill his particular needs. Just as it is possible to obtain a profile of the later Daniel Kachamba from the texts of his songs, it is also possible to get a picture of the teenager in a violent township environment from his narratives.

(A)

Once in 1966 I went to Ncheu. At 12 o’clock in the night I met many young people there in the street. I had walked for five miles. The boys said to me: “You have played for dancing, but now we want our money back!” I said: “I don’t have any money for you!” Six of the boys had sticks. Six of them had knives. One of the boys came and began to beat at me with a stick. But I snatched away his stick and beat him. Now all of them wanted to fight with me. I beat all the twelve boys. Two of them lost their teeth.

Myself and my brother Donald, we were walking from Muluma Mission to Pandule Village. I took my guitar there and my young brother, and we went “home” to the house we had rented. Next morning, those boys who wanted to beat me went to the chief and claimed: “This one here came to our village and took our girls!” But the chief said: “This one cannot have beaten all the twelve of you. Now you twelve will give him 3 shillings each for compensation!” I said to the chief: “I am a stranger. I am coming from Chileka. You should tell those boys that they must be good to me, that they must behave well, otherwise I kill one with the knife.”

From that day on they have not done this again. They are saying: “This is Mr. Kachamba from Chileka!” When all this happened, we were only three. I had two witnesses: Donald and a certain man. After this event I went back to Chileka.

(B)

Last year I bought a new flute. One day I played for pleasure *kunchini* [at the maize-grinding machine]. One boy came and took the flute away from me. I pursued that boy, took my flute back and beat him. I went to the parents of that boy. Later, they came all to my house and claimed that I had slandered them. Seven people came, five women and two men. They came. I just sat in my chair [*mpando*]. “Have you beaten the small one?” “You should first ask me why.” “We don’t want to hear any arguments, we are going to beat you now!” They came with an empty beer bottle. They beat me. I beat back. There was another woman there, who looked at us. I beat all the seven with a stick. I had a wound, and two of the women also had wounds.

They went to the police. The police called me. I explained everything there. One of the policemen said, “Come again next week!” We came again, that was on the 14th of July. A legal proceeding [*mulandu*] took place in Chilangome Local Court. I had a witness who explained everything. They had no witnesses. The judge said: “You have to give Kachamba £1.- and £1/10/- to the court.”

(C)

Later I came to the MBC. In September 1966, when I returned from such a visit to the radio and went to the bus station, I had my instruments with me. It was a quarter to seven. A man came, he was a tailor. He said: “Play one ‘record’ for me!” I said: “I cannot play well here, because this is a bus station.” The other one said: “You are very proud; if I want, I can break your guitar!” I said: “No! You cannot do that, you cannot break the guitar, because it does not talk! I will beat you!” and I gave him a blow. After that, I simply went away. I arrived at the Tea Room of Mr. Zagwazatha and wanted to drink tea there. But the man came again and began to beat me.

The police task force came and we were both arrested. We slept at the police station, together with one blanket. Next morning a policeman came and said: “Now you go home and come back on the 15th of September to the Chichiri High Court. That’s a criminal case! Such things can increase, until one day the whole town beats one another. Therefore each of you have to pay £1/0/0.” My sister (Anasibeko) came and paid everything.

These stories are reproduced literally from notes I made in shorthand, following Daniel’s narration. The Kachamba Brothers often stayed with us in the house we had rented in the Presbyterian Mission, Blantyre. When Daniel told me these stories, only the two of us were in the room.

The evil that Daniel sensed was surrounding him could also attack with

invisible force. In July 1967 I made the following diary note of what he had just told me:

Yesterday we earned £1/3/-, when we played; actually, it was exactly £1/6/-, but 3 shillings were lost because my strings broke. There are people in a dance who may cause that my strings break. If someone gives me 2 shillings and says: "Play that record" and someone else gives me 2 shillings at the same time, and I give preference to one of the two, then it may be that the other one had put a medicine on his 2 shillings, and as soon as I take them, a string breaks.

Some of Daniel's stories remind one of township life as depicted in, for example, Bloke Modisane's *Blame Me on History* (1963), but Kachamba's stories have a highly personal structure which reflects his feelings of menace. He was trying hard to come to terms with himself and the social environment. The narratives were, in a sense, an attempt at conflict management. The recurrence of the numbers 12 and 6 in the first story, for example, could be seen as indicative of his processing with fantasy the real event and of his attempts at compensating for inner conflicts by emphasizing regularity, order (see C.G. Jung's analytical psychology). At that time, however, Daniel was still the "winner," the master of any situation, surrounded by powerful but somewhat lame-duck enemies. He struck back successfully.

Daniel's slide into depression began, I believe, as a gradual process of psychological "hollowing out," released by his inability to come to positive terms with his immediate environment. At some point in his life, he must have discovered (though not, perhaps, consciously) that he was beginning to be caught up in a stereotypical pattern of aggression, namely "instant massive response" to any real or imagined enemies, and that his over-reactions were often counter-productive. His growing lack of judgement prevented him from cultivating permanent constructive relationships with anyone.

Early signs of the deterioration became visible at the start of the 1970s. When I met him again in January 1972, his brother Donald was no longer in his band; several successive relationships with females had ended in a similar manner, by separation. My personal intervention brought the two brothers together that same year, and our tour to Europe seemed to turn the clock back for some time. But, for various reasons, Donald did not resume playing with his elder brother after their return to Malaŵi. Instead, he formed an over-visible musical friendship with Josefe Bulahamu, almost as if this was meant as a demonstration. The next occasions on which the two brothers performed together were also artificially created: the concerts in Dar es Salaam in 1976 at the invitation of the Goethe Institute (CD Track 29), and the tour to the Federal Republic of Germany with a band of five persons (including the Zambian Mose Yotamu) in 1978.

During his career, Daniel was unable to hold a band of his own together and persuade experienced musicians—most notably, his brother Donald—to stay with him permanently. His problems in relating positively to friends and possible band mates gradually catapulted him into the awful situation of his frequent public appearances as a “guest performer” in second-class Malaŵian dance bands. For those groups he was a welcome money-making attraction, although he did not always realize it. Mike Kamwendo remembers:

The last few years saw Daniel jamming with fellow musicians and participating in musical festivals. It became customary to hear of a joint gig between himself and any band that chose to share the stage and gate takings with him.

And as it turned out, more often than not he happened to have been the attraction. “Yes, the gigs were fair. At least I was satisfied with what I got each time,” confided Daniel on his death bed. (Kamwendo 1987:37)

Conversely, his overseas invitations in 1981 and 1984 were strictly for him; his sponsors in Germany would not have wanted anyone else. For this reason, the tours were financially successful, although they did not change his situation at home. Normally, he arrived from an overseas tour in Malaŵi with substantial resources, including an array of brand-new instrumental equipment (electric guitars, amplifiers, etc.), to the admiration of customs officers in Lilongwe. But within a few months it had all disappeared without a trace.

Instrumental Techniques

In the early 1960s, Daniel’s career had begun with a *kwela*-style performance group. Eventually, their music developed a sense of drive that was unprecedented. This is particularly noticeable in pieces such as “Where Can I Get Emery?” composed in June 1967 (CD Track 27), which was part of a small theatrical sketch they staged and which I filmed in 16 mm. (A Betacam-SP copy of this unpublished film, *Kachamba Brothers 1967*, can be found in the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive, Los Angeles.) It is also noticeable in “Sunny Boy” (composed in 1972), “*Inkeleliwa*” (adapted in 1972) and many other pieces. The stylistic uniqueness of Daniel’s music from the late 1960s on has been recognized by the American blues researcher David Evans of the University of Memphis in a review of the Kachamba Brothers’ first LP (Evans 1976). In a letter he wrote to me on October 26, 1976: “It is this very *drive* that I find lacking in a lot of other neo-African music that I’ve heard, so that usually I prefer the traditional material and styles.”

By 1967 Daniel Kachamba had used three different techniques for playing guitar:

- (1) The “vamping style” (in Chichewa: *mokhwacha*) as a band guitarist. In the band he always performed on a five-string guitar, with the fifth or A-string removed, using various tunings. For striking the strings he used a plectrum made from plastic.
- (2) The “finger style” (in Chichewa: *mokodola*) as a solo guitarist, performing on a six-string guitar. Here he used two fingers of the right hand, thumb and index finger, for plucking or picking.
- (3) The “bottleneck” style, or what is called *hauyani* in Malaŵi. For this technique he used a bottle or another suitable object as a slide, as in the North American “bottleneck” guitar style.

It is noteworthy that Chichewa/Cinyanja terminology for guitar-playing techniques, as used by Daniel Kachamba and, in fact, by all the historical guitarists in the Blantyre/Chileka area, seems to match the English-language terminology developed by John Low (1982b). Low has divided up the various African guitar-playing techniques as follows:

The rather loose term “finger-styles” can be applied to any playing where the fingers of the right hand . . . pluck or pick the strings. The term serves to distinguish this sort of playing from plectrum playing (which can be used both to pick and to vamp) and from manual vamping (with thumb or finger). . . . I’ve used this word [vamping] rather than the word “strum” to avoid the possibly derogatory nuances of the latter: many vamping styles in Africa and elsewhere require a high level of rhythmic and instrumental skill. (Low 1982b:8)

In the 1970s, Daniel began to develop fine skills as a solo guitarist, and he was highly successful with his songs in Malaŵi, as the following 1976 newspaper report shows:

Musik Spik (by Features Editor)

Ask any child around Blantyre, or deep in the country, what song Daniel Kachamba has sung lately. From the beginning of this year, Daniel easily dominated air time on the radio with his “Padaali Agogo Parts One & Two,” “Ajesse,” “Kuchipatala,” “Alinire” and several other sounds. His style is aggressive, but sweet. He loves to woo his listeners with that 7th chord. That alone makes up for his reluctance to use minor chords. For the first time in the history of contemporary music, people have realized the power of music in moving them. Men and women alike have cried tears at Daniel’s “Padaali Agogo.” One experience Daniel recalled to me the other day was about this certain man who saw him in a restaurant and asked if indeed he was the Kachamba. When Daniel told the man he was, the elderly man asked him to sit down and explain what really happened to his Agogo. After Daniel told him, the man, all in tears, produced twenty tambala and gave it

to the singer thanking him for making him feel so much with such few words.

Such has been this year for Daniel who hardly walks the streets without someone calling out to him. . . .

His next sound, he promised, was going to depart somewhat from the Ajesse/Agogo beat. He admitted that a good number of musicians around were closing in on him. “I must keep ahead,” he said. I told him I had a surprise for him. I played him a re-do of his Agogo in classical style. He couldn’t believe it. Knowing how elusive he gets when it comes to revealing the keys he plays in, I told him that the piece was not in his famous KG high 6. “But what key was that?” “Try KG natural with 5 & 6 zero.” Daniel scratched his head and said, “Would you show me how you did that?”

“In two months’ time,” I said.—“But that’s when I’d be back from Germany!” And hopefully that’s when we shall hear his new compositions. Until then it’s good luck on your trip Daniel. (*Daily Times*, Blantyre, Wednesday, September 22, 1976. The author of this article was probably Mike Kamwendo.)

In the late 1970s and 1980s, Daniel Kachamba composed music almost exclusively for the six-string solo guitar and voice that was to be performed by himself alone, only occasionally backed up by available percussionists. Solo guitar music, which dominated his musical creativeness from the mid-1970s until his death, was developed by him, along with his band performance style. Since this music is unrelated to *kwela*, it is erroneous to classify the guitar songs that were published on the cassette *Afro Africa* from his performances in Germany in 1984 as “*kwela* music” (Voitl 1984:6). They belong to the same body of solo guitar compositions that characterized his style in Ndirande township, Blantyre, when Lidiya Malamusi and I recorded him again on September 3, 1983 (Orig. tape no. A 201 and short ciné film of a yet untitled new composition;³ archived in the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin).

With acoustic guitars totally out of fashion in Africa in the 1980s, Daniel found himself under pressure from audiences and musician colleagues to use an electric guitar. Thereafter, he also developed a spectacular technique for the instrument. He startled audiences by performing with the left hand alone, holding his right hand up for the people to see that it was not a trick. The technique, which he regularly exhibited in shows in Malaŵi in 1984, was based on stopping and “pinching” the guitar strings alternately with the fingers of the left hand. With electric amplification, this gives a remarkable effect, which he

3. These shots have been published on our DVD *African Guitar*, 1995, Stefan Grossman’s Guitar Workshop, Sparta, N.J. Most of our 1983 recordings are now published on the CD *Central African Guitar Song Composers: The Second and Third Generation* (August Schmidhofer ed., 2010).

exploited in an unprecedented manner, performing whole sections of songs in this way.

Otherwise, Daniel used to play an ordinary “Spanish” guitar with a capo-tasto, or capo, to raise the tuning level to suit his voice. The use of a capo (usually a pencil, nail or other long object attached across the strings behind the third, fourth, fifth or sixth fret) is another characteristic trait linking his style to acoustic guitar-playing techniques that were common all over Central and southern Africa.

Though he had a repertoire of nine different tunings, in six-string guitar playing he usually employed what he called “Key G” and “Full C.” “Key G” was based on the conventional tuning of a six-string guitar, in which case he used the fingering of what would be G major in Western music. It is important to note that he normally tuned the strings with fingers on. His “tune” (as he used to say), i.e. his inner tuning reference, was the G-major chord. What he termed “Full C,” on the other hand, required an adjustment of the sixth string, which was raised a semi-tone. He then used the fingering of the key of C major.

As Daniel used the thumb of his left hand for stopping the sixth string, the raising of this string gave him the notes F (open string) and G (stopped behind the second fret). These are the two root progressions forming a kind of shifting bass in the lowest register of his sound repertoire. The absolute pitches do not coincide with Western norms. On some occasions he tuned all the strings at a slightly lower pitch than the Western guitar tuning, on other occasions slightly higher. E might be lowered to E flat, even to D. His own reason for tuning “low” was “not to strain the strings too much,” especially in band guitar playing, when he used a plectrum. To compensate for the “low” tuning, there was ample range for the setting of the capo. At the end of the tuning process, Daniel put the capo as high up as was necessary to bring the tuning of his instrument to a comfortable pitch for his voice. Accordingly, he often changed the position of the capo for different songs. The actual pitch also varied from one performance to another.

The songs were usually based on relatively short guitar-patterns extending over 16, 24 or 8 pulses. These units were repeated in variations. The song developed in tandem with the structure of the instrumental accompaniment. With regard to form, most of Daniel’s compositions consisted of two alternating repeating sections, a “statement” (A) and a “refrain” (B). This also found instrumental expression. Further, the instrumental interludes always followed the “refrain.”

Daniel used a two-finger system of playing the six-string guitar. This is a common trait in finger-guitar styles of sub-Saharan Africa. The thumb usually strikes the bottom three strings and the index finger strikes the three top strings, though sometimes the playing areas overlap. The hand is supported over the strings by the third and fourth fingers, which rest on the fingerplate. In

Daniel's guitar playing, not only was the sound important, but also the motor processes that created the sound. This means that the movements of all the active agents—in the present case, right- and left-hand fingers—are often organized in patterns. The right thumb may play an independent movement-pattern on the bass strings; the right index finger may play a contrary, complementary or superimposed pattern that is autonomous. The fingering of the left hand is also more than a mere “stopping of the strings” at the appropriate fret; it is an organized cycle of kinematic units. The different areas of interaction may be quite independent from a motor point of view; they may function as motion centers in their own right. This can be studied in cinematographic field footage of Daniel's solo guitar playing that I made in Malaŵi in 1967 and 1983 (see the published DVD *African Guitar*, Kubik 1995), and also in a documentary under studio conditions, as in the films E 2136 and E 2137 shot in Göttingen, Germany, on October 10, 1972, and published in the Encyclopaedia Cinematographica series, Göttingen. Certain left-hand techniques such as the “pull-off” and the “hammer-on” are regularly used in his compositions for solo finger-style guitar, and he can be seen doing this in *African Guitar*.

Daniel Kachamba took delight in inventing instrumental structures on his guitar that yielded inherent or subjective patterns. Playing guitar, he would appreciate the physical pleasure of his fingers “dancing” separately and still dancing together. He would also appreciate the total pattern, the resultant combination of all movement, and he would also isolate, for example, what his right index finger was doing. At other times he paid no attention at all to the physical process of playing guitar, but listened to the music deeply, following the ever-changing picture puzzle of inherent patterns. In this way, new text phrases often occurred to him which he sometimes incorporated into the song. He and his musicians regularly projected words or syllabic patterns onto the instrumental melodic phrases, rather than appreciating the music in terms of abstract melodies alone. The guitar “speaks.” Sometimes he sang to me what a string “spoke” in a certain section of melodic variation in the music. Patterns usually suggested to him words in Chichewa, sometimes only syllables with no semantic meaning, sometimes even English words.

The following recorded and filmed songs demonstrate different instrumental techniques used by Daniel:

1. “*Maliro aKachamba*” (cinéfilm E 2137, item no. 2)

“*Maliro aKachamba*,” Daniel Kachamba's 1971 composition about his own funeral, exists in two versions: a band version with an elaborate text (first published on the LP *Kachamba Brothers' Band*, 1972 [CD Track 28]) and a solo guitar version (without text) that he recorded on film in Göttingen on October 10, 1972. For unclear reasons (but possibly related to the artificial studio filming situation), he played guitar on that occasion, but did not sing.

Before the filming session in Göttingen, he made a preliminary recording of the same song in Vienna on September 22, demonstrating an earlier version. He explained: “This was my first ‘*Maliro aKachamba*.’ We played two guitars, rattle and sang this song in two voices.” The tuning he used on these occasions was “Full C.” The overall cycle is defined by the number 24. After 24 elementary pulse-units, the harmonic cycle (F–C–G7–C) repeats. There are two themes, a statement (A) and a “refrain” (B). The dance steps that go with this piece divide the 24 pulses by 8, thus creating a triple subdivision. The rattle-pattern and guitar parts are closely related to a dancer’s footsteps, which are felt by the guitarist as the beat as he plays.

Daniel’s “*Maliro aKachamba*,” says Moya, was something entirely new at the time of its composition. It did not fit into any of the dance-patterns he had used before.

There is also a rattle-pattern to go with this song. It was not played in the film, but could have been coordinated with the guitar performance, as Daniel showed me later. It reminds us of rattle-patterns in some Shona music of Zimbabwe, with which Daniel Kachamba was familiar from his days in Harare.

The rattle (*maseche*) is of the type used by Daniel in the band. It is a tin rattle, in this case without handle, filled with a very thin layer of beads. Sound holes are pierced all around the sides. The rattle is held in the right hand. The movement consists of four kinemes (motional units), which I represent with the following symbols:

- x Down-stroke of the rattle, which is held in the right hand.
- / The rattle is lifted; the beads inside sound against its upper wall.
- + Between x down-stroke and / up-stroke, the left hand is quickly lifted and hits the rattle from above with the fist. This gives a sound that is different in timbre from the other two.
- . An empty pulse, no stroke.

The full pattern goes as follows in relation to the dancers’ steps.

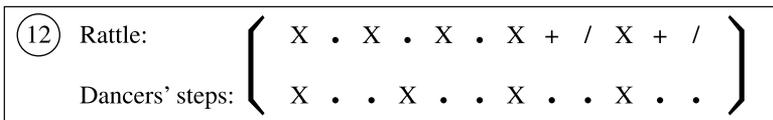


Fig. 46. Rattle pattern to go with Daniel Kachamba’s “*Maliro aKachamba*”

2. “*Dolosina Lumba*”(Film E 2137, item no.1)

Lumba (Chichewa pronunciation of “Rumba”) is a generic term in Daniel Kachamba’s terminology. There is “plain *lumba*,” “high *lumba*,” “*simanje*-

manje lumba” (a fusion between “double-step,” or *simanje-manje*, and the rumba movement), and there is “*putugizi*,” which can also be classed within the overall category. Departing from the segregate *lumba*, we can visualize his categorization as follows:

<i>lumba</i>			
“plain” <i>lumba</i>	high <i>lumba</i>	<i>simanje-manje lumba</i>	<i>putugizi</i>

Fig. 47. Daniel Kachamba’s *lumba* sub-categories

“*Dolosina Lumba*” was one of the pieces Daniel had already recorded on the solo guitar in 1967. In Nairobi he recorded this song for the second time on March 23, 1972, under the title “*Dorosina njerere*,” which had the implied meaning: “*Dorosina*, let’s go quickly for green locusts!” Daniel’s brother Donald accompanied him on the rattle, as he had done on the 1967 recording. In the Nairobi version, the brothers sang together in leader-chorus fashion. The chorus refrain was *mama njerere*. (All tapes in private archive Kubik/Malamusi.)

In September 1972, Daniel recorded a third version of this song under the title “*High Lumba*.” When I played his solo guitar back to him from tape, he immediately played a second guitar part to the recording.

Daniel defined “*high lumba*” as a fast form of rumba. In the version he recorded without song for the film E 2137, Göttingen, in 1972, there are two adjoining sections, each with a characteristic bass-line. The underlying bass of the first section is a common rumba bass-pattern such as occurred in East African rumba music of the early 1960s, for example in the celebrated “*Julieta uko wapi*” by Isaya Mwinamo.

Towards the end of the recording, Daniel changes the rumba bass and plays another bass-line that is identical in structure with the well-known 16-pulse time line that in Katanga during the 1950s was often struck on a bottle to accompany guitar music. In eastern Angola and north-western Zambia, it is known as *kachacha* and struck on the body of a drum or lamellophone. In Daniel’s guitar piece, both bass-patterns were performed with melodic variations.

Speaking about the origin of his composition, Daniel stated in a conversation on October 15, 1972:

I was playing guitar only for practice at home, when *Dolosina*, my young sister, who was a very small child, stood up and walked for the first time. She had never danced to any song, but at this one she suddenly stood up and danced. Since she was born she had never stood



Figure 48a–b. The two basic guitar bass patterns in Daniel Kachamba’s “High *Lumba*”

up. With this, my song, she started walking. The people wondered. Dolosina couldn’t talk. *Oye oye kuno* . . . she sang with a falling voice. So I called this song in her name: “Dolosina *Lumba*.” In 1967 when you were in Malaŵi she was not yet born. It is the child of a sister of my mother . . . I have words for this song, but I am still trying to work on them.

So he recorded only the instrumental part in Göttingen. The tuning here is the same as on the conventional six-string guitar and played with the fingering of the key G major.

3. *Putugizi* (film E 2137, item no. 3a)

Another style and guitar technique of playing *lumba*, used for example to accompany songs such as “Mama Elisa” (picked up from a Congo record of the 1960s), was termed *putugizi* by both Daniel and Donald Kachamba. Daniel showed the technique in the second of his two films in the Encyclopaedia Cinematographica series.

Putugizi in Daniel Kachamba’s conceptualization is (a) a subcategory of *lumba* (cf. Fig. 47) and (b) the name for a specific guitar-playing technique, whereby the thumb and index finger of the right hand strike the guitar strings in a rumba movement, the right hand describing a nearly circular motion. In the context of this movement the strings are hit at regular points first with the thumb (●), second with the pad of the index finger (▼), and third with the fingernail of the index finger (▲) in the opposite direction.

Explaining about the *putugizi* technique, Daniel said:

My second father played like this. [Here he meant a brother of his biological father.] This tune was played on Radio Nampula, in Portuguese Moçambique. That’s why we call it *putugizi*. When we imitate songs

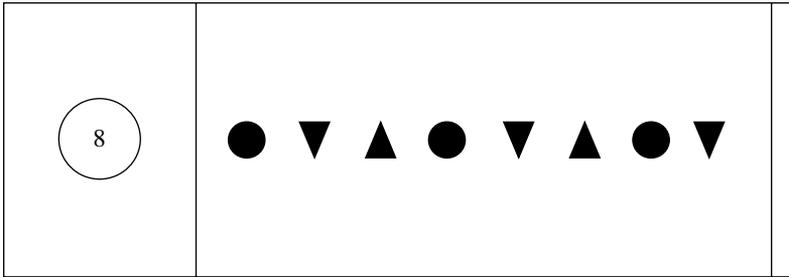


Figure 49. Thumb and index finger movements of the *putugizi* playing technique

we don't see how they play them, but we just imitate. I believe that they used two guitars on Nampula Radio. It is a record, I don't know its name. My second father is still alive. He is in Lilongwe. He played that. (Conversation October 15, 1972)

This is an interesting example of something that came to Malaŵi from the Portuguese-speaking neighboring country. Either Daniel's second father made an intelligent reconstruction of what the musicians were doing on the record he heard over Radio Nampula, or the song came from some other source and was picked up by musicians around Daniel Kachamba. *Putugizi* means that the music has its origin "*ku Putugizi*," i.e., in Portuguese-speaking Moçambique. Certainly, it is not a Portuguese guitar style, but it could be Brazilian, transmitted via Moçambique. An identical technique of striking the guitar strings was observed by Tiago de Oliveira Pinto during fieldwork in the Recôncavo region of Bahia, Brazil, in the music of *samba-de-viola* performed by João de Deus in Pilar, 1984 (Pinto 1991:126–35).

The tuning for playing "*Putugizi*" is "Full C." The speed of the music is very fast. Daniel said in 1972: "This is very high *lumba*; speed 78 rpm." This remark would probably not be understood by anyone unfamiliar with his terminology. Daniel used an elaborate taxonomy not only for tunings, among which he distinguished nine, but also for dance movement and for performance speeds. To express the required speed for his various dance-patterns, he compared them with the speed of revolution of records. Records at 78 rpm move fast, while those at 45 rpm move slowly on the turntable. "High *lumba*" is qualified as having speed 78; "slow *sinjonjo*" may be speed 45. But there are also fictitious numbers. For example, "Rock 'n' roll," which is the "fastest music," with people dancing it "specially in the dry season when it is very cold," has a speed of 82.

Putugizi is an example of "manual vamping" (Low 1982b) without plectrum, using the fingers. For Daniel Kachamba it was probably the basis for yet another spectacular technique that he developed in the 1980s and that he used to term "metric style." As in *putugizi*, the hand movement is circular and two



Photo 51. Daniel Kachamba playing *putugizi* in the studio of the Institute for Scientific Cinematography, Göttingen, Germany, October 10, 1972.—Photo: author.

fingers are employed (thumb and index finger), but the direction of the circle is changed after some time. In *putugizi*, the circle is counter-clockwise from the performer's viewpoint. In the "metric style," this movement was stopped at one point, and while the sound produced remained almost unchanged, Daniel used to move his hand clockwise for a while. In public concerts this greatly impressed audiences.

4. *Hauyani* (see Moya in the video *African Guitar*, Kubik 1995)

In the 1960s Daniel Kachamba sometimes performed in *hauyani* style, but very rarely in later years. The term *hauyani* is a Bantu adaptation in southern Africa of the English term "Hawaiian," and it refers to the "Hawaiian guitar" craze of the 1940s that also had an impact in Africa. In Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malaŵi, the Hawaiian guitar craze led to the revival of an old technique—playing on one string by means of a slide, usually a piece of calabash, a knife, or a small bottle. This technique appears in numerous areas of Africa on different instruments, such as on the so-called one-stringed idiochord zithers. Musicians resorted to this technique in southern Africa in order to reproduce the glissando effect of Hawaiian guitar music. Thus, there arose in this area a



Photo 52. *Hauyani* guitar played by Daniel Kachamba's younger brother Donald. In Blantyre, March 1967.—Photo: Maurice Djenda.

parallel to the so-called bottleneck guitar style of the southern United States. In Malaŵi and bordering areas of Moçambique, *hauyani* refers to both the technique of playing with a small bottle or other object used as a slide, and to the trichord tuning of a normal Spanish guitar when converted to function as a Hawaiian guitar.

By 1962 the *hauyani* style had spread as far as the frontier region of Malaŵi and Moçambique, east of the Mulanje Mountains. In Malaŵi's music history, *hauyani* is much associated with the guitarist Ndice Mwarare, who is considered the master of this style. But Daniel made a remarkable recording of a popular song of the 1950s, "Vula matambo," with guitars, one of which is played in *hauyani* style (published on the LP *Opeka Nyimbo*, item D6, Museum Collection Berlin MC 15, Kubik/Malamusi 1989).

In *hauyani* playing, the musician is usually seated and lays the guitar flat on his thigh. He slides the little bottle mainly over the three upper strings. In the right hand he either holds a plectrum or plays with thumb and index finger. The tuning of the guitar is in trichord, the relative pitches, from high to low, running: g–e–c–G–E–C or: g–e–c–G–C–C.

David Evans, who listened to two Malaŵian *hauyani* recordings from my material in 1967, commented:

The two “Hawaiian” pieces were especially interesting to me. The thing that impressed me most about them was their similarity to Afro-American slide guitar playing in tone and approach to playing. The African players seem to desire the same percussive, scraping sound that is found among Blacks in this country [the U.S.A.] even though the African playing is clearly based on Hawaiian playing. It would appear that the African players have rejected the clear “lush” sound of Hawaiian players and substituted something closer to their own concept of the proper sound. (Letter dated November 5, 1977)

Of the two recordings that Evans heard, one comes from the Kachamba group, the other from Ndiche Mwarare. In the 1980s Daniel’s younger brother Donald experimented again with the *hauyani* technique, and so did Moya A. Malamusu during the 1990s. There is a video made of Donald’s performance at the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, Musikethnologische Abteilung.

5. *Aloni Band* (recordings at Afrikahaus Benseler, Freiberg a. Necker, Germany)

A spectacular creation of Daniel Kachamba’s during the 1970s was his “*Aloni Band*”—a one-man band in which he played every instrument himself. The idea goes back to 1972, when he composed a song called “*Aloni Jive*” (published on the 1972 LP) and also made a sketch of a foot-operated percussion set that he wanted to use for the accompaniment of his solo guitar style. On the 1978 concert tour of Germany, he first included his idea in the program, performing alone on the stage while the other band members, including Donald, Moya, Mose Yotamu and I, were required to dance in front of the public. In his *aloni* band (from English: “alone”), he used to sit on the resonance box of the one-string bass and hit it with the heel of his right foot in a constant beat, as though it were a jazz drummer’s bass drum. The guitar was held by a strap and the capo was situated in front of the fourth fret. The left hand mainly performed recurring cycles of chords. In the right hand he held a homemade plectrum. A small rattle made from a tin can was fastened to the right hand by means of a rubber band. Finally, fastened by a holder in front of his mouth, he had a mouth organ.

All the sound-producing agents were used in the context of a fully integrated



Photo 53. Daniel Kachamba in Arthur Benseler's Afrika-Haus, Freiberg a. Neckar, Germany, in 1978. With some irony he used to call this set the "Aloni Band" (from English "alone"). Sitting on the one-stringed bass and hitting it with his right foot, he operated a guitar (with plectrum), a mouth organ in F, and on his right hand a tin rattle attached with a rubber band. In Freiberg a. Neckar, Germany, 1978.—Photo: author.

and internally structured movement cycle. The basic movement of the right hand was an even up-and-down motion. This produced a regular rattle beat to the syllables *cha-cha-cha* while, at the same time, the plectrum hit the strings with alternate strokes, upwards and downwards. The strokes with the plectrum were deliberately steered into the most varied parts of the strings and carried out with various accentuations. The result was that one could hear several apparently independent pitch-lines that seemed to conflict with one another.

In his “*Aloni Band*,” Daniel Kachamba used one of his band guitar tunings and played the five-string guitar, the fifth being removed. The five strings were tuned as follows (in relative notation, going from high to low): 1 = E, 2 = B, 3 = G, 4 = D, 5 omitted, 6 = C. Strings 4 and 6 were tuned a whole tone apart. In a musical terminology that he developed, Daniel described this tuning as “Key G high six.” This layout was motivated by technical and musical necessities. An alternating bass of two notes was produced on the bass string, which was, as it were, isolated by the space between it and the other strings. The bass string was handled melodically, just like a musical bow. When it was open it produced the lower tone, while the stopping behind the second fret with the thumb produced the second, higher tone.

Song Texts and Their Interpretation

Daniel’s literary talent had three major outlets during his lifetime:

- (1) song text composition;
- (2) oral narration, proverbial joke, showmanship, etc.;
- (3) written narration, including anecdotes and autobiographical notes.

As his texts became longer over the years, they demonstrate well his characteristic approach to text composition. At the beginning the texts were often merely “signature-lines” or abstracts of a long story remembered by the musician, inspiring him to compose. Later, they often turned into poems. The full story is rarely explained in the song text itself, thus leaving it open for audiences to guess and to interpret. This is part of the art. The exact story behind it is in the musician’s mind, and he alone can explain it, if asked. A comparison of Kachamba’s song texts and their explanations demonstrates that without the latter, outsiders would rarely arrive at fully appreciating the meaning of them. Some of the themes proceed from historical events that concern the broader society, but most of the songs in Kachamba’s repertoire mirror his personal life history. And yet, that Malawian audiences have cried to some of his songs, such as “*Padali agogo*” (“There Was a Grandmother . . .”), shows the broader human implications.

A formal content analysis of Daniel’s song texts from the 1967 recordings to 1983–84 reveals some unmistakable trends which suggest distinguishing

an earlier period (up to 1971) from a middle period (1971–78) and a later period (from 1978 up to his death). In the early period, he mainly composed for band guitar, and the song texts were relatively short, covering a wide range of subjects. These subjects were not necessarily different from the subject matter covered by other popular musicians during the 1960s: love affairs, personal anecdotes, local scandal and other events in the township environment, comments about current trends in dance music, political comments (for example about the “Federation,” and Malaŵi’s independence), etc.

The periods from 1971 into the 1980s could be characterized as dominated by an irresistible centripetal force, whirling the composer around what soon emerges as a single theme: death as the ultimate reality, the individual’s final exit from the turmoils of life. This trend began about 1971 with the composition of his “*Maliro aKachamba*.” In 1972, during the euphoria of his first tour to Europe, Daniel also composed songs with brighter themes, such as “Sunny Boy,” songs with humorous themes, such as “I Am a Beggar Man,” and political statements about Malaŵi’s past during the time of the *atsamunda* (“settlers”). A few years later, however, his comments in song texts were almost exclusively portraying disappointment, unacceptable social behavior by members of society, and warnings that whatever individuals may do to each other, eventually human beings are moving only in one direction—the ultimate reality. At the same time, in contrast with the earlier period, the song texts, now mainly written for solo guitar, also became longer and more elaborate, and often displayed unparalleled poetry.

When composing a new song, Daniel often wrote down the words on paper. Technically, composition would begin in various ways—with a nuclear text phrase or with an instrumental idea, for instance. Though he wrote in his self-introduction (cf. above) that it took him only ten minutes to compose a new song, I knew that usually this process could take him weeks, even months. He might carry several unrelated instrumental and textual ideas in his head for a long time, until one day he simply put them together. Such was the case with his “*Tsankho ndi matenda*” (see below). The sudden fusion of little bits from here and there into something new may be itself a process taking even less than ten minutes. I remember when Daniel suddenly created one of his famous songs, “Sunny Boy,” within five minutes of seeming almost possessed by musical inspiration; at the time, we were practicing in our hotel for a performance at the 4th International Music Forum in Viktring, Austria, in 1972. At first, his theme had a simple leader-chorus structure; but suddenly, he shifted the two phrases so that they would also interlock. Whenever his voice part landed on “—boy,” Donald and I were required to start on “Sunny—.” It was something like a miraculous experience to see Daniel when he was in the grip of a demon-like intuition.

Daniel composed songs in Chichewa, Shona, Kiswahili, Chiyao, even

Nkhonde and other languages, as well as in English. In his early stages, he used to sing much of his repertoire in the Shona language of Zimbabwe. This was due to three factors:

- (1) the family had lived in Harare during the late 1950s and Daniel spoke Shona fluently;
- (2) many of the popular songs that he liked from radio broadcasts during the 1950s and early 1960s were sung in Shona; and
- (3) in the days of the “Federation,” Shona was considered by many musicians as the fashionable language.

From the early 1970s, however, he began to compose more and more songs in Chichewa, responding to the increased national consciousness in Malaŵi. In 1972 he already had a substantial repertoire of songs composed with Chichewa texts, among these one of his most famous—“*Maliro aKachamba*” (“The Funeral of Kachamba”).

At the height of his career in the 1970s, Daniel used predominantly Chichewa in his songs; it was in great demand by the public, and it was the language promoted by the MBC (Malawi Broadcasting Corporation). In September 1983, however, when Lidiya Malamusi and I stayed with him for a few days in Ndirande, we recorded a song called “*Ubutuli*” in the Nkhonde language, which is spoken in northernmost Malaŵi. Obviously, with regard to language, Daniel had somewhat changed his earlier policy. During his final years, he wanted to diversify and reach people of various ethnic backgrounds. In Ndirande, on September 2, 1983, when recording “*Ubutuli*,” he told me that he had recently composed songs in the most diverse languages of Malaŵi. He also composed some songs again in English. On the eve of his departure from Germany in 1984, he composed for his host, Arthur Benseler, in whose house he had stayed during the tour, one of his saddest songs in English, “I Am So Sorry . . .” Unusual for Daniel, this song is slow and uses a minor chord in the basic cycle. Arthur Benseler, whom Donald Kachamba and I visited again in 1988, believes that Daniel had a presentiment of his death and that it was reflected in this song. (Our recordings at his home in Ndirande are preserved on tape A 201/1983, copy in the Musikethnologische Abteilung, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin; Arthur Benseler’s recordings of 1984 are preserved in the Afrikahaus, Freiberg a. N., Germany.)

The song texts discussed below were transcribed by Daniel Kachamba and I jointly on various occasions in 1967, 1972 and 1983, most of them literally from recordings. After writing the texts, Daniel explained their meanings. For various reasons, I usually took down his remarks and explanations in shorthand as he was speaking. Recording was out of the question, since it would have only inhibited him from speaking freely.

In a chapter such as the present one, it is not possible, of course, to tran-

scribe all his recorded songs. As I do not want to impose personal selective criteria, I have included only those for which we have either his own commentary or that of a relative, such as Donald or Moya.

(a) The Earlier Period

In February and March 1967, the first comprehensive recordings of Daniel Kachamba's Band were made. During that period, Maurice Djenda (my co-worker, who was responsible for many of the recordings and all the black-and-white photographs), Daniel, Donald, Josefe Bulhamu and I stayed together for prolonged periods at the old Hetherwick House, Presbyterian Mission, Blantyre, which we had rented. The songs and the notes about them were written down during the long evenings.

1. "Anifa Love Me" (Nyanja-ized English) (published on the LP *Opeka Nyimbo, Kubik/Malamusi 1989*)

Text:

Anifa oo plizi lav'mi
Anifa oo plizi lav'mi
Iya! La la la la—la la la la
jastnau!

Translation:

Anifa oh please love me!
Anifa oh please love me!
Iya! La la la la—la la la la
just now!

Explanation by Daniel: One morning when I woke up, I had this tune in my head. Anifa is the name of a girl which I had in Chikuli. This song is my composition, and I composed it in January 1967, when I said goodbye to Anifa, as I went to Chilomoni.

It was in Chikuli that I saw the girl called Anifa for the first time. I said to Anifa: "From today on, I would like you to be my girl." She said: "Very good. I love you very much, because you play guitar very well." Anifa was my girl from 1965 to 1966. Then I went to her less and less. Once I went on a long journey, in 1966. Then I visited her rarely. I have never said to her that our friendship is finished. But I did not see her for five months. In February 1967 Anifa was once again my girl.

(2) "Chileka Twist" (orig. tape no. 1/1967, item 2)

Instrumental performance. No singing.

Explanation by Daniel: One day a building company came to Chileka to construct a house. They pitched a tent. The tent remained there for a month. I went to one of those people and said: "You should give me that tent." Everyone knew of course that Kachamba was a guitarist. They said to me: "It is better for you to go and play for dancing!" I went home and told my brother Donald: "Look, they have sent me away; now we must compose a song about

that man. What should it be?" "Tenti twist" was the reply. This was the original name. Now we are calling it "Chileka Twist."

(3) "Sinjonjo" (orig. tape no. 1/1967, item 3; CD Track 25)

Instrumental. No singing.

Explanation by Daniel: One day I was very drunk. (Now since I have been staying with you, I don't drink very much.) Once in Chilomoni I was very drunk, and we had forgotten all our songs. I said to Donald: "What are we going to sing? Let me try something!" And we called the song which came out "Sinjonjo." The name *sinjonjo* imitates the sound of certain dance steps, it refers to dance steps. We use the expressions "high *sinjonjo*" and "slow *sinjonjo*" only to distinguish different musical pieces. I heard *sinjonjo* for the first time in Malaŵi, but it comes from Rhodesia, possibly even from South Africa. But there it has another name: "*Bambata*," that is the name of the record.

Now, I have made similar "records." But I cannot call them all in the same way, because it is not one music. So I called this piece "*Sinjonjo*." *Sinjonjo* is a dance step. Even the composition "Anifa Love Me" is a bit like *sinjonjo* or *chachacha*. The people who listen to my music don't know how to dance. They even dance to "Chileka Twist" like *sinjonjo*. But myself, I can hear a guitar from very far, and say exactly which string is not in tune.

(4) "Mai wanga ali kuti" (orig. tape no. 1/1967, item 4)

Instrumental. No singing.

Explanation by Daniel: One can play the rumba sticks with this song. [He showed it:]

⑩ [x . . x . . x . | . . x . x . . .]

This song is also called "*Mai wangu ali kupi*" in Shona ("Where Is My Mother?"). When I was in Chilomoni, for three weeks after leaving Chileka we did not drink, but we only said: "I would like to see my mother next week!" The language in which we were singing is Shona. But the song is our own composition. During the performance Donald says: "Mother is in Ntali" [i.e., Umtali, on the road to Salisbury]. But she has never been there. The answer is given for fun.

* * *

[Daniel Kachamba's claim that this song was his and Donald's composition cannot be substantiated. This may be so with regard to the words, but definitely not with regard to the tune. In the film *Pennywhistle Boys* by Kenneth Law (South Africa, 14 min., 1962), featuring street performances in Cape Town by the *kwela* musicians Robert and Joshua Sithole, this song is performed. It is likely that Daniel Kachamba saw this film in the 1960s, since there were often mobile cinema shows in Nyasaland.]

(5) “Double Step” (orig. tape no. 1/1967, item 5)

Instrumental. No singing.

Explanation by Daniel: When we were in Chilomoni, I said, “Donald, let us go to Blantyre! We shall earn money there, to buy cigarettes.” We went on foot, because we had no money for the bus. We were hungry. We arrived at a tree and stayed in its shade. I said to Donald: “What can we do, we are very hungry! In both directions it is very far. Alright, we shall play a ‘record,’ and the people will give us money.” Donald said: “I have forgotten all the songs, because my hunger is too big.” I said to him: “Try in spite of all!” And we began to play and found this tune. And we asked Josefe, the rattle player: “Is this a good record?” Donald almost cried from hunger: “We must call this ‘record’ double step!”

(6) “Chips” (orig. tape no. 1/1967, item 6 February)

Instrumental. No singing.

Explanation by Daniel: Donald possesses much science, much plan. He has many ideas for “records.” You can tell him: “Make a new record!” and he will make it immediately. One day we were in a bar and bought chips. One man came and said to me: “Play a ‘record’!” I answered: “Let us first eat the chips!” The man said: “Do you know very well how to make music?” Donald said: “Yes.” He asked: “Can you make a ‘record’ about those chips which you are eating here?” Donald said: “Yes, I can do that instantly.” We tried, and very soon we had the song. The dance style to this piece is also called “chips.”

(7) “Malawi moto” (“Malaŵi Is Fire”) (orig. tape no. 1/1967)

Text:

Malawi moto moto moto (2×)
Siyale madoda siyale (2×)

Translation:

Malaŵi, fire, fire, fire
[Adapted text in Shona, untranslatable].

Explanation by Daniel: The content of this song is: “Don’t play with Malaŵi! Malaŵi is very dangerous.” I composed this song after 1964. The guitar is in “Spanish tuning.” We often use this tuning when we play without string bass, because the guitar bass string comes out very loud.

(8) “Fedro yatha” (“The Federation Is Finished”) (orig. tape no. 1/1967)

Text:

Yatha fedro yatha fedro yatha
amalawi!
Dziko lino la Malawi!

Translation:

Finished, the Federation is finished
Malaŵians!
This country of Malaŵi!

Amalawi, kondwelani, kwacha!

People of Malaŵi, rejoice!
Wake up!

Explanation by Daniel: This is my composition. Before 1958 there was no Dr. Banda in Malaŵi, only Roy Welensky. The country was called Nyasaland, and it was “federal.” Ngwazi Dr. Banda came in 1958 to break the Federation, in order to take out Malaŵi. The Ngwazi said: “This is Malaŵi land!” He said that when he came to Chileka. In 1961 he explained: “Federation—the end!” He said: “The country should be called Malaŵi!” And I said: “We must make a ‘record’ about that,” and we called this record “*Fedro yatha*” (“The Federation is Finished”).

(9) “Ndani akumbuka?” (“Who Remembers?”) (orig. tape no. 1/1967)

Text:

Ndani akumbuka?
Amalawi kuphedwa
popanda chimo. (2×)
Azibambo ndi azimai
kumangidwa popanda chimo.

Anyamata ndi atsikana
kuphedwa popanda chimo.
Ankhalamba ndi makanda
kupotoletwa popanda chimo.
Tsopano Akamuzu
atiombola dziko la Malawi.

Translation:

Who remembers?
Malaŵi people were killed
without any fault. (2×)
Men and women
were taken prisoners without any
fault.

Boys and girls
were killed without any fault.
Aged people and infants
were strangled without any fault.
Now Kamuzu
has redeemed for us our country of
Malaŵi.

Explanation by Daniel: Who remembers? We were dying for no reason. Other people came and took men and women, to throw them into prison, without trial. Boys and girls died for nothing. Even children, grandmothers and grandfathers were simply dispatched. The Ngwazi came to help. Now we are with him. We are very happy. There are no difficulties. I composed this song in 1961. We were at home. When the Ngwazi came to Chileka, he said: “This is our country. Nobody can come to control this country. This is our self-government.” When the Ngwazi said these words, I was there.

(10) “Vula matambo” (recorded 1967, published on *Opeka Nyimbo*, MC 15, item D 6, Kubik/Malamusi 1989)

Explanation: This song, played by Daniel with “slide guitar” in *hauyani* tuning and accompanied by Donald on the rattle, is an adaptation by the Kachamba brothers from a famous commercial guitar record which appeared in

Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) by 1950: “*Vura matambo ubare mwana*,” by Jaiorosi Chimangware and Mabunu Moyo (Gallotone GB. 1057 T).

The text is in the Shona language of Zimbabwe. The Kachamba brothers used to sing it in the following pronunciation:

Kumba kwangu akuna mwana. (2×)

Vula matambo mbale mwana. (2×)

“*Vula mathambo*” literally means: “Open the bones!” According to John Blacking (1961:43), it is to be understood as sexually provocative. This song was very famous in southern Africa during the 1950s, and must have been heard on many occasions by Daniel Kachamba and his young brother when they were staying in Harare, Zimbabwe. That he still performed it in 1967 during our recording sessions in Blantyre shows that Daniel Kachamba’s Zimbabwean experience as a teenager had a permanent impact on his expressive repertoire.

“*Vula matambo*” is an interesting case in point, demonstrating how musical terms emerge and then widen or narrow their meanings in different places and at different times. A key phrase in the text of a popular song had transformed into a term referring to the motional pattern associated with that song. Eventually, it became a designation for a music/dance genre.

With the exception of Rumba music imported from Congo or East Africa, *vula matambo* was one of the few musical types in the repertoire of the Kachamba Brothers group in 1967 in which the concept of the time-line pattern was incorporated. The motional structure of *vula matambo* is based on an interlocking combination of patterns within a 12-pulse cycle, including the well-known 7-stroke “standard pattern” (cf. Chapters I and VI).

In the Kachamba Brothers’ concept of *vula matambo* as a motional structure, there are the following four determinants:

- (1) presence of a fast triple rhythm,
- (2) this pattern filling a 12-pulse cycle,
- (3) the constituent parts combining in an interlocking manner, and
- (4) an asymmetric or “additive” structure manifesting itself in the form of a time line, which may be struck on an instrument (e.g., a bottle) or implicitly contained in the musicians’ perception of the whole.

(b) The Middle Period (from ca. 1971 to 1978)

(1) “*Kanga, Maria!*” (orig. tape no. L 31/II/5)

In my recording session on January 16, 1972, with the Kachamba Brothers at Rice’s Bar near Chirimba, Blantyre District, there was one title, “*Kanga, Maria!*” which Daniel categorized as *vula matambo*. In this piece Daniel

played a five-string guitar in the tuning of Key G high six, as he usually did in the band. The other instruments were the one-string box bass played by Donald and a rattle played by Luka Khumuwa. All participants sang the text of “*Kanga, Maria!*”

Daniel explained that it was a song in the Manyika language of Zimbabwe/Moçambique, a Shona-related language. A woman from Salisbury had come on a visit to his home village or some place nearby and had demanded that he play *vula matambo*. There were visitors. Suddenly, she lost her money and began looking for it. The people were laughing: “*Maria! What do you want to do there between the bricks?*” *Kanga* means “quick,” hence the name of the song, “*Kanga, Maria!*” (“Quick, Maria!”) (Conversation with Daniel in July 1972).

Daniel said: “Originally, ‘*Kanga, Maria!*’ was not played with guitars but with women’s rattles.” He could not remember the name of those rattles. I asked him, perhaps too suggestively: “Rattles like *chitsukulumwe?*” He said, “Yes.” These are longish rattles made from gourds, filled with grains of maize. We recorded such rattles in 1967 and 1984 among the Antumba in the mountain area north of Mwanza, Blantyre District. They were considered exclusively women’s instruments.

(2) “*Maliro aKachamba*” (“The Funeral of Kachamba”) (cf. LP *Kachamba Brothers’ Band, 1972*; CD Track 28)

Recorded on January 16, 1972, at Mr. Rice’s Bar, Chirimba, Blantyre District, this song was performed by Daniel Kachamba (lead vocals), Donald Kachamba (metal flute in B-flat), Luka Khumuwa (about 17 years old, rattle and vocals) and Ronol Kaufa (about 21, one-string bass).

Text:

Ndinke kuLilongwe mayo ndabwela ine
 KuMulanje mayo ndabwela ine
 Maliro aKachamba mayo mudzabwele ine (2×)
 Mudzabwele mudzalile mudzantaye kumanda (2×)
 Ndatopa ine mavuto achuluka ine (2×)
 Chisoni mayo, kulila ine (2×)
 Ndatopa ine, ndikapume ine (2×)
 . . .
 Anthu alipano mayo miseche awa (2×)
 Ndinke kumadzi mayo ali nane, kunkhuni mayo ali nane
 Ndatopa ine ndikapume ine (2×)
 . . .
 Osinja nasinja, ophika naphika, oimba naimba, olila nalila
 Chisoni mayo, ndadabwa ine (2×)
 Ndatopa ine, ndikapume ine (2×)

Translation:

I run away to Lilongwe, alas! I have come.
To Mulanje again, alas! I have come.
The funeral of Kachamba, alas! You should come!
You should come, you should cry, you should throw me into the grave!
I am tired, troubles grow upon me.
Oh the pity of it, I am weeping.
I am tired, I ought to rest.

...

These people here, alas! they are talking scandal.
I run away to the river, alas! They are still with me, to the firewood, alas! They are still with me.
I am tired, I ought to rest.

...

Those who pound they are pounding, the cooks are cooking, the singers are singing, those who lament are crying.
Oh the pity of it, I am shocked!
I am tired, I ought to rest.

Explanation: With this song Daniel Kachamba entered history as a composer who described his own funeral while he was still alive. This song criticizes the township environment, which he experienced as a cruel one from his own position in it as a singer and as a social outcast. He sensed that only *miseche* (“bad talk” behind one’s back; scandal; backbiting) surrounded him, “so why is it not better just to die?”

Daniel composed this vision of his own funeral in November 1971, first for solo guitar. He recorded the solo version in Vienna in October 1972. He also performed it in his film *Daniel Kachamba’s Solo Guitar Music*, Göttingen, October 10, 1972.

These are the explanations he gave in 1972:

I was tired of the people in the village, because they were troubling me too much. The people in the village spoke bad about me, they were backbiting. They made *miseche*.

Osinja nasinja: During a funeral at home in Africa, when I die, the people pound maize and cook food with maize flour for those who will come to the funeral.

Oimba naimba: And then they sing church songs.

Ophika naphika: Some people are cooking, some are pounding, all are very busy. They are singing and some cry [*kulira*]. This song is not for laughing. During a concert we have to play “*Maliro aKachamba*” with serious faces.

I asked Daniel, “Why did you compose a song about your own funeral?”
He replied:

I said to those people, who give signs to each other behind my back, to those who speak to me friendly and at the same time exchange meaningful glances between themselves, I said about them, “The people are not happy with me, and they will be glad when I die.” And I said, “When I die, then you must come to my funeral. You will cry and carry me to the graveyard, because I am tired of all these things.”

Chisoni mayo!: I am sorry, I wonder. I am tired to listen to their speeches [*miseche*] behind me, while they talk nicely in front of me.

(3) “*Zotsala kumanda*” (“The Things That Remain in the Graveyard”) (recorded October 10, 1972, published on Cinéfilm E 2136, item 1, Institute for Scientific Cinematography, Göttingen, Germany)

Text:

Ngakhale tinganyade ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,
simudzanka nazo kumanda.

Ngakhale tinganyade ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,
Mama ngondo kumanda.

Mama tototu ine kumanda.⁴

Simudzanka nazo kumanda.

—guitar—

Ngakhale tinganyade ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,
Mama ngondo kumanda. (2×)

Sitidzanka nazo kumanda. (2×)

—guitar—

Ngakhale tinganyade ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,
Mama ngondo kumanda.

Ngakhale mungakhwime ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,
Simudzanka nazo kumanda.

Taonani anzathu apita.

Mama tototu ine kumanda.

[*guitar*]

Kuimba tingaimbe ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,

Mama ngondo kumanda. (2×)

Mama sitidzanka nazo kumanda.

4. The words *ngondo* and *tototu* are so-called **ideophones**, and difficult to translate into another language. *Ngondo* apparently comes from the Chiyao language, where it transmits the idea of “war, conflict.” *Tototu* (in Chichewa) expresses the idea of absolute refusal. (Conversations with Moya A. Malamusi in Chileka, September 2009.)

Simudzanka nazo kumanda.

[*guitar*]

Ngakhale tinganyade ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,

Mama ngondo kumanda. (2×)

Kulibe zonka nazo kumanda.

Palibe zonka nazo kumanda.

Mama tototu ine kumanda. (2×)

[*guitar*]

Ngakhale tinganyade ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,

Mama ngondo kumanda.

Ngakhale tinganyade ine zonsezi zidzatsala ine,

Sitidzanka nazo kumanda.

Mama ngondo tu ine kumanda.

Mama tototu ine kumanda.

[*guitar*]

Translation:

Even if we are arrogant, all these our things will remain,

You will not take them to the graveyard.

Even if we are arrogant, all these things will remain,

Mama! Dear me! Not to the graveyard!

Mama! Not me to end up in the graveyard!

You will not take your things to the graveyard.

[*guitar*]

Even if we are arrogant, all these things will remain,

Mama! Not me to end up in the graveyard! (2×)

We will not take our things to the graveyard. (2×)

[*guitar*]

Even if we are arrogant, all these things will remain,

Mama! Dear me! Not to the graveyard!

Even if you play witchcraft, all these things will remain,

You will not take them with you to the graveyard.

See how our relatives have passed away!

Mama! Not me to end up in the graveyard!

[*guitar*]

Even if we just play music, all these our things will remain.

Mama! Dear me! Not to the graveyard! (2×)

Mama! We shall not take them to the graveyard.

You will not take them to the graveyard.

[*guitar*]

Even if we are arrogant, all these things will remain.

Mama! Dear me! Not to the graveyard! (2×)

There is nothing to go with to the graveyard.

Here is nothing to go with to the graveyard.

Mama! Not me to end up in the graveyard! (2×)

[guitar]

Even if we are arrogant, all these things will remain.

Mama! Dear me! Not to the graveyard!

Even if we are arrogant, all these things will remain.

We will not take them to the graveyard.

Mama! Dear me! Not to the graveyard!

Mama! Not me to end up in the graveyard!

[guitar]

Explanation: After composing this song in Nairobi in March 1972, Daniel explained that there was no particular event behind it:

It is just for teaching people! There are people, some others who are very proud. They are forgetting that they will also die. They believe that they will go with their things to the grave, for example with money. But even if you are a wizard you will be buried with your magic, you will no longer be a wizard when you die! Because there are people, who are wizards, who kill, but they will go to the same graveyard as those people whom they killed. We were many, but some of our relatives died, and the wizards believe that they themselves will have a long life, that they will always remain here.

On September 22, 1972, in Vienna, before the Göttingen film was made, Daniel recorded this song with a slightly variant text. He explained: “Even if someone wants very much to kill me by magic, he/she will also die!” In one place in the text he sings: “I will not take the guitar into the grave.”

“*Zotsala kumanda*” was the beginning of a series of songs by Daniel about the transience of life and the futility of human aspiration. Although I have no doubts about Daniel’s authorship of this particular song, recent research by Moya A. Malamusi in Chileka has brought to light that this theme is probably very old among Chileka guitarists. Robert Dawala Khwachani, a veteran guitarist of the 1950s, recorded songs that warned people about the futility of pride and greed: “*Chemwali, musanyade inu, ku manda satenga ndalama*” (“Sister, Don’t Be So Arrogant, One Does Not Take Money to the Graveyard”) (cf. Malamusi 1994).

While Daniel Kachamba was playing his song in the Göttingen film, October 10, 1972, one could observe the fingering of his left hand. The tuning was what he called “Full C,” implying that the sixth guitar string is not tuned (relatively) to E, but to F, a semi-tone higher. In this way he could move his thumb between F (open string position) and G (stopping the string behind the second fret). The capo was placed high up, behind the sixth fret. While playing this song, Daniel stomped slightly and inaudibly with his right foot to mark the reference beat.

(4) “*Tsankho ndi matenda*” (“Favoritism Is an Illness”) (recorded October 10, 1972, cinéfilm E 2136, Encyclopaedia Cinematographica series)

Text:

Samati mwana wamwini ndi chirombo Mai Gama! (2×)

Aá àa áa mudzanka ngati ng’ombe! (2×)

Samati mwana wamwini ndi nkango Mai Gama!

Samati mwana wamwini ndi chirombo Mai Gama!

Amene alibe nzake ndi chirombo Mai Gama ine!

Aá àa áa mudzanka ngati ng’ombe!

[*guitar*]

Amene alibe nzake ndi chirombo Mai Gama ine!

Aá àa áa mudzanka ngati ng’ombe!

Amene ali ndi tsankho ndi chirombo Mai Gama ine!

Amene ali ndi tsankho ndi matenda Mai Gama ine!

[*guitar*]

Amene alibe nzake ndi chirombo Mai Gama ine! (2×)

Aá àa áa mudzanka ngati ng’ombe!

[*guitar*]

Amene ali ndi tsankho ndi matenda Mai Gama ine! (2×)

[*guitar*]

Amene alibe nzake ndi chirombo Mai Gama ine! (2×)

[*guitar*]

Translation:

Don’t say that somebody’s child is a wild animal, Mother Gama! (2×)

I am sorry that you will pass away like a cow! (2×)

Don’t say that somebody’s child is a lion, Mother Gama! (2×)

Don’t say that somebody’s child is a wild animal, Mother Gama! (2×)

A person who has no friends is a wild animal, Mother Gama!

I am sorry, you will pass away like a cow!

[*guitar*]

A person who has no friends is a wild animal, Mother Gama!

I am sorry, you will pass away like a cow!

A person who practices favoritism is a wild animal, Mother Gama!

A person who practices favoritism suffers from an illness, Mother Gama!

[*guitar*]

A person who has no friends is a wild animal, Mother Gama! (2×)

I am sorry, you will pass away like a cow!

[*guitar*]

A person who practices favoritism suffers from an illness, Mother Gama! (2×)

[*guitar*]

A person who has no friends is a wild animal, Mother Gama! (2×)
[guitar]

Explanation by Daniel: There are certain people, when they eat they take a little piece of *nsima* [hard porridge] and give it to somebody's child. When they eat with their own children, they don't call that other child to eat with them. The song blames a certain woman. *Gama* is the *mfunda* [clan name] of a woman. She was a real person. "Don't say that somebody's child is a wild animal, Mother Gama!" Animal, because it was treated as separate from the other children. *Mwana wamwini anzanga ndi wako!* [Treat your neighbor's child like your own!]

"I am sorry you will pass away like a cow!" I mean that woman who acts like this, she will die, die like a cow . . . because people will not want to come to her funeral.

Tsankho means to show favoritism, to keep somebody's child apart and to make a difference between one's own child and that of someone else.

* * *

[In this song the composer disapproves of the behavior of a woman, Mother Gama, who only gave food to her own children, excluding those of the neighbors. The words moralize about people who treat their own children differently from their neighbors'. Daniel composed the final text and wrote it out on a piece of paper just two days before recording the song on film in Göttingen. Shortly before the final rehearsal, he was still ironing it out and changing a few words.

The melody of this song is based on a popular Ugandan record, "*Obwenda nkulinda*" (in the Luganda language), which Daniel heard during our visit to Uganda in April 1972. As we continued on our concert tour to Kenya, Ethiopia and Europe, Daniel constantly listened to this song. Slowly, he began to try out an adaptation of the melody on his solo guitar. On September 22 he made a first recording of his own version. He said, "I don't know the language. I am just imitating [the words]." At this stage he imitated the Luganda text phonetically, as he remembered it.

In Göttingen, after writing Chichewa words to the guitar part, he said that he had held the "voice," i.e., the vocal part, a long time before he had ever heard the Ugandan song. "And now I am trying to fit the two together."

(5) "*Panali agogo*" ("There Was a Grandmother") *Lumba* (recorded on orig. tape no. A 13 during a concert in Dar es Salaam, Goethe Institute, September 20, 1976)

Text:

Panali agogo panali agogo ine o!
panali agogo nkalinga

zonsezi anzanga nkumanda . . .
Kulibe nzimu, kulibe nzimu ine o!
kulibe nzimu nkumanda
taonani agogo apita.
'A a ye, e a ye, e a ye
mawa nkumanda!

Translation:

There was a grandmother, there was a grandmother, dear me!
There was a grandmother, and if I think
That everything, my friends, is in the graveyard . . .
There is no spirit, there is no spirit, dear me!
There is no spirit in the graveyard
Look, the grandmother is gone.
A a ye, e a ye, e a ye
Tomorrow—to the graveyard!

Explanation: “*Panali agogo*” (“There Was a Grandmother”) was one of Daniel Kachamba’s celebrated songs. It used to make audiences in Malaŵi cry when they heard it over the radio. He composed it in Vienna in June 1972, and we first recorded it on July 4 of that year at Daniel’s residence in Hohe Warte, Vienna, after he himself had made a brief cassette recording. For this purpose, he had used a radio cassette recorder belonging to a small Viennese boy with whom he used to walk around.

This is one of the songs that won him popularity contests in Malaŵi (cf. “Musik Spik,” *Daily Times*, September 22, 1976). There are several versions, for both solo guitar and band performances. One version that was recorded by the MBC (Malawi Broadcasting Corporation) in the mid-1970s is preserved in the archives of that radio station. The text above was transcribed by Donald Kachamba and I in February 1988 from the 1976 recording in Dar es Salaam. As to the phrase *kulibe nzimu nkumanda* (there is no spirit in the graveyard), Donald explained to me on February 6, 1988: “There is no spirit inside the grave, because the spirit of a dead person goes *up!*”

(c) The Later Period (from 1978 to 1987)

(1) “*Amai amati . . .*” (“My Mother Said . . .”) (archived in the Library of the MBC [Malawi Broadcasting Corporation], Chichiri-Blantyre, December 28, 1980)

Text:

Amai amati ine ndapita
anthuwa ndi nkhondo, mwananga nsamale! (2×)

Akapanda kumva aleke iwe
mwananga iwe ine ndalephera. (2×)
Olo akunene aleke iwe
mwananga iwe ine ndalephera. (2×)
Olo mundimenye ndilibe mau
ndine masikini ndilibe chuma. (2×)

Translation:

My mother said: “I have gone (died).
These people are quarrelsome, my son be careful!
If they don’t understand, leave them alone!
You my son, I have failed (to put things right) (2×)
Even if they give you bad names, leave them alone!
You, my son, I have failed.” (2×)
Even if you beat me, I have nothing to say
Because I am a beggar man, I have no possessions. (2×)

Explanation by Daniel: This happens in many locations in Blantyre: when you walk in the street during the night, you meet robbers. They say, “You give us money! If you don’t, we kill you!” If you don’t have money, they may really kill you. But before they demand money from you, they say, “Give us cigarettes, we want to smoke!” So if you say, “I don’t have cigarettes!” they say, “All right, give us change!” And if you say, “I have no change!” they say, “Can you give us your trousers, we want to try them!” So if you don’t give them anything, they start beating you. When you go into a bar and drink beer, if they see you with money, they come near you, sometimes two or three of them. They “cut” you at your mouth and neck, that means they shut your mouth with their hands and put the other hand on your neck, shouting while rushing you out of the bar. In order not to reveal to the other people in the bar that they are robbers, they say, “Oh, our friend is vomiting, so we are taking him out!” So the other people in the bar think you are one group, while you are not. You can’t speak because they have shut your mouth. These are their tricks. . . . So when they take you out, then they take the whole money they find in your pocket, beat you and leave you there, running away.

This is the meaning of my song, to advise people who drink during night in the bar and take a month’s salary into their pocket, not to do so. A woman (a mother) always likes to advise her son, “My son, don’t go during night-time into the bar with all your salary.” If you don’t listen to her, then what I have said above will happen to you. We call those crooks *anthu ankhondo*, people of war, quarrelsome people, killers. If you are quiet in the bar, they just can’t come like that, but they will try to provoke you by backbiting, this

is why I am saying, “*Akapanda kumva . . .*,” if they don’t understand your viewpoint . . .

(This information was copied from a manuscript by Daniel Kachamba at Singano village, Chileka, in September 1983.)

* * *

[Once I read this story by Daniel to Moya A. Malamusi, who as a former band member is intimately familiar with Kachamba’s personality and his environment. But Moya said that people listening to this song on the radio would not interpret it in the way suggested by Daniel. They would understand it more generally as a warning or advice from a departing mother (who died) to her son to be careful in life and watch out for people in the immediate environment, especially relatives, who could be harmful. (Personal communication, Sept. 22, 1988.)

This example demonstrates that, for any of Kachamba’s songs, there may be two or more interpretations. One, the meaning he himself attached to each, is often connected to specific personal experiences; the other, the message audiences perceive, is the projection of the listeners’ own collective life experience onto the songs.]

(2) “*Amayi mwalakwa*” (“Mother, You Have Made a Mistake”) *Saba-saba* (published on the *Daniel Kachamba Memorial Cassette, 1988, University of Malawi*, and on the CD *Central African Guitar Song Composers*, item 20 [Schmidhofer ed., 2010])

Text:

L.: Amayi mwalakwa!
Amayi mwalakwa!
Ch.: Kutsogola nokha!
kundisiya ndekha ine!
amayi mwalakwa!
amayi mwalakwa!

Translation:

Mother, you have made a mistake!
Mother, you have made a mistake!
Going ahead alone
Leaving me behind, me alone
Mother, you have made a mistake!
Mother, you have made a mistake!

Explanation: This is one of the songs that Lidiya Malamusi and I recorded of Daniel Kachamba in our last recording session in Ndirande, on September 3, 1983 (orig. tape no. A 201/4). The boys accompanying Daniel who played guitar and sang were: Samson John (percussion, voice), Daison Kamwendo (rattle, voice) and Devesoni Kadangwe (voice).

This song has remained unexplained by its composer, Daniel Kachamba. But since it is true that audiences construct their own interpretations purely from the overt text because the singer does not normally explain his radio broadcasts with lengthy interviews, it is legitimate to ask someone else about the perceived meanings.

I asked Moya how he would interpret this song from the viewpoint of a nationwide audience—in other words, how would people in Malaŵi listening to Kachamba’s songs on the radio interpret their lyrics in light of no other explanation? Moya said:

This is a song for the graveyard. Mother died and left her son, possibly it was her only child. Now the boy sings, “Mother, you have made a mistake, to leave me behind alone. We could just have gone together.”

(3) “Ndilekeni” (“Leave Me Alone”) (recordings in the Library of the MBC, Chichiri-Blantyre, recorded August 30, 1981)

Text:

Anthu abodza ali Kachamba wafa (2×)
Ndilekeni ine ndili ndekha ine (2×)
Ngati pali mau mungonena!
Musamakankhile anzanu kumanda! (2×)
Oh mwalephera oh mwalephera. (3×)

Translation:

People who tell lies say Kachamba is dead (2×)
Leave me alone, I am alone myself (2×)
If you have something to say, just speak it out! (2×)
Do not push your friends into the graveyard! (2×)
Oh, you have failed [done wrong], oh, you have failed [done wrong]. (3×)

Explanation by Daniel: In 1981 I went to Chingale in Zomba District to give a concert. I stayed there for two weeks. For these two weeks there was no announcement in the radio so that people should know where I was. Now those who make rumors started to tell others that Kachamba was dead. After these two weeks of my concert tour, when I came back to Blantyre, reaching my house in Ndirande, I found many people coming to me and among them

some were crying. They thought I was coming back from the graveyard. So I asked them: “Why are you crying?” They said: “We have been told by others that you are dead.” As those rumors made their round through the whole of Malaŵi I could not manage to tell each and every one by mouth that I was alive. That is why I composed this song and recorded it for the MBC instead of announcing that I was still alive. This is how I have made them feel ashamed. (From Daniel Kachamba’s manuscript, at Singano village, Chileka, September 1983)

(4) “Matsoka” (“Bad Luck”) (recordings in the Library of the MBC, Chichiri-Blantyre, recorded August 30, 1981)

Text:

Mudzafela panjira.
Mowa wanuwu mudziumwa ndi nzeru.
Ntima uli m’ malo (2×)
Ndinkayesa ndakwatila
komanso ayi, ndaonjezera matsoka
Ndingosiya ndi ineyo!

Translation:

You will die on the road [in a street].
This your beer, you had better drink it with restraint.
Keep your heart settled (2×)
I thought I was married
But no, I have only increased the bad luck
I had better leave this!

Explanation by Daniel: The wife of a certain man was drinking too much. Whenever she went to drink beer far away from her home, on her way back from there, when she got tired because of the beer, she just used to sleep in the street, failing to walk. So the husband tried to advise her, saying: “You had better drink slowly [with restraint] and not too much,” but she could not understand. The husband was just speaking in his own heart, he did not pronounce it really by his mouth. What he said to himself in his heart was this: “I thought I had married, but I have only increased my bad luck. I had better leave her!”

I asked that man when I saw him: “Why do you look so thin?” And he said: “I am thinking about my wife for what she is doing.” And he told me what his idea about this case was. He said to me that he would like to divorce. This made me compose this song in order to advise others who might be found in a similar situation. (From Daniel Kachamba’s manuscript, at Singano village, Chileka, September 1983)

(5) “*Miseche*” (“Scandals; backbiting”) (two recordings: [a] in the Library of MBC, Chichiri-Blantyre, August 30, 1981; [b] orig. tape J 14, recorded by Donald Kachamba, July 11, 1983: collection Kubik/Malamusi, Vienna)

Text:

Ndimati ndikhale nawo
Koma palibe khalidwe.
Anthu apano miseche. (2×)
Ngati pali mau amachita chokamba
musamadikile mukakhuta mowa! (2×)
Siizo lelo mwazona?
Musiye miseche. (2×)

Translation:

I wanted to stay with them here
But this is no good place for living.
The people of here are full of scandal. (2×)
If there are problems it is better to discuss
Don't wait until you get drunk with beer! (2×)
Is it not this what you are seeing today?
You should stop the scandals.

Explanation by Daniel: This song concerns villagers, what often happens in the village. People like scandals very much. When they see you with something that is strange to them, they become jealous. They think that it is not good that someone else should have that thing, but they themselves should have it. They don't like anyone to eat well or to dress well. So in order to get rid of those people who are making *miseche*, it is better for you to change the place of living and stay somewhere else.

Those people who make *miseche*, when they want to say something bad to you they first have to go and drink beer. When they get drunk, then they come to you and start shouting and say something bad into your face. When they are sober, they just talk bad about you in your absence [backbiting]. They would not dare to say it into your face.

In this song I am trying to advise people who are doing so to discuss any problems openly, because scandals can kill a person. If someone wants to kill someone else, he will not declare it openly, because he is afraid to do so. If you go to someone and say: “such and such a person was insulting you,” and from there to go to the other one again, saying that “he or she was insulting you,” the result will be fighting between the two. These are the results of *miseche*.

I composed this song in 1981 when I saw people fighting because of *miseche*. (From Daniel Kachamba's manuscript, at Singano village, Chileka, September 1983)

(6) “*Kunyoza*” (“To Despise”) (recordings in Library of the MBC, Chichiri-Blantyre, August 20, 1981)

Text:

Leader : Mukakhala ndi chuma musamanyoze anzanu pa mudzi!

Chorus: Nsamapemphe tsoka Chauta adzakulangani!

L.: Ngati mwaledzera nsatukwane anzanu pamudzi!

Ch.: Mudzasimba tsoka m'malo moti mudzasimbe mwai. (2×)

Translation:

If you are wealthy, do not despise your neighbors in the village!

Don't invite bad luck, God will blame you!

If you are drunk, do not insult your neighbors in the village!

You will spell out bad luck instead of spelling out good luck. (2×)

Explanation by Daniel: There are some people in the villages, when they have much property they tend to insult or despise others, who are poor. These people, if you pray to God very much, it may happen that next time they will be poorer than you are now. Then they will no longer laugh at you. This is how God may take away somebody's property. In this song I am just trying to advise people who are acting like this, not to despise others. (From Daniel Kachamba's manuscript, at Singano village, Chileka, September 1983)

(7) “*Bodza*” (“Lies”)

Moya A. Malamusi indicates that this song was also recorded by the MBC, Chichiri-Blantyre, and should therefore be found in the archives of the radio station.

Text:

Ngati m'bodza yee anzanga ndilo mudzanke nalo (2×)

Paja munkati mowa wasenga ndi matope

Ndipo ndi chakudya cha nkumba (2×)

Lelo muli pakachasu,

kukongola mowa, chuma chija chatha. (2×)

Translation:

If it is lies, my friends, that's what will kill you (2×)

You remember that you said that *masese* beer was mud

And that it was a pig's food (2×)

And now today you are found on *kachasu* [distilled alcohol],

drinking beer on credit. The wealth you had is now finished. (2×)

Explanation: There was no chance to write down an explanation for the meaning of this song in 1983, when Daniel dictated the text to me. Moya A. Malamusi offers the following interpretation:

There are people who behave in a particular way when they have money. For example, after having returned from WENELA, when they see other men drinking *masese* [millet beer] they say: “We don’t drink that, we only drink Carlsberg, *masese* is good for pigs.” After some time, however, when the money is finished, they go and drink the cheap *kachasu* [locally distilled alcohol] even on credit from the women who brew it. (Personal communication, September 22, 1988)

WENELA is the local pronunciation of the acronym W.N.L.A. (Witwatersrand Native Labour Association), a South African organization in those days that recruited workers for the South African mines.

(8) “Musamandizunze” Saba-saba (recorded orig. tape no. A 201/5, in Ndirande, September 3, 1983. Published on the CD *Central African Guitar Song Composers*, item 21, Schmidhofer ed., 2010)

Text:

Musamandizunze!
mudzapita nane,
koma ndidzatsala ndekha ku manda.
Imfa ndi nkhondo.

Translation:

Don’t torture me [like a slave]!
You will come with me,
But I will remain alone in the graveyard.
Death is a war.

Explanation: The meaning of this song also was not explained by Daniel Kachamba himself. Moya is of the opinion that it is based on something like *mwambi* (a proverb). It castigates people who treat someone badly, especially if the man is poor and therefore defenseless. Then the man says to himself: “If you treat me badly, your treatment will accompany me up to the graveyard, but there in the graveyard you will leave me and go back; there I will remain alone.” The idea is that torture does not continue forever. Torture “accompanies” the victim up to the moment of death. Then it is over. “*Imfa ndi nkhondo*” (Death is a war) is also proverbial and meant as a reminder that anyone could die at any moment. (Personal communication, September 22, 1988)

Daniel Kachamba's Published Works

Daniel Kachamba's unexpected death in 1987 has not only been a shock for his friends, but it has also deprived us of seeing and hearing more of the music by one of Africa's foremost guitar composers. Fortunately, some of his compositions have been well documented in recordings, with the exception of songs such as "*Kuchona bambo*," performed in 1978, of which no recording has been traced so far. However, very few film or video recordings of Daniel's performances seem to have survived, particularly of his later period. We are grateful to have the two films in the *Encyclopaedia Cinematographica*, Göttingen, but I know how tiresome the preparations of camera positions, angles, and light conditions can be. Studio conditions would wear down Daniel's patience, and his energy and humor would be restored only from the moment he stepped outside into the street. What we greatly miss is comprehensive cinematographic coverage of stage performances by Daniel Kachamba, the only context in which his personality, in response to a cheerful audience, became fully operational. In particular, his last four to five years onstage, with the "metric style" and many more important innovations, have remained virtually undocumented. Private video footage may exist, however, in scattered locations, and it seems of vital importance that they be centrally stored and preserved.

This is a list of Daniel's published works:

- (1) LP record *The Kachamba Brothers Band*, AEL Series Phonographics no. 1, *Acta Ethnologica et Linguistica* Nr. 17, Verlag E. Stiglmayr, Föhrenau/Wien 1972. With booklet in English. Originally published by the Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia, P.O. Box 30900, Lusaka, Zambia.
- (2) Two 16 mm films, magnetic sound, shot in 1972 at the Institute for Scientific Cinematography, Göttingen, Germany: *Encyclopaedia Cinematographica* E 2136 (*Daniel Kachamba's Guitar Songs*) and E 2137 (*Daniel Kachamba's Solo Guitar Music*). Published in 1977. These have been transferred onto DVD. Available from: Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film, Nonnenstieg 72, D-37075 Göttingen, Federal Republic of Germany; in the United States from: Pennsylvania State University, Audiovisual Services Division, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA. Copies in the possession of the Information Department, Lilongwe, Malawi.
- (3) Several 45 rpm records published by the now defunct Nzeru Records Company, Ginnery Corner, Blantyre, Malawi, in the 1970s:
SOM 17 "*Panjira*"/"*Chileka 14*"
SOM 36 "*Mtundu watha*"/"*Kuutsanza mtima*"
SOM 37 "*Anganga*"/"*Mabvuto ndi maliro*"

SOM 44 “*Chibale pa mowa*”/“*Kunamiza Mulungu*”

SOM 45 “*Mulendo ndi mame*”/“*Musanditaye anzanga*”

SOM 46 “*Masautso*”/“*Nkhani za m’banja*”

By luck, some of these may be found in private collections.

- (4) “*Mawrong-wrong*,” double-step, recorded by G. Kubik in Blantyre, March 1967 (orig. tape no. 4/item 10), published on Cassette II, side 2, item 53 in Simon (ed.) 1983.
- (5) Cassette and booklet, *Afro Africa*, with recordings of Daniel Kachamba’s solo tour to Germany in 1984. (Available from the producer: Roland Voilt, Ammergasse 26, D-72070 Tübingen, Germany)
- (6) *Daniel Kachamba Memorial Cassette. Kaseti ya nyimbo za chikumbutso cha Malemu Daniel Kachamba*. 20 musical pieces performed by Daniel Kachamba. Selected by Donald Kachamba from unpublished historical recordings, 1967–1983. Editor: Mitchel Strumpf. Commentary: Gerhard Kubik. Text transcriptions and translations: Gerhard Kubik and Donald Kachamba. A publication by the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, University of Malaŵi.
- (7) Three musical pieces, “*Vula matambo*,” “*Anifa Love Me*” and “*Anifa Waiting for Me*” (recordings made by M. Djenda and G. Kubik in Malaŵi, 1967), published on the double album MC 15. Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin (see Kubik and Malamusi 1989).
- (8) Cinematographic footage of four of Daniel Kachamba’s compositions published on the DVD *African Guitar*, 1995 (Vestapol 13017), available from Stefan Grossman’s Guitar Workshop. P.O. Box 802, Sparta, New Jersey 07871, U.S.A. These are the four titles and their year of recording: “*Dolosina Lumba*” (1967) “*Mimi kwenda Nairobi*” (1967), “*Dzana lija tinali tonse*” (1980) and “*N.C.*” (1983).
- (9) Five musical pieces, “*Vulamambo*” (1967), “*Dumbo*,” “*Amamwalakwa*,” “*Musamadizunze*” and “*Plain Jive*” (recorded 1983), published on the CD *Central African Guitar Song Composers*, Schmidhofer ed., 2010.

In addition to the late Daniel Kachamba’s published work, some two hundred unpublished recordings and several unpublished films (16 mm color) also exist. Most of this material can be found in the following major collections:

- Recordings and 16 mm films by Gerhard Kubik and Maurice Djenda in Malaŵi, 1967. Copies of the recordings are preserved in the Musikethnologische Abteilung, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin. The films are preserved in Private Archive Malamusi/Kubik, Vienna.
- Recordings by Gerhard Kubik with various team members, 1972 (Malaŵi, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Austria, Federal Republic of Germany), 1976 (Tanzania), 1982 and 1983 (Malaŵi). Private Archive Malamusi/Kubik, Vienna.

- Recordings by Arthur Benseler and acquaintances in 1972, 1978 and 1984 in the Federal Republic of Germany, preserved in the Afrika-Haus Arthur Benseler, Freiberg a.N., Federal Republic of Germany.
- Recordings made and held by the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), Chichiri-Blantyre, Malawi.
- Unpublished 16 mm color film, shot at the Afrika-Haus Arthur Benseler, Freiberg a.N., in 1972 for the Süddeutscher Rundfunk, Stuttgart. This film contains performances of “I’m a Beggar Man” and “High *Sinjonjo*,” supplemented by some explanation about the history of the music.
- Cinematographic footage of a performance at the Grazer Kunstmarkt, Graz (Austria), 29/30 September, 1972, by Austrian Television (ORF) and in the Vienna studios.
- Some recordings are preserved at the Deutsche Welle (Voice of Germany), Cologne. Others are preserved by the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Graz. Besides, there are several television and radio stations that may have recordings and cinematographic footage.

Chapter X

African Space/Time Concepts and the *Tusona* Ideographs in Luchazi Culture

In April 1981 I was invited by the Folklore Department of Indiana University, Bloomington, to participate in its African Studies Lecture Series, whose general theme was “African Dimensions of Time.” Ruth Stone, who organized my trip and stay in Bloomington marvelously, wrote to me on October 27, 1980, explaining the series’ objectives: “We will attempt to explore concepts of time in African experience as a fundamental aspect of folklore, music, art, religion, history, and other areas of the humanities. We invite you to explore how African music provides insight into the temporal dimensions and may provide a key to understanding the broader organization of experience in African life.”

The suggested topic gave me some headaches at first, and although I accepted the invitation and committed myself to probing this set of questions, I was worried that a concept such as time was to be explored cross-culturally. How would this concept of “time” translate into African languages, and into musical practice, since—so far as I was able to remember—none of my teachers in Africa, neither Evaristo Muyinda in Uganda, nor Kufuna Kandonga in Angola, nor Donald Kachamba in Malaŵi, had ever used a word such as “time” in their own language with reference to music? The point of departure seemed to be that the research problem was conceptualized in English, while the responses were expected to come from verbal (and possibly non-verbal) testimonies by speakers of African languages.

Another point which seemed to emerge from the topic indirectly was a kind of assumption that we may expect the results of structural and/or conceptual analysis of one culture complex, e.g. African music, to give us a key to the understanding of broader behavior, experience and organization, e.g. “African life.” Over the years, I have been reluctant to go along enthusiastically with the idea that expressions or forms of behavior detected by observers in one realm of a culture must be paralleled in another. Alan Lomax (1968:161–69), for example, seemed to believe that different types of multi-part organization in a musical style reflect the social structure of the communities concerned. He treated “instrument variety” and performance conditions in a similar manner:

An earlier version of some parts of this chapter was published in the journal *African Music* 6 (4), 1987, pp. 53–89.

The key to understanding the performance situation, however, and its relationship to social structure is to be found in the social organization of the singing group . . . we have already discovered that the relation between leader and led in song performance varies directly not only with societal complexity . . . but, more specifically, with the level of political complexity. (Lomax 1968:155)

The problem here is that data are correlated not with data but with abstractions such as “societal complexity” and “political complexity,” whose relevance in the comparative study of cultures is not guaranteed.

The Time Concept in Eastern Angolan Cultures

In order to avoid being trapped in this problem from the start, it seemed advisable first to narrow the geographical extent of the discussion from “Africa” to one relatively homogeneous culture area. I chose an area which I know well from repeated field trips: G. P. Murdock’s Cluster 13 (“Lunda”) in eastern Angola/north-western Zambia, where Chokwe, Luvale, and Bantu languages of the so-called Ngangela group, such as Luchazi, Mbunda, Mbwela, Nkhangala, Lwimbi, etc., are spoken. Second, I realized that “space” and “time”—when viewing the matter from an external standpoint, and one does so from the moment one uses the English words—are convertible in Bantu languages to such a degree that concepts in either sphere may be represented by the same particle; i.e. the “locative” prefixes are equally “temporal” indicators. Under these circumstances it seemed advisable to treat the Western concepts of “space” and “time” as a merger so that one may more adequately call the “locative” prefixes “locative/temporal,” thus opening up a path for studying equivalents or synonyms in both the visual and the aural aspects of the expressive culture.

For a start, we may discuss what has been referred to as the “time concept” in Ngangela culture on the basis of what is conceptualized in the language. No one is perhaps more qualified to be quoted on this subject than Emil Pearson, who lived in south-eastern Angola since the 1920s and published a unique inside account of Ngangela culture in his books *People of the Aurora* (1977) and *Tales of the Aurora* (1984).

Pearson hints at the synonymy of “time” and “space” (“place”) in Ngangela thinking as reflected in the language. And like me he seems to be reluctant to project Western notions of “time” directly onto a culture so different from the western European, although he then attempts to dilute the dilemma of cross-language incommunicability by improvising philosophically with the word “time.” In a short section entitled “The Time Concept,” he writes:

In the Ngangela language there is no word, as far as I know, for “time” as a continuous, flowing passage of events or the lack of same. Time is experiential or subjective, that is, it is that which is meaningful to the person or thing which experiences it. Time and space are cognate incidents of eternity. The same word is used for both “time” and “space” (the latter in the sense of “distance”). “Ntunda” can either express meaningful time or meaningful space. For example: “Ntunda kua i li” — “There is some distance”; and, “Ntunda i na hiti” — “Time has passed.” Another word, “Ntsimbu” (or “Simbu”), expresses the thought of “definite time.” The related verb, “Simbula,” means “delay,” the thought being of awaiting “meaningful time.” To the European the African may seem to be idling away useful time, whereas the latter, according to his philosophy, is awaiting experiential time, the time that is right for accomplishing his objective.

“Time” is locative, something that is virtually concrete, not something abstract. The locatives “Ha,” “Ku” and “Mu” are used for expressing “time” as well as “place.” Example: “Ha katete” — “In the beginning” (as to either time or place); “Ku lutue” can mean either “in front” or “in the future.” “Mu nima” can mean “behind” as to place, or “after” as to time. (Pearson 1977:30)

Neither of the terms *ntunda* and *ntsimbu* appear in Ngangela descriptive vocabulary with relation to music except the verb *kusimbula* (to delay), which may appear, as it does in words of similar meaning in other African languages, in connection with tempo and speed coordination in a performance group. A musical trainee on the drum (*chipwali*) may “delay” his strokes as a consequence of inexperience and thus be behind the others. In musical conversation the word *kusimbula* is then used for correcting him.

Conversely, the locative prefixes *ha* and *ku* are normally used for pointing out different playing areas on musical instruments, i.e. tapping areas on a drum skin, spots on a slit drum or individual lamellae on lamellophones, and more rarely with “temporal” implications, as when something has gone wrong in group teaching of a new song and the leader wants the group to repeat the song from the point (in time) where the mistake occurred.

Neither *ntunda* nor *ntsimbu* is used in reference to “musical time,” i.e. “measures,” “time-signatures,” etc., concepts which seem to be totally foreign to the musical cultures of the Ngangela group of peoples. Even what is now widely called a “time-line” pattern, since Kwabena Nketia first used the term in the 1960s, is identified in Ngangela culture only by the syllables used for teaching it, and in the case of the 16-pulse time-line pattern also by the name of the dance with which it is associated: *kachacha*. Phonetic and structural analysis of such mnemonics can only confirm that there is strict “time” in east-

ern Angolan music, but this observation is hooked into the European notion of “time”: *ntunda* or *ntsimbu* do not come into the picture. The differences in conceptualization are obvious.

A similar situation is found in the realm of visual perception, when it comes to analyzing ornamental structures (as found on artifacts) in the same culture. While the locative/temporal prefixes are used in abundance in discussions by the relative craftsmen, there is no term in the Ngangela languages equivalent in its semantic field with the notion of “space” either. On the other hand, the apparent ambiguity in the “locative” prefixes seems to be corroborated—as long as one maintains the same external standpoint—in parallel principles of construction in the visual and aural realms. With this observation, touching on the central topic of this chapter, the obstacles to a satisfactory analysis are, however, not overcome. The first problem thereby created is that analogies or identities in construction principles across the two realms seem to be discernible only from an external (“etic”) standpoint, and that they are dependent on the notion that “time” can be represented visually in “space.”

Is There a Universal Experience of Space/Time?

It is likely that the experience of “space” and “time” as synonymous or, more precisely, syncretic is universal in the sense that distance may be understood as either spatial or temporal, thereby making spatial distance which is visually perceptible able to be used to symbolize the experience of temporal distance. Graphic representation of “temporal distance” in the form of a spatial layout of symbols, however, may well be culture specific, as much as depth perception in pictures seems to be. In western European cultures it is customary to represent measured time graphically through measured space, implying that both realms are experienced as analogous and connected through the notion of distance. In other cultures, e.g. in the *tusona* tradition of writing ideographs in the sand as found among the peoples of eastern Angola, an event may be represented as movement counter-clockwise through a layout of equally spaced dots encircled by lines returning to their origins. This is the case, for example, in the ideograph “*Vamphulu*” (“The Gnus”; see Fig. 54, later in this chapter) representing four gnus in the forest startled by gunshots. The first says: “*Pi!*” (“Listen! I have heard the shot of a gun!”) The second says: “*Vika?*” (“What is it?”) The third: “*Vantu.*” (“It is people. They are killing each other again.”) The fourth: “*Tutinyenu!*” (“So, let us run away!”)

Human experience is anchored in a central awareness of something we call “self” or “ego.” In the first dimension of this experience, ego appears as if it were positioned on a straight, infinite line extending from itself in two opposite directions; for convenience we may refer to them as left and right. Ego cannot leave the line, and it does not occupy any definite position that could be

pinpointed because in both directions the line extends into infinity (or appears to do so); also; ego is infinitely small.

This dimension could be termed: our primary awareness of oppositional directions. In the second dimension of human space/time experience, this primary directional awareness (i.e. “left” versus “right” or its conceptual counterparts) is combined with an analogous experience added to the first, thereby defining ego’s position: a second line seems to cross the first one, passing through ego at any possible variation of an angle of [$>0^\circ$; $<90^\circ$], resulting in ego’s awareness of a plane. The concepts “left” and “right”—if so verbalized—may then appear in combination, for example, with the conceptual pair: “in front” and “behind.”

These four concepts—in whichever way they are named in specific languages—are then further expanded in a third dimension of human experience, with ego still the central reference point: the awareness of “up” and “down,” generating the three-dimensional framework we seem to be so familiar with: space.

And yet up to this juncture, the subjective universe outlined thus far is static, motionless. Ego occupies a virtual position within a three-dimensional expanse, at an indefinite crossing point of the first, second and third directional dimensions, while paradoxically, ego in itself is non-dimensional. Within such a framework ego cannot move, cannot change its position.

Ego’s movement comes about only as the expression of an interface with a fourth dimension: the one we call “time.” The experience of space is expanded to include a fourth determinant, which—in human intuitive perception—seems to be autonomous: time. Thereby the system becomes dynamic. Movement as an experience can only exist in space within time, and therefore is intrinsically an expression of a four-dimensional universe. Ego remains the central, non-dimensional reference-unit, a somewhat eerie existence, itself the result of an interface between the four dimensions, with ego apparently moving along a time line that is too abstract to be imagined. So humans often conceptualize time by analogy to spatial images. In many cultures—and it is here that cultural factors begin to play a role—the past is “behind” and the future is “in front” of ego. With the present conceptualized as a “point” that is infinitely small, and in a sense simply identical with ego, the past is conceptualized as a space that expands behind ego’s back, and the future as an expanse lying ahead. To explore the past, one can turn one’s head and “look back.” We experience a state in which we believe to be perpetually moving forward, however slowly, into something we call the future, although at times we may feel that we stand still for a while. Some people in some cultures have a linear concept of moving into the future. My colleague from Malaŵi, Moya Aliya Malamusi, told me that he has a circular idea of the year and, by extension, of movement into the future.

While the subjective experience of a four-dimensional space/time continuum is probably universal in humans, it can be culturally modified by the way

it is verbalized. For example, the spatial interpretation of the concept “future” as an area in front of us is variable cross-culturally. There is also evidence of ambivalence in some cultures. For example, one can refer to a future event by pointing to “what will follow.” In Cinyanja, the language spoken in Malaŵi, eastern Zambia and parts of central Moçambique, the following sentence is almost a standard phrase encountered in many personal letters: “*Kunena zaiŵe tonse tili bwino, sindikudziwa pambuyo pa kalatayi*” (“As concerns us we are all well, but I don’t know how it will be after this letter”). The implication is that the letter just completed by the writer is in itself an event occupying a position on the time line while possible future events are in attendance. They may come “afterwards,” when this particular event is concluded. Therefore a possible future event, at least in this case, is not experienced as *kutsogolo* (in front, in the future), but as a follow-up of the present, as something that will arrive at ego’s position a little later.

Many languages possess spatio-temporal concepts that are integrative. This may have resulted historically from the fact that in some culture areas, one of the universal human experiences is considered particularly important: that both space and time are connected by the concepts of direction and distance. Mathematically, this is expressed in the idea of the vector. In a three-dimensional Cartesian system, the vector may point left, right, up, down, etc., while its length symbolizes a quantity that has “elapsed”! There is the concept of measurable distance in both space and time. Distances are experienced in an analogous manner. In space or time, distances between objects or events can be described as “far” or “near,” and movement through space/time can be described in terms of speed, with its derivatives of acceleration and dilatation. Distance can be broken rationally into units of measurement aligned equidistantly (see the points in a *kasona* ideograph).

Thus, space/time has several conceptual derivatives: direction, distance, measure and equidistance. It is inseparably linked to these, because space/time is experienced as filled with objects or events. We cannot conceptualize space/time without anything; even when we believe that we have done so, we have only filled it up with the word “empty” or other images. Space/time as such is not conceivable. The only idea that transcends these derivative concepts is Werner Heisenberg’s principle of non-locality. In the subjective world, however, non-locality actually applies to only one entity: ego, the central non-dimensional reference-unit. Consciousness in any creature, i.e. any circuit without exit, human or animal or machine, is by definition non-local. In dreams we experience non-locality in some form through the virtual realities suggested by our brain’s activity.

Distance refers to the relative and comparative positions of objects/events, while direction refers to the changes of these positions. An interesting aspect of direction is that it can be mirror inverted: left–right can become right–left, up–down can become down–up. Mirror inversion is also an important cul-

tural variable with regard to any kind of movement. For example, clocks in the West have hands that move in a direction considered so natural by most westerners that such movement is called clockwise. A circle dance can be structured so that the dancers move clockwise. In sub-Saharan Africa, this is very rare. Normally, people move counter-clockwise, a famous exception being the *ngwaya* dance among the -Pangwa of south-western Tanzania. A more recent exception is the highly agitated movement style of Zioni religious groups in south-east Africa. Characteristically, they change direction in the middle of their circular performance. Counter-clockwise movement is suggested by many items of African visual art; besides some *tusona* ideographs from Angola, it is also suggested by the rainbow snake *aido hwedo*, one of the *vodu* spirits among the Fõ of ancient Dahomey, as depicted for example in a mural of the palace of the former kings of Dahomey in Abomey (now

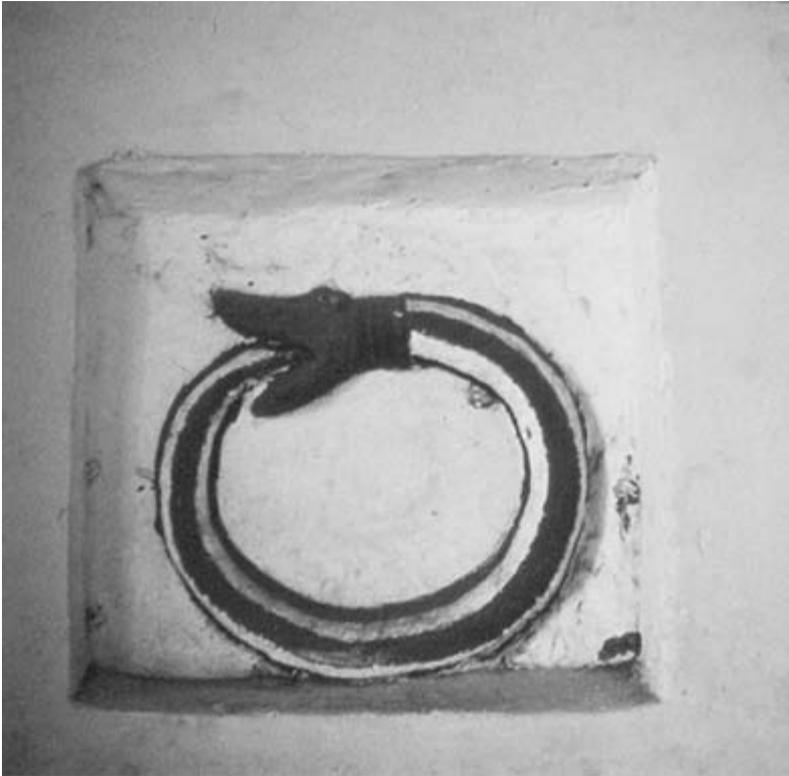


Photo 54. *Aido hwedo*—the *vodu* (transcendental being) imagined as the Rainbow Snake, an Uroborus figure prominent in the symbolic world of the religion of the Fõ, Dahomey, West Africa. In Abomey, August 13, 1960.—Photo: author.



Photo 55. *Kalunga*—symbol of infinity, modelled with black ooze as a snake, to be shown to initiates of the *mungongi* secret society, inside the enclosure. In Chief Kayoko's village, area of Kwitu-Kwanavale, south-eastern Angola, August 1965.—Photo: author.

République du Benin). Left-directedness is also characteristic of the snake figure called *kalunga* (infinity) found in the secret *chipango cha kalunga* (Kalunga's enclosure) constructed during the *mungongi* initiation rites among Mbwela-/Nkhangala-speaking peoples in south-eastern Angola.

The *Tusona* Graphic Tradition

For my lecture on April 15, 1981, in the Distinguished Alumni Hall at Indiana University, I chose a specific topic: "Space/time relationships in *tusona* ideographs," dealing with my field studies in north-western Zambia and eastern Angola. Although I had mentioned before that spatial relationships in the *tusona* ideographs seem to be equivalent to temporal relationships in some kinds of African music, I did not elaborate further for some of the reasons given above, and promised Professor Ruth Stone to do so in the future after some more reflection.

Tusona (sing. *kasona*) is the name in Luchazi, one of the languages of the Ngangela group, and can be regarded as a tradition of ideographic writing. They constitute a method of expressing ideas by means of a limited number of graphemes and their constellations in a space/time continuum. The graphic configurations of *tusona* are of specific characteristics and style, usually drawn with the fingers on a plane of white sand. *Tusona* may also appear on house walls and, more rarely, on objects.

Traditionally the writing of *tusona* was one of the social pastimes of men, normally elders (*vakuluntu*) in their forties and fifties. *Tusona* are drawn during leisure-time gatherings in the *ndzango*, i.e. the round, thatched assembly pavilion which can be found in every village of this culture area. The *ndzango* is a “hut” without closed walls, open on the sides. It is normally located in the center of a village or group of houses. It is a most important place of social encounter in a Luchazi village, representing the male community, as opposed to the *ntsenge* (often translated as “kitchen”), where the women come together for their own activities and gossip. *Ndzango* is the place where important news is communicated, where stories are told, where disputes are settled, where strangers are first received by the village headman when they enter a village, where the blacksmith may do his work, where men sit together to discuss, work, rest or play games. It is accessible from several sides, and in the middle there is a fireplace, often with blacksmith’s equipment nearby, such as bellows.

The drawing of a *kasona* may begin without any particular instigation, as long as a sufficient number of people are together with one or two experts present. Millet beer (*vwalwa vwa masangu*) may be passed round, and then someone suddenly begins to draw, with all the others looking on quietly until he finishes and begins to explain the meaning of the drawing. Expert drawers of *tusona* were often rewarded in the past with free millet beer. Sometimes the figures are drawn outside the *ndzango*, where it is not so dark and where the white sand may be less mingled with charcoal. In some ways these elderly men’s activities parallel youngsters’ social activities such as riddling, or storytelling among members of all age-groups.

We may categorize some of these configurations in English as ideographs, others as pictographs. The content and meaning of the *tusona* are philosophical, and they serve the community as both entertainment and a store of abstract ideas about some of the people’s most central institutions. They represent a written symbolic record of deep structures in the cultural heritage. They are drawn to convey to the community ideas about existing institutions, and to stimulate fantasy, abstract logical thinking and even meditation. A *kasona* conveys an idea about an object, a situation or a constellation of things or events. The mood radiated by *tusona* is reflective, witty, often enigmatic. Sometimes the essentials of a narrative are visualized in an abstract manner.

In a sense, *tusona* are something like a traditional library of esoteric subjects and experience among the -Luchazi, -Chokwe and related peoples in the

culture area concerned. However, they are strictly ephemeral—because they are wiped off soon after production—and it is, therefore, difficult to assess how old the tradition is. Although largely obsolete today, the tradition was originally shared by the -Chokwe and most of the Ngangela-speaking peoples in the eastern half of Angola, in the Northwestern Province, Zambia, and the Kasai area of Congo, a territory perhaps as large as France. It is certain that *tusona* are pre-colonial.

The (so far) oldest known testimony to the existence of *tusona* in pre-colonial Angola is found in paintings by the 17th-century Italian missionary Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, depicting scenes involving Queen Anna Nzinga of Matamba (cf. the *Manoscritti Araldi*, Bassani 1978; Heintze 1989a:123–26). But only the most basic *kasona*, i.e. with eight dots and one circumscribing line, is seen in some of these paintings on a variety of objects.

Then there is a gap in the available sources until the 20th century. In 1930 Hermann Baumann observed several *tusona* drawn by Chokwe experts in the sand and on a granary (Baumann 1935). From the 1950s, independent observations of *tusona* among the -Chokwe are found in Hamelberger (1951, 1952), followed by dos Santos (1961). More recently, Emil Pearson (1977, 1984) came up with a large collection of *tusona* from Ngangela-speaking experts in south-eastern Angola. He had observed them in the 1920s during his missionary work in Kwandu-Kuvangu and Muxiku Provinces.

Pearson's collection reveals the basic identity of the tradition among Chokwe and Ngangela speakers. With regard to the -Chokwe of north-eastern Angola the most comprehensive account, so far, is by Mario Fontinha, who collected *tusona* in the 1950s. But his book, *Desenhos na areia dos Quiocos do Nordeste de Angola*, only came out in 1983.

My own work on this subject began in 1973 on the Zambian side of the border, in Kabompo District, Northwestern Province, among people who are part of the Eastern Angolan culture area. I was working here predominantly among Luchazi speakers whose grandparents had migrated from Angola to their present area only from the beginning of the 20th century onwards.

My visit in 1973 was the second to Kabompo District, having spent six months with Chief Kalunga of Chikenge village two years earlier, in 1971. My work was carried out in cooperation with the Luchazi oral literature researcher Kayombo kaChinyeka, author of various publications in Luchazi and English (cf. Chinyeka 1973 etc.). During two more, longer, visits to the area in 1977/78 and 1979, I was able to collect most of the material incorporated in my book, first published in 1987. In the same year, my wife, Lidiya Malamusi, her brother the researcher Moya A. Malamusi and I went back to the area in September/October to see what remained of the tradition and make a sync-sound documentary film (no. 75/October 1987; archival copy stored in the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin). Broadly, it is from these experiences that this chapter's discussion of *tusona* ideographs and their structure comes.

There exist several distinctive strains within the *tusona* tradition, each with its own set of graphic symbols. Some are pictographic, while others are highly geometric in layout. The diversity of forms suggests not only that the tradition is very old, but even that several traditions may have merged into one, a fact that is perhaps no longer remembered.

The most common *tusona* consist of a series of regularly laid-out dots which are circumscribed by lines. The resulting configurations may sometimes remind non-Luchazi observers of what is known in western European cultures as a “labyrinth,” also with regard to their noticeable quality of thought-play. In this chapter we only deal with those characterized by a highly geometrical construction, and examine their space/time relationships and the apparent parallels in some kinds of African music.

The Class VI noun *kasona* (pl. *tusona*) comes from the verb *kusona*, which means “to draw,” “to paint” abstract figures using dots, rings, lines and other elements—not only in the sand, but also on house walls and on the human body, for example during initiation ceremonies. The applied form *kusoneka* is also often used in connection with drawing (or writing) the ideographs in sand.

In the relatively homogeneous culture area of eastern Angola, key words such as *kusoneka* and *kutanga*, which are now translated as “to write” and “to read,” existed before the introduction of Western-style alphabetic writing. When colonial schools began to appear in the area, at first on the “British” side (i.e. in present-day north-western Zambia) and then also in Angola, it was no problem for Luvale, Luchazi, Chokwe and Mbunda speakers to use the familiar terms in the new context, writing alphabetical symbols in a paper exercise book or on a blackboard and reading aloud graphically fixed texts during school lessons.

It is revealing to consider the original meanings of the words *kusoneka* and *kutanga* in Luchazi, Luvale and related languages—words that are now generally used for expressing ideas such as “writing a letter” (*kusoneka mukanda*) or “reading a book” (*kutanga mukanda*), the word *mukanda* referring to any paper, cloth or other material carrying a written message, such as a letter, book or exercise book, document, certificate, etc. The original meaning of the word *kutanga* may be approximately conveyed in English by “to recite” (often a historical oral text), or “to speak aloud” in a formal manner. A frequent expression heard in Luchazi is “*kutanga muzimbu*” or “*kuta muzimbu*,” “to recite history,” “to read the news,” to tell what has happened during one’s journey. Someone returning home from a long journey is required to report about it in a formal manner, almost as if reading from a book. The boys in a circumcision school are also taught to recite *muzimbu*. This is called *kutangesa* (to make recite, to teach). Moreover, some of the masked characters (*makisi*) constructed in the circumcision school recite historical texts when arriving in the village, in front of the drums. (Cf. our cinematographic document “*Makisi Dance Performance at Sangombe*,” no. 74/Sept. 19, 1987, Zambia; copy in the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin.)

Since reading in Western-style primary schools in Zambia often begins with the pupils reading aloud in unison, the meaning of the verb *kutanga* was easily extended to include the new practice. It now also includes the silent form of reciting, i.e. when reading a letter or a book. By contrast, the original meaning of the verb *kusoneka* has changed little. It was always understood in the sense of drawing meaningful graphical structures, abstract symbols as opposed to representational drawing. While traditionally these dot and line structures were drawn in sand with the fingers, or in color on walls using a drawing instrument such as a brush, what was added in colonial times was new writing materials—pens, pencils, ball-point pens, paper, blackboard, industrially manufactured chalk (replacing *mphemba*, white kaolin)—and new graphic symbols—the Western alphabet. What has remained stable, however, is the basic concept of writing contained in the verb *kusoneka* and the action expressed by it. The one who draws a *kasona* is called *mukakusona*, i.e. “the one who does” (*muka-*) “draw,” “write” (*kusona*).

The *mukakusona* uses the fingers of his right hand, following strict conventions. He begins his performance by selecting a spot in front of him where the ground is relatively hard and level, like a board. Then he brushes away the layer of loose sand on top of the hard surface with his flat palm, until it is very thin. He begins to draw, while the other men often stop their conversation and watch him attentively. Usually, he does not utter a word during the process, concentrating on the intricacies of what he has to reproduce from memory, and well aware of the fact that many *tusona* are difficult to remember. In many *tusona* two basic modes of action are involved:

- (1) The impressing of dots. These are called *mafundungwino* (sing. *lifundungwino*) or *mafundungwinyo* (sing. *lifundungwinyo*). In the sand they look like little craters or rather—to the Luchazi eye—like the round depressions left by fowl which nest on the ground, such as partridge (*nthento*) or even a chicken, when it wants to lay its eggs. When these fowl leave the spot, a circular depression remains, which is called *lifundungwino*. The dots are like miniature versions of the fowl’s *mafundungwino*. They are pressed in pairs into the sand, the *mukakusona* using his first and third fingers at the same time in parallel movement, working away from his body. When he wants to work sideways, he uses an interesting technique: in order to obtain equal spacing between the basic dots, he only impresses a new dot with one of the two fingers used, while the other one rests on a dot already impressed. Thus, the span between first and third fingers is meticulously preserved and transferred sideways as a measure. For instance, if he has completed a vertical double-column of dots and wants to extend it to the left, he will put his third finger into one of the *mafundungwino* of the left column and impress a new dot with his first finger. This action may then be repeated with the usual movement

away from the body (upwards on the paper), until a third parallel column is completed. If, on the other hand, he wants to extend to the right, he puts his first finger into an “old” *lifundungwino* and impresses a new one with his third finger.

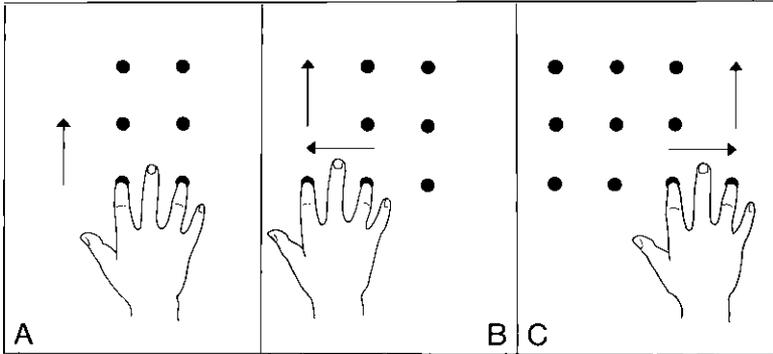


Figure 50. Constructing the basic grid

The result is a basic layout of a specific number of dots according to the character of the *kasona* intended. The method ensures that all the dots are equidistant from one another. Distance is measured by the eye alone, but equal distances are obtained by the consecutive use of the natural span of the first and third fingers. The action of impressing the dots is called *kusona* (to write, to draw), sometimes also *kufunda* (to draw figures).

Next, the basic grid thereby obtained is amended by impressing interlocking dots. This can be done by using either the first and third fingers in the same manner as before, or—as is more common—only the first finger of the right hand. This action is called *kusononwena* (to write between).

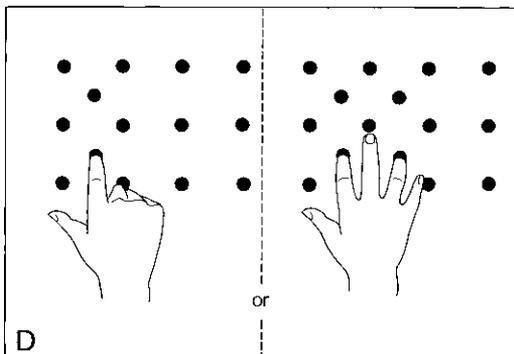


Figure 51. Impression of the interlocking dots

- (2) Lines are then drawn which pass between the dots diagonally, surrounding and circumscribing them in geometrically regular ways. These lines are about as thick as the pad of the index finger of the right hand with which they are drawn. According to one informant, John Mazunga at Katuva, Kabompo District, Zambia, the lines in the *tusona* are called *mifunda* (sing. *mufunda*), a class II noun in Luchazi, which is related to the verb *kufunda*.

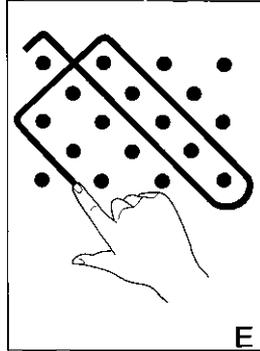


Figure 52. Drawing the lines

This is the basic technique of drawing a *kasona*. We find it applied in most of the ideographs of this tradition. In some figures, however, modified or special techniques may be used. When the *mukakusona* has finished drawing, and in a few instances even while he is still drawing, he begins the verbal explanation (*kulumbununa*) of the ideograph. Sometimes a *kasona* is pictographic and merely represents an animal such as a tortoise or crocodile. In these cases the verbal explanation may be short, often not much longer than the name of the animal itself. In other instances, a *kasona* may visualize in an abstract manner the content of a proverb, in which case the proverb is recited by the *mukakusona* and its meaning explained. Many *tusona* have long narratives or philosophical considerations attached to them. In these cases the *kasona* functions not only as a structural representation of the thought to be expressed, but also as a mnemonic aid.

The meaning of a *kasona* is explained by the “owner,” or *mukakusona*, to the elders assembled in the *ndzango*, who listen attentively and may occasionally comment on the drawing and its explanation. The process of explaining is called *kulumbununa chakasona*. One of the criteria of its effectiveness is that there should be a convincing logical relationship between the structure of the drawing and the explanation from the viewpoint of the cognitive system of the culture which has produced it. It is characteristic of some *tusona* that the logic of a thought may be transformed and remolded into the geometrical logic

apparent in the relations between dots and lines. Many *tusona* have a complex inner geometry. Apart from their function as ideographic carriers of important verbal traditions from one generation to the next, the *tusona* also transmit empirical mathematical experiences. Luchazi mathematics is completely different from Latin/Western mathematical traditions; its geometrical dimension is based not on one grapheme (lines) but on two: dots and lines.

One can get a glimpse of the geometrical complexity of some of these ingenious ideographs by closing one's eyes and trying to reproduce from memory a *kasona* such as “*Kambava wamulivwe*” (“The Hyrax in the Rock”). This was a figure communicated to Mr. Kayombo kaChinyeka and me in July 1973 by the late Mwangana (Chief) Kalunga Ntsamba Chiwaya (1898–1981). We sat down inside the enclosure (*kulilapa*) of his traditional residence in Chikenge, Kabompo District, Northwestern Province, Zambia, and Chief Kalunga drew this figure in the sand.

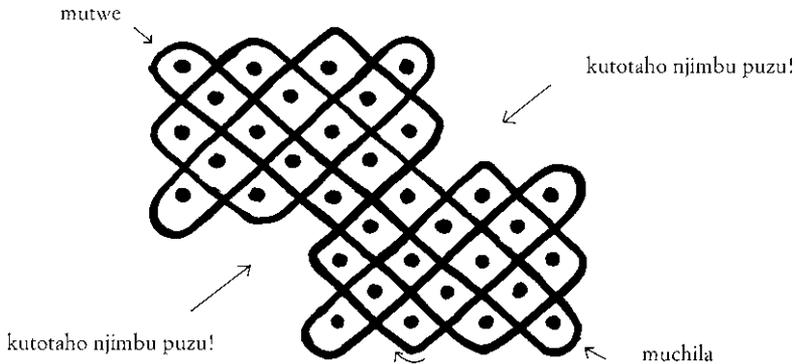


Figure 53. “*Kambava wamulivwe*” (“The Hyrax in the Rock”)

It was six years later before I was able to obtain an explanation of this ideograph from another elder at Chikenge village, Kapokola Chimbau. On July 20, 1979, he let us know that it represented an animal called *kambava* which had died in the rock: “*Kambava kasitu wamumusenge. Wengilile mulivwe. Kumulya mutwe utovala. Kumulya muchila utovala. Wengilile mulivwe. Muvila weni kutotaho njimbu puzu chapolele mulivwe*” (“*Kambava* is a mammal living in the forest. It entered inside a rock. If one eats the head, it tastes very well. If one eats the tail, it tastes very well. It entered inside a rock. Hacking at its body with an axe, *puzu!* A large piece was chopped out! And the corpse decayed in the rock”).

Kambava is a hyrax; that conforms with the description. In the drawing I have identified its parts as the head (*mutwe*) and the tail (*muchila*). The figure has a narrow waist; this is where the hunters who found the animal in the rock

chopped out a piece with the axe (*kutotaho njimbu puzu*). *Kutota* means: to knock, beat, cut out (also a bee's nest, for example). *Puzu* is an ideophone, conveying the idea of breaking up, disintegrating, crumbling.

Although the figurative content projected into this *kasona* by the carriers of the tradition is an important aspect, so is the geometrical or mathematical content. *Tusona* mathematics is the undisclosed knowledge of an expert *mu-kakusona*, the very element which helps him to create surprise and excitement when he draws such a figure, beneath the eyes of the other men in the *ndzango*, at an incredible speed.

In the present figure, 34 dots are laid out in such a manner that it is possible to pass between them with a single line which eventually returns to its starting point. The path of the line is prescribed by mathematical laws, the whole figure thus being absolutely predetermined. (On this question see also my *tusona* book, Kubik 2006.)

When Chief Kalunga drew one more figure for us, “*Vamphulu*” (“The Gnus”), we were startled by its “mandala”-type structure (see Jung 1950, 1974 for Indian and Tibetan mandalas) and by its oscillating quality in which the components may shift in visual perception. One projects easily the faces of four horned animals into this figure, with eyes and mouth clearly marked. But one may also see changing images by associating the lines and dots in one or another manner.

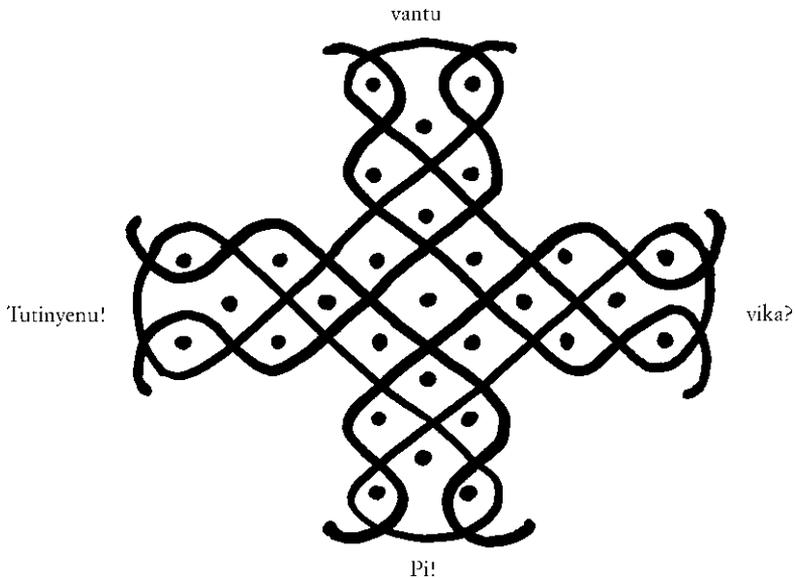


Figure 54. “*Vamphulu*” (“The Gnus”)



Photos 56 and 57. Chief Kalunga beginning to draw the *kasona* of “The Gnus,” Kay-ombo kaChinyeka watching with a notebook in hand. The second picture shows the technique of impressing the basic dots into the sand, using first and third fingers of the right hand. In the chief’s enclosure (*lilapa*), Chikenge village, Kabompo District, north-western Zambia, July 22, 1973.—Photos: author.

With the last line completed by the *mukakusona*, the spectator begins to recognize four faces emerging from the four corners of the figure, each with two eyes, a mouth and two horns; they are the four gnus in the story associated with this *kasona*. Chief Kalunga immediately pointed to the four heads and then explained to us what each of them says, starting at the bottom of the figure and moving his index finger counter-clockwise. The first gnu says “*Mbi!*” then the second one asks “*Vika?*” (“What?”), to which the third one replies “*Vantu*” (“People”) and the fourth one concludes: “*Tutinyenu!*” (“Let us run away!”). These words are shown next to the heads in the figure above. *Mbi*, also often pronounced *pi*, is an ideophone and represents the sound of a gun. This is the story that goes with this ideograph, as told by Chief Kalunga:

Luchazi Text:

Ndzita yezile muchifuti. Kaha ngwavo ineza mukutsiha vantu. Kaha vatinine kumusenge. Kaha muvevwa: Mbi! Ngwavo vuta vene ovwo. Kaha ndzo, ou ngweni: “Vika?” Ngweni: “Njinevu mbi!”—“Ove unevu mbi?”—“Ee.”—Ngweni: “Ange cho njinevu, iii! ngweha vantu.” Ou ngweni: “Vantu?”—“Ee.”—“He! Tutinyenu vovo vene vakwanakutsiha vantu.” Kaha mwatu, hoho havatininine. Kaha vatinina mumusenge, vakayoya.

Translation:

War came to the country. So they [the gnus] said, it has come to kill people. And they ran away into the forest. When they heard the sound *mbi*, they said, That is surely a gun! So then one of them said: “What is that?” The other replied: “I have heard *mbi*.”—“You have heard *mbi*?”—“Yes.”—The third one said: “Me too, I have heard it, terrible! It is like people.”—And this one here said: “People?”—The other one replied: “Yes.”—“Hey! Let us run away, over there they are just killing people.” Then they were off, scattered, in a moment they had run away. So they fled into the forest and survived. (Recording: orig. tape no. A 78/I/1, June 30, 1979. at Chikenge)

This *kasona* may also lead us to some historical questions, since we have by chance one document from Angola showing an identical version drawn perhaps some fifty years earlier: Hermann Baumann photographed it in 1930 as a wall painting in Chokwe-speaking country, north-eastern Angola (Photo 58). Three important facts arise from this photograph:

- (1) Although the lower part of the figure is destroyed, probably washed away by rain, it is clear that the drawing is “*Vamphulu*,” and that it is absolutely identical in shape with the one I obtained from Chief Kalunga in Zambia, 1973.
- (2) The place where it was photographed, although not identified exactly, is several hundred kilometers from where I found the same *kasona* in north-western Zambia.

- (3) The ethnic group in Baumann's research area was -Chokwe; in mine, -Luchazi.

These facts suggest for this particular *kasona* a cross-cultural stability that extends over a wide geographical area and at least half a century, probably much longer. It confirms our impression gathered from informants that the *tusona* tradition must be very old. In spite of the opportunity for creative invention at all times, and some margin of variation, it must have remained essentially stable over long time periods in the eastern Angolan culture area. Further, Baumann's photograph confirms that *tusona*, although normally drawn in the sand, may occasionally be painted on mud walls. This is also confirmed by Marie-Louise Bastin (personal communication), the expert on Chokwe decorative art.

Baumann's photograph, however, reveals one more important detail. When drawing such ideographs on walls, the Chokwe graphic artists, and most likely others, used *mukundu* (red ochre) and *mphemba* (white kaolin). These two colors are conceptualized as opposing forces in Chokwe and Luchazi cosmogony. *Mukundu* is associated with blood, death, etc.; *mphemba* symbolizes luck, rebirth, resurrection. It is most interesting, and clearly visible in the black-and-white photograph, that *mukundu* was used for the dots, and *mphemba* for



Photo 58. The *kasona* "Vamphulu" ("The Gnus") photographed in 1930 as painted on the wall of a *ntsenge* (store, kitchen and fireplace for the women) in Chokwe country, north-western Angola.—Photo: Hermann Baumann. Reproduced from *Lunda* by H. Baumann, 1935.

the lines. Further, it is interesting that the ideograph appears on the wall of a granary, above the fireplace for women, who are not carriers of the tradition—although occasionally a woman may draw *tusona*, as I saw in north-western Zambia. It is difficult to interpret this observation, since Baumann gives scant documentation.

One of the most intriguing Luchazi ideographs is the one called “*Mukanda*” (“The Boys’ Circumcision School”). I recorded it on January 4, 1978, at Chindzombo village, north of Chikenge, Kabompo District, Zambia. It was drawn, and explained simultaneously, by Mose Chindumba, a young man still under 30 years old, who was working as a medical assistant in Zambezi and who had come to Chindzombo to visit his relatives. He had learned it from his father in Zambezi.

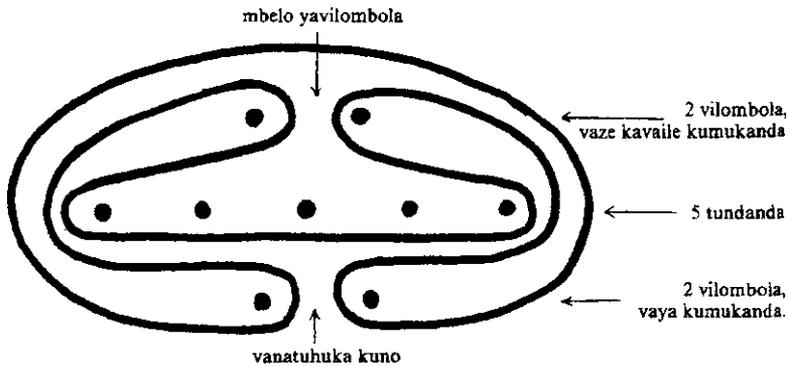


Figure 55. “*Mukanda*” (“The Boys’ Circumcision School”)

Mukánda (speech-tones: --) is the term in Luchazi and related languages for the circumcision school for boys. This is a central institution in the culture of the peoples of eastern Angola, north-western Zambia and southern Congo. The *mukanda* lodge is constructed outside the village, and the newly circumcised boys, who are called *tundanda* (sing. *kandanda*) in Luchazi, *tundanji* (sing. *kandanji*) in Chokwe and Luvale, are kept there in seclusion for several months’ instruction. (See Volume I, Chapter V.)

Mukanda among the -Luchazi starts at the beginning of the dry season, usually in April, May or June, and ends in about October, November or December. The age of the boys to be initiated is usually ca. 6–10 years. It is a pre-puberty school, intended to make the young boys self-reliant, group conscious, and independent of their mothers, in anticipation of their future tasks and roles as members of the society of men.

During his prolonged stay in the lodge, each *kandanda* has a personal guardian (*chilombola*, pl. *vilombola*) who is responsible for his well-being and education. In addition there are assistant guardians, usually adolescents, who per-

form minor tasks. These are called *tulombola-tito* (sing. *kalombola-tito*). An uncircumcised male, i.e. someone who has not been to the *mukanda*, is called *chilima* (pl. *vilima*). This is a depreciatory term, implying that such a person lacks the education which is provided by Luchazi society.

The five dots in the middle of the drawing represent five *tundanda* (initiates), who are in seclusion inside the lodge. The two at the bottom represent two publicly acknowledged *vilombola* (guardians), whose task, among others, is to bring the food, cooked by the boys' mothers in the village, to the boys in the *mukanda*.

The true *vilombola* know where to enter, because they are initiated; they themselves went to a *mukanda* when they were young. In the drawing this is expressed in such a way that the paths of the two acknowledged *vilombola* inevitably lead to the narrow entrance of the *mukanda*, seen at the top of the figure, which I have marked with an arrow as *mbelo yavilombola*. Everyone can comprehend—and this is explained by the “owner” of the *kasona*—that the two dots, if they were movable, could move between the lines encircling the enclosure and reach the entrance without meeting any obstacle on their path.

However, there are also two pretenders, false *vilombola* who have never passed through a *mukanda* school. They are *vilima* (uncircumcised). These are represented by the two dots at the top. Now they also want to carry food to the *tundanda*, and they begin their walk. But being uninitiated, they simply cannot recognize the entrance; they cannot see it. Their path leads out of the area. In the drawing this is expressed such that the paths which could be followed by the two top dots do not lead to the five points in the middle, but out of the enclosure.

Tusona are in many instances complex structures composed of several ideographic elements. It is not so that one sign would express one idea by convention; rather, a set of ideas is expressed by graphemes with distinctive spatial relationships. Individual graphemes forming a *kasona* each have functions and meanings which are variable according to position and context. A dot, for example, can mean a person, an animal or an object, depending on the overall theme; a line can mean a path, a wall, a fence, again depending on context. The graphemes of a *kasona* only obtain their full meaning by configuration over a plane. An alphabetic script and a body of ideographs such as *tusona* represent two completely different approaches to graphic communication and could, therefore, never be related along an evolutionary line. With a *kasona* it is possible to express non-verbal ideas and insights into the intricacies of human experience which are impossible to render by words. The logic of a situation or event, including the logic of laws governing long-established institutions such as *mukanda*, may be transmitted through conversion into graphic logic.

In the *kasona* “*Mukanda*,” audience satisfaction derives mainly from the fact that an axiomatic law of this institution is expressed so perfectly: namely that only someone who has previously graduated can ever freely enter it and





Photo 59a–d. “*Mukanda*” (“The Boys’ Circumcision School”); ideograph drawn in the sand by Moses Chindumba, inside the *ndzango* (assembly pavilion) of Chindzombo village. At Chindzombo village, north of Chikenge, Kabompo District, Zambia, January 4, 1978.—Photos: author.

assume functions, such as that of a *chilombola* (guardian) or *kalombola-tito* (assistant guardian). This is convincingly demonstrated by the graphic logic: there is no path that would allow the uninitiated to reach the *mukanda* entrance. Following the only path available to them, they land outside (*hambandza*).

A precondition to the appreciation of the ideographic message of this *kasona* lies in the knowledge shared by the *mukakusona* and his audience about this central Luchazi institution. Their satisfaction arises from their perception of a “written proof” that those false guardians who have never been to *mukanda*, and therefore do not deserve their title, cannot discover its secrets because they are *vilima* (uncircumcised). The sand figure corroborates by its structure that this is indeed the natural order of things. As if blinded by magic, the false guardians are unable even to recognize the entrance to the enclosure.

In this example it is shown by purely graphical means “why” *vilima* can never assume the functions of *vilombola*, even if they wanted to. The *mukanda* is a world of rigorous laws and carefully balanced behavioral rules, which are inculcated into the initiates by instructions and taboos (*vizila*). One of these is presented in this witty *kasona*.

Tusona ideographs often make the inner—perhaps we should say essential—order in situations, events, institutions and human interactions perceptible to the eye. They take the mind on a trip to unknown dimensions of the psyche. In a number of *tusona*, such a “trip” is assisted by their oscillating visual quality—and the fact that the drawer may be alone. Indications are that new *tusona* were usually invented in solitude, far away from the village, for example by a hunter resting for a while in the shade of a tree, by someone passing time between work hours in the fields (*ku mehya*) or by a long-distance traveller visiting relatives in a remote part of the country. The very nature of *tusona* geometry with its dots and lines gives rise to jigsaw-puzzle effects. As we have seen in “*Kambava wamulivwe*” and “*Vamphulu*,” as soon as one looks at them with a passive, dream-like stare, these points and lines begin to “move”; visual perception begins to group the components into fluctuating patterns. In other words, inherent patterns in many of the *tusona* emerge from a perceptual regrouping process. These patterns then stimulate in the solitary drawer daydream-like associations: trees, people, animals, paths, objects seem to emerge from them. What the *mukakusona* begins to see in those structures is in some way comparable to what a diviner (*mukakutaha*) “sees” in the configuration formed by the little objects in his *ngombo* (divining basket), although the *tusona*, of course, have nothing to do with divination. What the drawer sees he may later share with the *ndzango* community. The other people endorse these associations and drawings with comments when the *mukakusona* explains the meaning of his figure. Usually they agree, admiring his drawing expertise, and say that this is indeed what can be seen in those dots and lines.

Another example of the drawings from which subjective patterns emerge is the *kasona* called “*Tunwenu vwala vwetu*” (“Let Us Drink Our Millet Beer”). Jeremiah Makondo at Chikenge village drew it for us on July 1, 1979. He had almost forgotten it, but we eventually managed to reconstruct it completely.

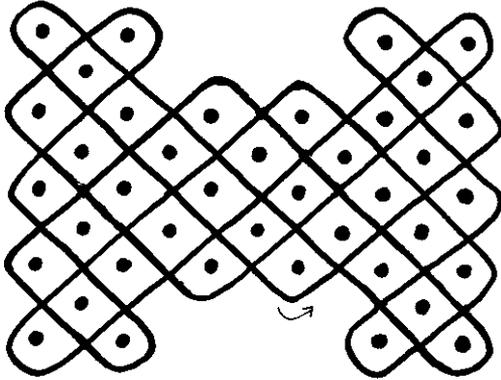


Figure 56. “*Tunwenu vwala vwetu*” (“Let Us Drink Our Millet Beer”) as drawn in the sand by Jeremiah Makondo, about 70 years old at the time. In Chikenge village, July 1, 1979

It is one of those ingenious structures in which a single line circumscribes a complex grid of dots, in this case 40, in an odyssey of paths and finally returns to its starting point. One can see in this drawing two people, one on the left and one on the right, with their hands merged into each other. They are bound together by something, passing something between themselves, or united by a table between them. Drinking millet beer is an important social activity among VaLuchazi men, as it brings people together and promotes discussion. *Vwala* is, therefore, something that would easily come to mind, which could have linked the hands of the two figures. The dots in the middle could, perhaps, be seen as vessels containing beer. From this viewpoint, the interpretation is convincing, and others in the *ndzango* would agree with the *mukwakusona* that two people can be seen in this *kasona* sharing their drinks.

A question of quite a different nature, however, is whether this is the generally accepted explanation. In this particular case it was Kapokola Chimbau, about 60 years old, an expert in storytelling (cf. our film no. 26/1979, archived in the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin), who had explained Jeremiah Makondo’s *kasona* that way. It could be his personal interpretation, i.e. what he himself projected into the figure. But that would in no way diminish the value of his comment. The interpretation of a *kasona* is originally a creative process, and even what may come to be accepted in the course of time as the standard meaning began that way.

The “trip” induced by some of the *tusona* (without the aid of any hallucinogens) can also be regarded as an excursion into the enigma of human existence. There is one *kasona* which was collected independently by two missionaries in eastern Angola, Hamelberger (1951:126) among the TuCokwe and Emil Pearson (1977:25) among the VaLuchazi of Muxiku Province. It is another example of a “mandala”-style figure, as if taken from the pages of Jung’s works on the collective unconscious. It is called “*Kalunga*” (God), according to Hamelberger. Although one may argue (cf. Kubik 1977) whether the Ngangela word *kalunga*, which has many meanings, basically “thunder and lightning,” “rain” and, more specifically, “anything without beginning and end,” “infinity,” etc., can be equated in its semantic field with the concept of a High God, the explanation of the ideograph (*kulumbununa chakasona*) given by Hamelberger and in a way confirmed by Pearson sounds authentic. It has the form of an etiological myth, explaining how human death originated. Hamelberger definitely could not have invented this, although he does not give us the original Chokwe text, only a Portuguese and French translation. The translation evidently embodies some editing in style, although apparently not in content.

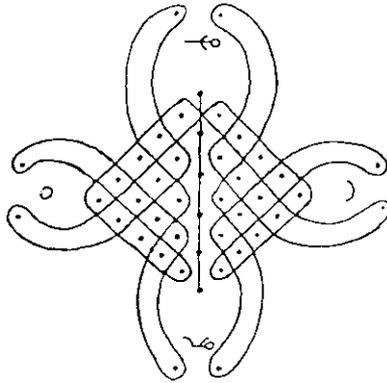


Figure 57. “*Kalunga*” (“God”). Reproduced from Hamelberger 1951:126

The small sign at the top represents *Kalunga* (God), the sign at the bottom Man. The Sun is represented by the disc on the left, the Moon by the sickle on the right. The vertical line linking six central dots represents the path leading to God. All dots forming the basic structure of this *kasona* are circumscribed by a single line, which rejoins itself after a long and complicated journey.

The following story goes with this figure:

Long ago the Sun went to see God to render homage to him. It traveled on and on until it found the path leading directly to God. God received the visitor very well: he gave the Sun a cock for the evening

meal and said: "Come back to see me tomorrow morning before you finally depart!"

The Sun went to sleep somewhere on the way. Very early in the following morning the cock began to crow. The Sun rose at once, went back and presented itself before God. However, God was very surprised and said: "How come, I heard the cock crow in the morning, the one I gave you yesterday for your supper! Didn't you eat it?"—"No, I didn't," replied the Sun,— "All right, you can go your way, but from now on you must present yourself here every day!" It is for this reason that the Sun travels round the Earth and reappears every morning.

The Moon also went to visit God and received a cock. It kept the cock during the following night. Next morning, after the cock had begun to crow, the Moon presented itself again to God, as promised, with the cock under its arm. God said, "You too, you did not eat the cock which I gave you yesterday for your supper! All right, from now on you have to come back here and see me every 28 days!" Is it not precisely what the Moon has been doing until today?

Man in his turn went to visit God. He also received a cock, but since he was very hungry after his long journey, he killed it. One half he ate the same night, while the other half he put aside for his return journey. Next morning the Sun was already high in the sky when Man woke up. He ate what remained of the cock and then took a rest (he did not go to see God). God came and said to him smilingly: "What has happened to the cock which I gave you yesterday evening? I didn't hear it crow this morning." Man began to be frightened and said: "I was very hungry. I killed it. Yesterday evening I ate one half and the other half this morning in order to obtain strength for my return journey." "All right, all right," replied God, "the cock belonged to you. But now listen! You know that the Sun and the Moon also came to me and each of them received a cock like you, but did not kill it. For this reason neither Sun nor Moon will ever die. You who killed the cock will die like it died. And at your death you will come and present yourself again here to me!" (Hamelberger 1951:126, transl. G. Kubik)

Finally, there is one *kasona* which seems to hold the key to an understanding of the structure of most of the geometrical *tusona*. It is the smallest figure in the tradition among those whose dots can be circumscribed by a single line rejoining itself. We collected it from an elderly informant, Sachiteta Kakoma, born in 1914, whom we met at village Kanguya during our excursion to the villages along Katuva river, Kabompo District, Zambia, at the beginning of July, 1979. He had some difficulty responding to our request for *tusona*, since he, like many other elders, said he had forgotten them. After some time, however, he produced "*Katuva-vufwati*" ("The One Who Pierces Intestines")

(Fig. 58), a *kasona* which was also called “*Kangano kanthyengu*” (“The Little Foot-Print of the Roan Antelope”) by another informant in the same place, Benson Muzaza.

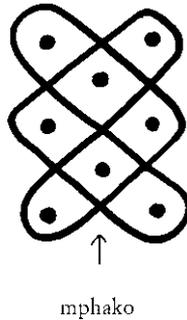


Figure 58. “*Katuva vufwati*” (“The One Who Pierces Intestines”)—the basic geometrical structure from which many *tusona* seem to derive

The word *katuva-vufwati* comes from *kutuva*—“to pierce, bore a hole,” and *vufwati*—the content of the stomach and intestines; *vize vitwekulya haze halufu* thus means: “the things we eat which are there in the intestines.” *Katuva-vufwati*, says Sachiteta Kakoma, is a small animal (*kasitu wamundende*), which can kill the goats in the pen (*vamphembe mulimba*) (interview on July 23, 1979, in Katuva).

According to another informant, Robert Ngunga, *katuva-vufwati* is “something like a small mammal of the type of animals which used to stay in the holes in trees” (*Kakele ngwe hakasitu, tusitu vekukala muzimphako*). “Because people come to poke again and again there at the hole, then when they pierce through it, when they pierce the animal through its abdomen, the content comes out” (*Mwomu vantu vakwiza nakutuvatuva kuze kumphako, kaha muvamutuvila, kaha havakumutuva hazimo kaha vufwati havukwiza*).

Luchazi Text:

Uze kasona uze, mwomu wakele kumphako, kaha lizina lyeni ikeye Katuva-vufwati. Wakele kumphako muze. Kaha vuno muvakumbata kaha kumbata luswango kaha kuhakaho muze. Kaha vunoni vuze vufwati vweni vunatwika, kaha kotalako ngechize: Nana! Oku kumphako kuli vufwati. Oku kumphako kuli vufwati. Oku kumphako kuli vufwati. Kaha ngavo: Kal’iya? Kutotaho haze, kaha kotalako ngwavo: Kali katuva-vufwati, lizina lyeni.

Translation:

This drawing here, its name is “*Katuvavufwati*,” because that animal was in the tree-hole. It was in the tree-hole just like that. Then the people took

a long stick and put it in there in a certain manner, until the content of its stomach burst out. Then they looked at it and wondered: “Hey! There in the tree-hole there is the content of a stomach! There in the tree-hole there is the content of a stomach!” And they asked: “Who is this little animal?” When they cut it out and looked at it, they said: “This is *katuva-vufwati*, that is its name.”

A Glance at the Structure of *Tusona*

Our discussion of six *tusona* selected from a tradition of hundreds formerly known in eastern Angola may have given us sufficient insight for the moment to examine them structurally and return to some of the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter. We have seen that the geometrical type discussed here displays some intriguing mathematical qualities. Sometimes a single line will suffice to circumscribe all the constituent dots and return to its starting point; sometimes more than one line is needed. The circumscription of the dots by one or more lines is systematic and follows strict, though not verbally formulated, rules.

In most *tusona*, every dot must be isolated by a line, thus acquiring a “field,” or surrounding area or “territory,” of its own. There must never be more than one dot in each field. To achieve the drawing, only a limited number of operational possibilities exist. In many cases there is only one possible route for the line to take. Lines always pass between rows of dots, never crossing a dot. The number of structured combinations of dots and lines in the *tusona* system is therefore limited. Although we cannot determine the number of *tusona* mathematically possible in this tradition as a whole because construction techniques demonstrate unpredictable variation, it would be possible to do so for subgroups. This awareness allows a *mukakusona* even today to reconstruct any figures he might have forgotten, merely by applying the strict conventions for dots and lines, which he has internalized.

Many *tusona* consist of a basic screen of equidistant dots, into which a contrasting, interlocking series is inserted, bisecting the basic one, with each interlocking dot placed so that it divides the distance between its two diagonal neighbors in half. The layout of dots is then circum- or, rather, interscribed by lines which normally return to their starting point. In some *tusona*, a single line is destined to circumscribe dozens of dots, returning to itself with amazing accuracy after an odyssey of labyrinthine movements. For the observer watching an expert *mukakusona* drawing at top speed, it often seems miraculous how this can be accomplished.

The conventions for dots and lines which I deduce below from our sample were not explained to me by Luchazi elders. I have good reason to assume, however, that they reflect the concepts of the carriers of the tradition. They are

inherent in the structure of the figures, and also partly implicit in the style and technique of the drawing process.

(1) Basic dots.

The basic screen is laid out first. The *mukakasona* impresses the dots in pairs, extending his series upwards, then to the left, finally to the right, by transferring the span between the first and third fingers of his right hand from place to place, as described earlier. The dots transferred side-ways constitute, from a technical viewpoint (not detectable in the finished product), a chain of “overlapping” or “anchored” pairs. We shall discover that the anchoring principle thus isolated contains an important clue to an understanding of the mathematics of this tradition. It is at the basis of a proliferation process from elementary to composite shapes.

(2) Interlocking dots.

The interlocking dots are then inserted between the basic ones, either as one might place a fifth dot into a cube with four “eyes,” or in pairs analogous to the fingers’ movement in drawing the basic dots. With the interlocking dots a new dimension is created. The screen of combined dots is now diagonally divisible in addition to the already established horizontal and vertical divisibility. The total resulting number of dots in a *kasona* is, therefore, to be considered a composite entity, with the shortest distance between any two dots being diagonal. It consists of a regular number of equidistant basic dots and an “interlocking screen” of dependent dots. This structural characteristic of the *tusona* cannot be seen after the drawing is completed, because basic and interlocking dots are indistinguishable, and the two screens merge completely.

Looking back at the structural implications of the drawing process, we can say that each pair of basic dots (formed by the first and third fingers) is something like an autonomous unit, standing by itself, while the interlocking dots can be singular in conception. The combination of these two divergent entities is at the root of the relative frequency of odd numbers we encounter in the total number of dots forming a *kasona*. We have to note that it is an essential concept, inherent in the *mukakasona*’s drawing technique, to transfer pairs of basic dots over the surface of the sand while developing his figure.

(3) Symmetry.

A further important trait is revealed in the number and total arrangement of the combined dots. In most cases their layout is governed by a principle of symmetry. They may form implicit squares, rectangles, overlapping (anchored) rectangles, a broad cross or other symmetrical shapes leading to an overall symmetry, once the lines are inscribed. However, the geometrical symmetry does not generate a corresponding symmetry in the total number of dots incorporated into the final complex structure. Their

number rarely displays any regular entities such as 12, 18, 24, 36 or 48, so prominent, for example, in African music.

This is due in part to the principle of visual interlocking, and in part to the overlapping or anchoring of surfaces formed by the dots. However, as will be seen later, regular form numbers are also a governing structural principle in the *tusona* tradition, only they are hidden in the deep structure of the figures.

Most of the *tusona* have a left-right symmetry like an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic being, but there are some with quaternary symmetry, such as “*Vamphulu*” and “*Kalunga*.” Some of these do not contain any concept of “up” or “down,” “left” or “right.” “*Vamphulu*,” for example, can be turned in any direction without losing its identity. It can also be mirror inverted. This is not merely of theoretical interest: some *tusona* have actually been collected mirror inverted or upside down from different informants in this culture area. Directional concepts are important in the *tusona* tradition, but as a performance strategy. For the *mukwakusona*, directional movement during the process of drawing is:

away from the body (on sand) or from bottom to top (on walls);
from right to left.

This is a common approach in many African writing traditions.

If the two directional concepts are combined, they tend to generate circular movement counter-clockwise. This is paralleled in the directional movement of African circular dances, such as those mentioned before, and in numerous art traditions across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

(4) Lines.

The next, and in many *tusona* the final stage, only supplemented in some by pictorial additions, is the drawing of the intersecting or circumscribing lines. These lines follow strict rules of behavior. With regard to the possible relationships between dots and lines, we may distinguish three types of lines used in the *tusona*:

- (a) Straight Line. This is the basic type of line. It is, however, only nominally “straight”; actually, one could call it “reactive.” In principle it pursues a straight course along a row or between two parallel rows of dots, until it reaches the end of the longer row. Only then does it change direction, describing an angle, or rather a gentle curve of either 90° or 180°. Since its curves or angles do not come about arbitrarily, but are “reactive,” i.e. determined by the structural layout of the dots, we may for the sake of simplicity refer to this type as the “straight line.”

In whatever direction one wants to begin drawing a line of this type, it must proceed straight as long as there is a row of dots along which it can move, up to the last dot in that row (see under item 1 above). The line cannot change its direction ad lib; any changes

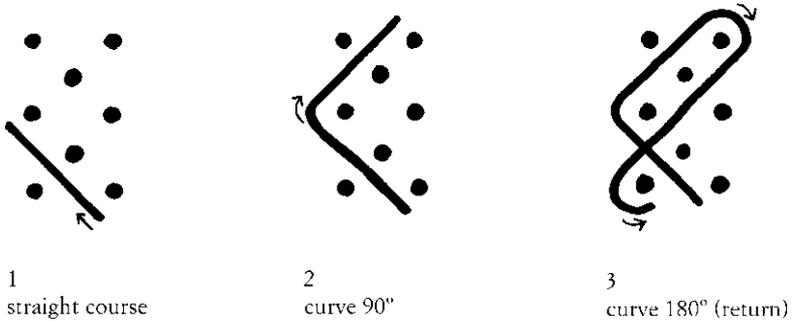


Figure 59. Behavior of the “straight line”

depend on the configuration of the dots in each area it traverses. It cannot turn before the end of the row of dots along which it is proceeding. From the viewpoint of the executant, the movement of the straight line is always diagonal, thus linking the shortest distances between dots.

Directional change is determined by the following rules:

1. If the “wall” of dots along which the line is proceeding ends and another “wall” or row opens up at a right angle, then the line has to “bend,” describing a gentle curve of 90°, and continue along the new row (see under item 2 above). In principle, it cannot proceed into empty space and leave the field of dots behind, unless it is to assume a different function. (For this see below under “Roving Lines.”) The straight line must always find a row of dots against which to lean.

2. If on the other hand there is no new row in sight and consequently the last dot in the row “sticks out” of the coherent body of dots, then the line must go round it in a 180° U-turn and return on the other side of the same row of dots (see under item 3 above). Once again it must proceed to the end of that row until a new situation comes about, provoking a new change in direction.

This should suffice to show that the structural layout of the dots and the movement of the interscribing lines are interdependent in the *tusona*. It is important to keep in mind that the change in direction of the line comes about after the last dot of the (longer) row of two parallel rows of dots. Gaps in any of the rows are ignored. In those instances, the line leans against that section of a row which is at that spot complete and uninterrupted (see the following sketch, Fig. 60).

Strict observation of these implicit rules leads to the assured result that a line will return to its starting point, sometimes after a long and tortuous journey (see “*Kambava wamulivwe*”). This holds true for single as well as multiple lines. The rules are strictly observed unless

special effects are desired, such as in “Vamphulu,” where the inventor of this probably centuries-old *kasona* wanted to visualize the horns of the four gnus, and consequently modified the route of some lines.

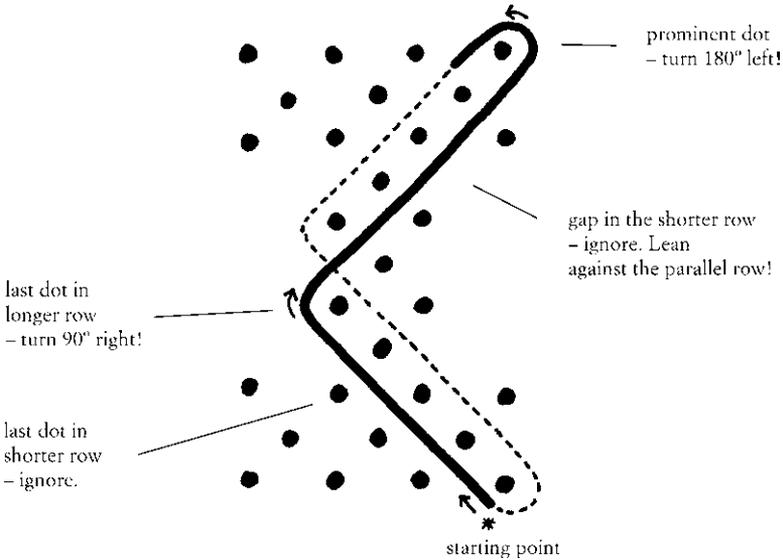


Figure 60. Itinerary of a line

Verbalizing the behavior of the line in Figure 60, we can describe the process as follows: (1) Start here (2) Move to last dot in the longer row (ignore the shorter row) and turn 90° right! (3) Ignore the gap in the shorter row, lean against the parallel row, and at the prominent dot turn 180° left. And so on . . .

Readers can get the feel of these unwritten laws by redrawing some of the *tusona* we have discussed, either on sand or on paper. Thereby one discovers that there are no choices for the “straight line.” There is only one predetermined path it can take.

- (b) Wavy Line. The second accepted mode of behavior for lines is different from the first one. Found in some *tusona*, it is serpent curved and passes between the dots of either a horizontal or a vertical row in serpentine movement.



Figure 61. Wavy line

As a consequence of the specific spacing of the basic interlocking dots in a *kasona*, this line always moves in a horizontal or vertical direction, never diagonally. Thus, it links, or connects, the longer distances between the dots, while the straight line (see above) moves diagonally, linking the shorter distances.

- (c) Roving Line. Curved lines may also assume quite a different function. In some *tusona*, long roving lines occur which surround the whole structure, traversing wide areas of empty space before returning to the screen of dots, e.g. the roving line in the *kasona* of “*Mukanda*.”

It is the type of line, straight, wavy or roving, which determines the final shape of a *kasona*. There are several figures which have the same number and layout of dots, but differ in the type of line which gives them the final shape. “*Katuva vufwati*” and another *kasona* which we have not considered yet, reproduced below, are both based on eight dots, six basic ones and two interlocking; in number and layout of dots these *tusona* are identical. And yet they are different in shape and size, due to the different paths of the line. A comparison of “*Katuva vufwati*” with “*Liswa lyavandzili*” (“The Nest of the Weaver Birds”) will make this observation clear.

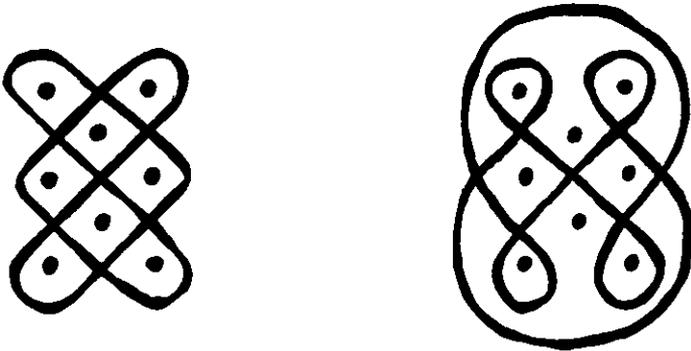


Figure 62a–b. Same grid—different trajectories of the line (a and b). The result is a different *kasona*. (a) “*Katuva vufwati*” (b) “*Liswa lyavandzili*” (“The Nest of the Weaver Birds”)

The result is a different *kasona*.

While in “*Katuva vufwati*,” the route of the line can be explained and predicted by the rules which we have discussed for the “straight line” (under [a] above); in “*Liswa lyavandzili*,” all three modes of behavior for the line—straight, wavy and roving—appear in an intriguing combination, leading to an absolutely regular and symmetrical shape. The only way we can structurally

understand this *kasona* seems to be by trying to find a “missing link” between the two, because they are obviously related. Then each structure will seem to be a development from the previous one by the introduction of a new mode of behavior for the line.

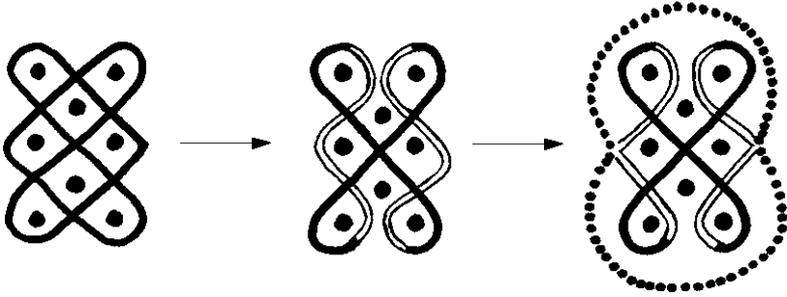


Figure 63. The “missing link” between the two ideographs shown in Fig. 62a–b

The greatest surprise for me was when I discovered that Stage 2, the “missing link,” which I arrived at purely from abstract principles of construction, exists as an actual *kasona*. I did not see it in Kabompo District, Zambia, but it was documented among the -Chokwe of Angola by two authors, Hamelberger (1951) and dos Santos (1961), and has a meaning similar to our “*Liswa lyavanzili*.” This suggests that I was on the right track in trying to construct an intermediate form.

As is evident from Figure 63, the mode of behavior of the line at each point in its path can be clearly defined (whether “straight,” “wavy” or “roving”). Stage 3 is obtained from Stage 2 by a simple but effective expansion technique. On both sides of Stage 3, left and right, the wavy line is “broken” and the roving lines commence. Instead of curving around the next dot (as in Stage 2), the line then proceeds into “empty space,” describing a wide half circle before coming back to the screen of dots on the opposite side.

Our point of departure in this investigation was the idea that not only are most *tusona* complex geometrical structures, but their complexity presupposes the existence of mathematical insights in this culture area. Whether this insight is empirical, theoretical or intuitive is a question that may be fascinating, but really irrelevant from the viewpoint of the culture concerned. We do not even need the prefix “ethno-” to characterize it, because—like mathematics elsewhere—*tusona* are the products of cogitation by very few individuals.

It is mathematics in *tusona* that determines the distinctive behavioral rules for the layout of the dots and the drawing of the lines. Regularity and order is the hallmark of this graphic tradition, to the extent that it is possible to reconstruct forgotten *tusona*. To understand the geometry of *tusona*, it is important to remember that the dots which form the layout should be considered a grid.

Dots and lines together form a surface on the sand, a continuum of marks and empty areas. Only by perceiving the figures in this way can the intrinsic regularities of *tusona* be discovered. We were surprised by the irregular number of dots forming the grid of some of the *tusona*. But we can easily discover that even those with seemingly irregular numbers (even prime numbers) of dots are based on a regular deep structure. Numbers such as 12 or 24 appear with particular frequency.

For example, the *kasona* “*Kambava wamulivwe*” (Fig. 53) seems to be composed of 22 basic and 12 interlocking dots. This gives a total of 34 dots, which are then circumscribed with a single line that rejoins itself after an intriguing course over the whole figure. At first the number 22 is surprising, a mathematical puzzle. Why should the total of 34 (which can only be divided by 2 and the prime number 17) form the skeleton of such an interesting geometrical shape? And why is it that this particular *kasona* requires a most complex and labyrinthine path for the single line? The line performs no less than 15 curves on its way, before returning to its start. Why does it function so perfectly within the framework of such irregular numbers?

Looking more closely, we discover that the layout of the basic dots in this *kasona* can be appreciated in a different manner, provided that we look at the dots as “surfaces,” and that they can be considered as forming two rectangles of the same size, overlapping at two points. Each of these rectangles constitutes the very regular constellation of $3 \times 4 = 12$ dots.

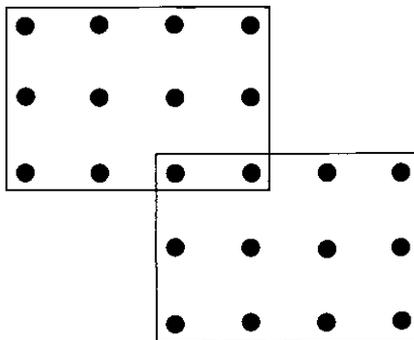


Figure 64. The basic grid, seen as intersected rectangles

Since the two rectangles overlap by two dots, the latter have to be counted twice to obtain from the total number the form number of the deep structure. It now becomes clear how the portentous but structurally insignificant numbers 22 and 34 come about. Inside the conjoined rectangles, the interlocking dots also form surfaces, namely two further rectangles of 6 dots each. Since they

do not overlap their summary, number 12 is preserved. They are half the size of those formed by the basic dots.

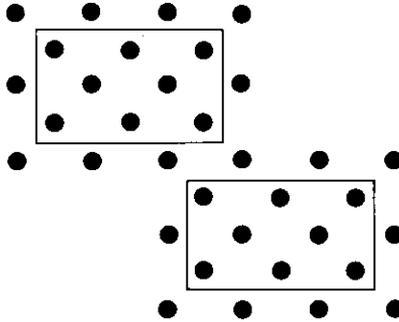


Figure 65. Rectangles formed by the interlocking dots

Thus, “*Kambava wamulivwe*” really has a deep structure of $18 \times 2 = 36$ constituent elements, which are amalgamated so that two dots count for four. It is this amalgamation or overlapping between “deep structures” (consisting basically of multiples of 6) which seems to provide the mathematical clue as to how a single line can travel right through the structure, isolating all the dots and safely returning to itself.

So we can define this *kasona* as consisting of two bodies of dots laid out equidistantly over a rectangular surface, each governed by the internal structure: $3 \times 4 + 2 \times 3 = 18$ dots, with two dots of the outer horizontal row overlapping. The total structure is defined by the simple numbers 2, 3, 4 and their multiples.

What is important, then, in the structural make-up of these *tusona* is not so much the (total) number of constituent dots, but the structure of the surface-patterns they form. A dot may belong to more than one pattern at a time, to two over-lapping entities. In counting the “real” total number, such dots should be counted twice, if they form part of two entities. For a structural analysis of *tusona*, it is important to consider the number of dots in *each* surface entity.

It can now be shown that all the *tusona* whose combined dots can be circumscribed by a single line returning to itself are proliferations of the $(3 \times 2) + 2 = 8$ basic structure, i.e. the figure known as “*Katuva-vufwati*” or “*Kangano kanthyengu*,” in the sense that they contain two or more such structures anchored together by one or more dots.

It is then possible for us to construct or reconstruct various *tusona*, some of which we have never seen, but which could have existed at some time or place.

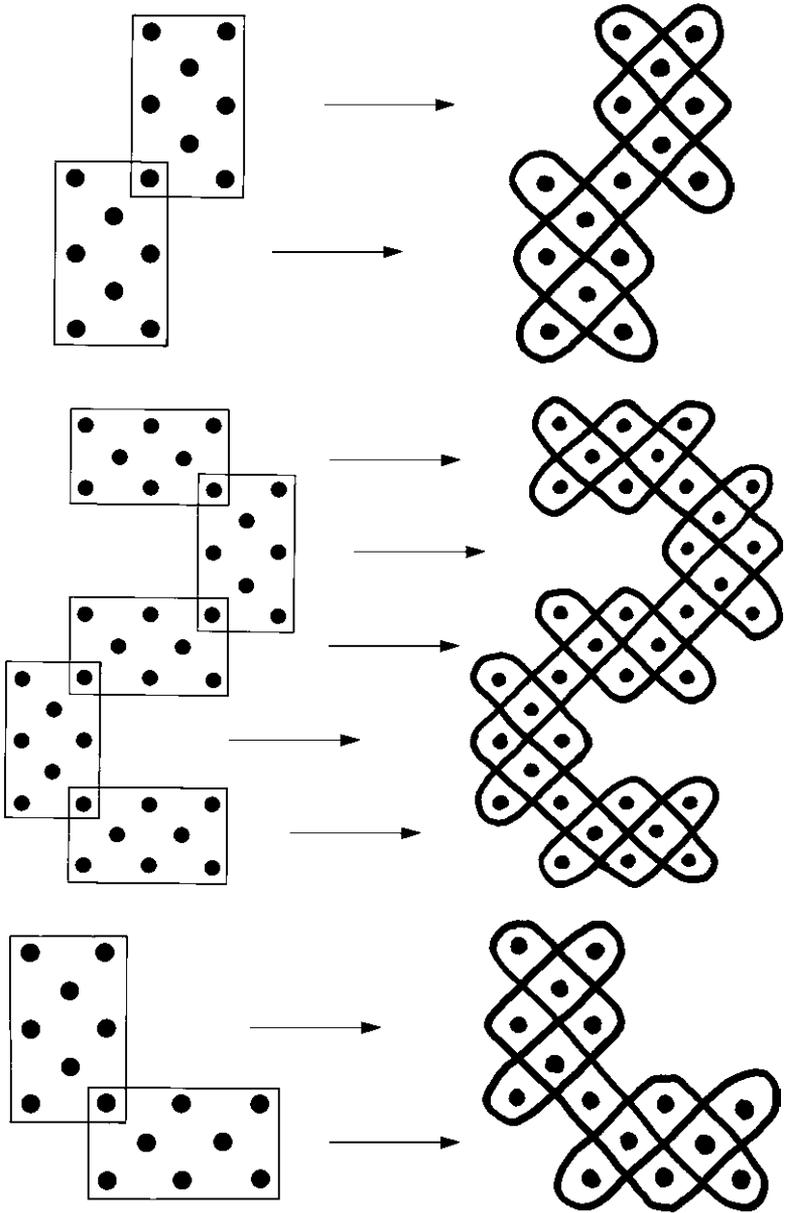


Figure 66a–c. Proliferation of the basic eight-dot form

The *kasona* of “*Katuva-vufwati*” can be anchored in one dot with identical rectangles to create complex figures. It is possible to create an infinite proliferation of such anchored eight-dot forms, and predict that they can all be circumscribed by a single line returning to its starting point.

Four 8-dot forms can also be connected sideways, for example, creating a new rectangle of 15 basic and 8 interlocking dots, a total of 23. Two such rectangles can be joined in various ways, as shown in Figure 67. The result is always that a single line will do to circumscribe all the dots of the new figure.

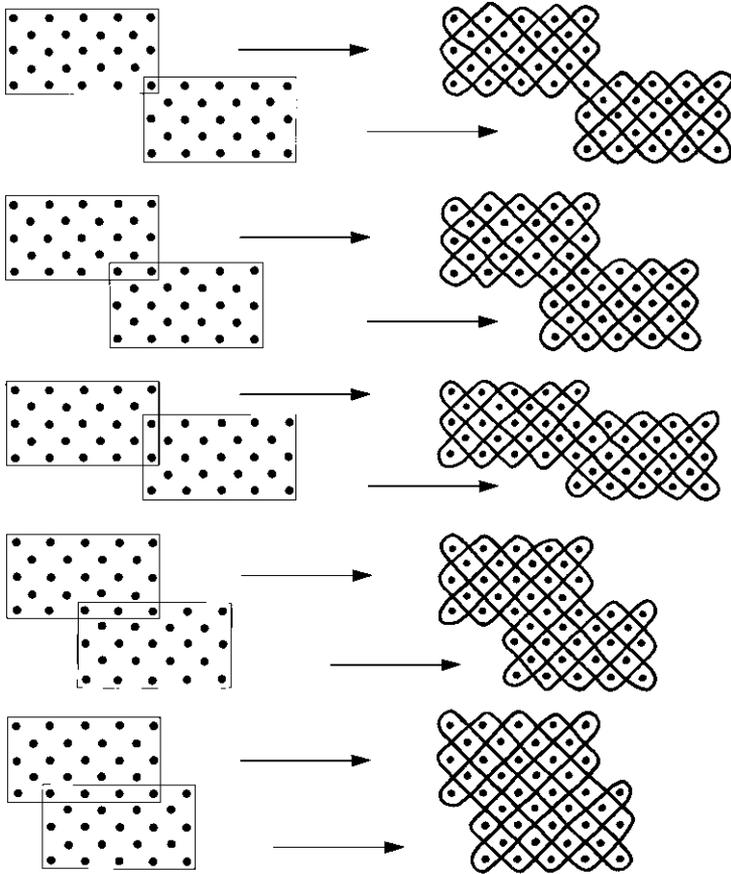


Figure 67a–e. Proliferation of compound entities

“*Tunwenu vwala vwetu*” (“Let Us Drink Our Millet Beer!”), one of the most intriguing *tusona* of this type, can be explained geometrically in the same way:

as three intersected rectangles of dots, each compounded from overlapping 8-dot forms.

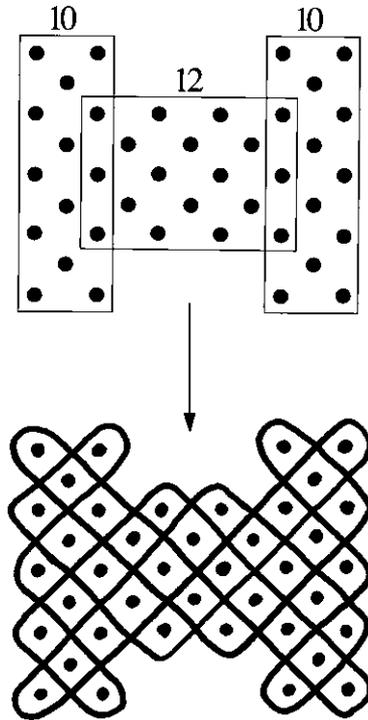


Figure 68. The hidden structure of “*Tunwenu vwala vwetu*”

***Tusona* and Music: Analogies across Different Cultures**

The reader who is familiar with certain basic principles in the shaping and composition of African music must have heard something like a “bell ring” all through our discussion of *tusona*, and not only because of my perhaps suggestive use of terms like “interlocking,” “inherent patterns,” etc. Moreover, students of African music have been aware for a long time that in some pre-20th-century African musical traditions such as the royal music of Buganda, handed down from anonymous composers of the past, there are strict regularities in the constituent parts. These compositions are almost mathematically structured. The approach of these composers of African music in the remote past was different from that of anyone nowadays, but one can feel, for example, within the contours of the Kiganda musical system a compelling pre-

occupation with absolute relationships, so that once a basic part is composed, the rest can be deduced from it. In this particular culture the pitch series of the basic and interlocking parts are so interdependent that hardly two or three notes could be changed without destroying the system; a third part is then deduced entirely from the two basic ones. I remember, when I first stumbled on this in December 1959, that it was a startling discovery to be absorbed only gradually. No wonder that in 1973, when I first saw *tusona*, a déjà-vu experience impressed itself on me. I was persuaded to assume that there were probably parallels in the creative process across the apparent boundaries between the visual and the aural.

Structural analogies are perceptible by the naked eye when examining patterns of weaving and plaiting with patterns in musical composition. Intracultural confirmation of such parallels does exist—for example, in the musical terminology in Luganda, where some descriptive terms are borrowed from the realm of textile technique (Kubik 1991d).

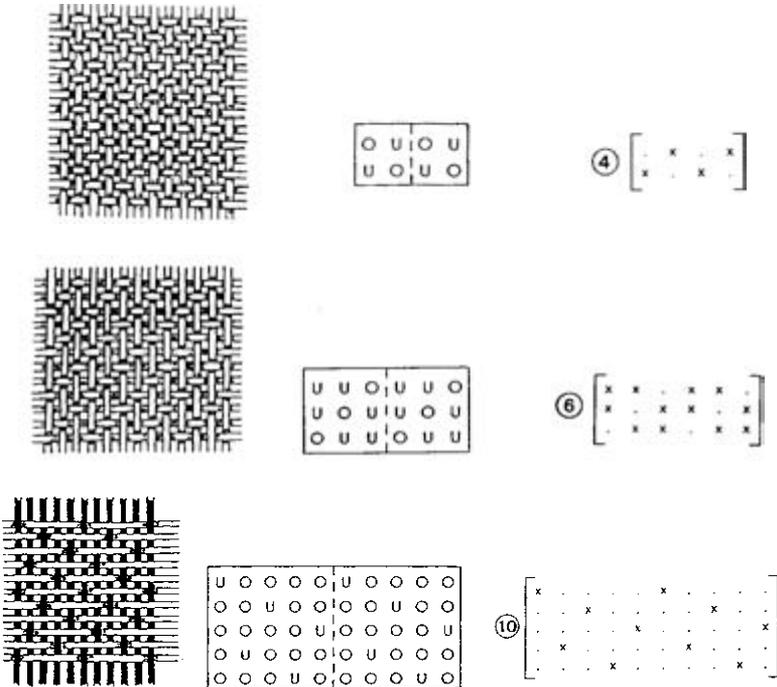


Figure 69a-c. Visual and auditory interlocking patterns

In the comparative study of textile techniques world-wide, researchers have delineated three basic methods in the formation of fabrics, according to the type of weaves, i.e. the crossing of warp and weft (woof):

- (1) linen or plain weave;
- (2) twill weave;
- (3) satin weave. (Cf. Hirschberg/Janata 1966:146.)

Linen or plain weave, whereby the woof passes alternately over and under a warp, corresponds structurally with duple-division interlocking in African music, as found in several xylophone styles of southern Uganda, northern Mozambique and adjacent areas, as well as in *timbrh* lamellophone music of central Cameroon (see Chapters I, IV and VII).

Twill weave, with its basic scheme demanding that each woof first pass over two warp threads and then under one warp (or the reverse), corresponds in music with the triple-division interlocking combination, such as in the *ngwayi* dance drumming, studied by A. M. Jones among the -Bemba of Zambia in the 1930s, or *akadinda* xylophone music in the royal enclosure of the kingdom of Buganda.

Only for the satin weave, whose basic scheme if transferred into the auditory realm could be described as a polyrhythmic conflict between elements of two and five, would musical parallels still have to be detected. I cannot recall any right now, but some musical styles in Zimbabwe and in southern Uganda could be candidates for such a discovery. Curiously, in the Okavango Region of Namibia, my colleague Moya A. Malamusi and I photographed in 1992 a mat in the house of a musician who (perhaps by coincidence) was a notable player of a *kaṅombyo* lamellophone; the mat's plaiting had an interlocking structure whose code was a quadruple-division scheme (see Photo 60).

The abstract representation of each type of weave can be easily transferred into one form of musical notation by exchanging the o and u signs (for "above" and "below" in the visual code) for the familiar x and • (point) notational symbols used for "stroke" and "empty pulse-unit" in the notation of rhythmic patterns in African music (Fig. 69a–c).

It cannot escape the reader's notice that structural parallels also exist between some of the *tusona* basic principles of combination and those in many forms of African music. The analogies include:

- (1) The presence of identical "form" numbers in both realms: in African music quite normally, where we call them cycle numbers, and in many *tusona*. In "*Vamphulu*" and "*Kambava wamulivwe*" it is 24; in some others the number is composite according to how the rectangles of the deep structure overlap. To obtain the form number in *tusona*, one has to count the number of basic dots in each invisible rectangle. In "*Vamphulu*," for example, the basic parallel rows have $2 \times 6 = 12$ dots, but two pairs cross each other. In "*Kambava wamulivwe*" there are two invisible rectangles anchored together, each with 12 dots, while in "*Tunwenu vwala vwetu*" there are three, yielding a form number of 32 dots. Many form numbers in the *tusona* are nothing but multiples of the basic 6-form. As in African music, 12 and 24 seem to be particularly important.



Photo 60. Plaiting pattern of a mat in possession of Thivagho Kanyichi, *kaḡombyo* lamellophone player at Andara, Okavango Region, Namibia, November 20, 1992.— Photo: author.

- (2) “Doubling in pairs” is the next trait linking the aural with the visual field: in the *tusona*, dots are impressed with first and third fingers in parallel rows; in many kinds of African instrumental playing, for example xylophone music, two beaters are moved parallel over the keyboard in octaves or other intervals.
- (3) The principle of equidistance is paramount and appears as a structuring element in both the aural and visual fields. Basic and interlocking dots in the *tusona*, and the sonic impact points in many forms of African instrumental composition, are both laid out in equispacial rows. In accordance with the syncretic or even synonymous nature of spatial and temporal concepts in many African cultures, the equidistance principle when realized in “time” leads to tone-rows consisting of equally spaced sound impacts (notes).
- (4) The principle of interlocking is a further parallel guiding the construction of *tusona* and many forms of African music. In the *tusona* there is duple-division-type interlocking.
- (5) In both realms, visual and auditory, there are inherent pattern effects. In the *tusona*, the lines combine certain rows or sequences of dots into patterns, creating oscillating configurations. This is paralleled in music partly by phrasing and accentuation, but also by a predilection for overall patterns which facilitate or encourage their restructuring by the ear, dur-

ing which new patterns seem to emerge. Both in the *tusona* and in many types of African instrumental music there are puzzle effects—here visual, there aural.

Over a thousand kilometers distant from Angola, there are musical cultures in which some of the *tusona* graphic principles work so neatly in music that one could even visualize compositions from those cultures with a *tusona*-style notation system. I mean some of the xylophone and other instrumental compositions from the kingdom of Buganda and the neighboring pre-colonial state of Busoga. In 1964 and later (cf. Kubik 1964c:154; 1983:148), I also used a modified system of staff notation to write this music down, besides cipher notation.

Strangely, when using dots only (dropping flags and stems), then Kiganda xylophone compositions almost get a *tusona*-style puzzle quality. The black dots seem to dance in front of one's eyes and form ever-changing patterns between themselves. Here are two of my early notations reproduced from other works.



Figure 70. Total image of the xylophone composition “*Basubira malayika*” for *akadinda* recorded by Hugh Tracey in the king’s enclosure in 1950 and transcribed by the author. Reproduced from Kubik 1964c:154.



Figure 71. Total image of the *amadinda* xylophone composition “*Ssematimba ne Kikwabanga*,” reproduced from Kubik in Simon 1983:148

The parallels in the process of structuring an *amadinda* or *embaire* xylophone piece (in southern Uganda) and a *kasona* (in eastern Angola/north-western Zambia) can hardly be overlooked. The geographical distance separating this tradition is not an argument against the parallels. First, there is a basic series of equally spaced impact points. In the xylophone styles mentioned it is a series of double strokes carried out by one player in octaves. In the *tusona* it is a series of parallel impressions in the sand. Next, in the *tusona* there is the interlocking series of dots, also equally spaced. This corresponds to the interlocking series of strokes performed in these xylophone styles by the second player, who “falls between” the first one. Finally, there is a process of associating or grouping the dots of both series. In *tusona* it is done by lines; in Kiganda music there is both accentuation and an abstracted pattern which combines certain notes of the two basic series. The result in both cases is those fluctuat-

ing puzzle-like gestalts which we have earlier called inherent or subjective patterns. The inherent patterns emerging from the total structure of an African instrumental composition then stimulate the listener to fill them with content: words, text phrases, etc. Images and other meanings are projected into them. The inherent patterns emerging from some of the *tusona* also suggest content: a figure, a picture, an idea, a situation, a story.

Inherent patterns emerge subjectively as visual or aural images to the on-lookers or participants. They are structurally contained, i.e. inherent, in the total configuration, but cannot be traced as such by any objective measuring apparatus. Their fluctuating, oscillating quality, i.e. their ability to change in perception, and—as everyone has experienced with optical illusions—their potential to collapse and reconfigure without any effort of will-power, illustrates the fact that human perception itself constantly adjusts its scanning patterns to process the external stimuli.

The evidence of inherent patterns in abstract configurations such as the *tusona* may be a most consequential finding for cultural research. It shows that the African audio-psychological discovery, unparalleled in any other culture of the world, of how to make use of the reactions of the human perceptual apparatus by deliberately creating structures that must reconfigure, encompasses both the aural and the visual realms.

These parallels, as I said earlier, are discernible from an “etic” standpoint. But in a sense some kind of corroboration also comes from “emic” research, namely the fact that in spite of the geographical distance and the visual/aural crisscrossing, the terminology for composing a *kasona* and a Kiganda xylophone piece also displays some parallels, although the two Bantu-language cultures, Luchazi and Luganda, are only remotely related. This is perhaps better shown in the form of a table.

Culture Area	Lunda cluster E. Angola / N.W. Zambia	Interlacustrine cluster Lake Victoria (Uganda)
Ethnic Group	VaLuchazi	Baganda
Language	Luchazi	Luganda
Culture Complex	<i>Tusona</i> ideographs, Type A	<i>Amadinda</i> xylophone music
Social Context	Esoteric male tradition of elders who have attained the highest level of education	Esoteric male tradition in the framework of court music for the Kabaka of Buganda
Perceptual Realm	Visual	Aural
History	Ancient, becoming obsolete	Ancient, now extinct (in its original context)

I. Layout	Equally spaced series of double-row parallel dots—two fingers held at equal distance apart act simultaneously, moving basically away from the body. First and third fingers of the right hand are used, omitting the second between them	Equally spaced series of notes in parallel octaves—two beaters held at equal distance apart strike simultaneously, moving laterally over the keyboard. Left- and right-hand beaters are used, striking in <i>myanjo</i> , omitting four keys between.
Diagram		
Transcription	<pre> </pre>	<p>4 . 5 . 2 . 4 . 5 . 2 . etc.</p>
Terminology	<i>kusona</i> (draw, write)	<i>okunaga</i> (start a series of notes)
II. Layout	Equal-spaced series of interlocking dots, duple-dividing the basic series.	Equal-spaced series of interlocking notes, duple-dividing the basic series. The notes form “double rows” in parallel octaves
Transcription	<pre> </pre>	<p>4 1 5 4 2 3 4 1 5 4 2 3 etc.</p>
Terminology	<i>kusononwena</i> (write between)	<i>okwawula</i> (separate, divide)
III. Terminology	Delineating the dots by drawing encircling lines. <i>kusita kasona</i> (erect the walls of a <i>kasona</i>)	Phrasing the structure a) by sharp accentuation— <i>okusita ebyondo</i> (erect corners) b) by picking out and duplicating an inherent pattern— <i>okukoonera</i> (to knock on the top two keys)
Transcription		<p>. 1̄ . . 2̄ . 4 1 5 4 2 3 4 1 5 4 2 3</p>

<p>IV. Inherent Patterns</p>	<p>Result from the total structure, generate subjective visual associations, determine the theme of the projected content, on which the <i>mukakusona</i> elaborates verbally. Many of the structures are regular in form and based on proliferation of a basic 8-dot form</p>	<p>Result from the total structure, generate subjective word associations, suggest words (content) for the theme of the song and text variations (<i>ebisoko</i>), on which the singer elaborates. Many of the structures are regular in form number and based on themes of 12, 18, 24 (rarely also 25, 27, 35) notes in the <i>okunaga</i> part</p>
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Table 5. Comparison of construction methods and terminology in *tusona* and *amadinda* xylophone music

Both these Bantu-language-based traditions are known to be of a certain antiquity and have displayed stability over a considerable period. Some of the Kiganda court music compositions can be traced at least to the last decades of the 18th century by the method of compositional and content analysis, correlated with the genealogy of the *bassekabaka* (dead kings). Likewise, *tusona* have definitely existed in Angola during the 17th century, as testified by some of Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi's paintings (Bassani 1978). If antiquity is significant, it could help to explain the esoteric nature of these traditions and their survival in a few widely separate areas of Africa. A third geographical area where similar construction principles appear in music could well fit into the picture. I am referring to *timbrh* lamellophone music of the Vute in the Cameroon grasslands. If we correlate these three areas with the Bantu dispersal reconstructed by linguists, then the three traditions look like leaves from the same tree dropped behind on a long path. Some people of central Cameroon previously classed as "Semi-Bantu" speakers are relatively close to the supposed Bantu nuclear dispersal area.

I do not want to speculate about the remote culture history of sub-Saharan Africa. But there is obviously something common in approach in some of the more dated Bantu expressive traditions which have survived into the 20th century, and this applies across the visual-aural divide. One characteristic is their rigor of construction. Each constituent part of a whole is designed to be an essential, irreplaceable entity with multi-lateral relationships. In *amadinda* and *akadinda* music of Buganda, not a single note can be changed in those orally transmitted compositions without upsetting the entire structure. Slight melodic variation can be used by musicians if a different text-line is to be suggested, especially when the same compositions are played on the harp. And yet, the basic interlocking tone-rows are to be retained most of the time.

In the *tusona*, too, there is no room for arbitrariness. Each component of the whole is clearly defined, and there are rules of conduct. This gives both

traditions a special cohesiveness and finality. They are little closed systems of functional and causal relationships, little universes without exits. The minds who created them must have been researchers in the basic sense of the word. By creating the self-contained mini-universes of these configurations, they also created mini-replicas of what our macro-universe may ultimately be like. They discovered abstract relationships which are not man-made, which come about and exist without human deliberation. And it must have become an immense passion once these ancients were on the track of such discoveries. The infinite proliferations in both traditions are proof enough of a persevering experimental spirit behind them.

Further Recommended Readings

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List of Musical Examples on CD II

No.	Title and/or genre	Performer(s), sex, age and instruments
1	Historical recitations and songs to the <i>kora</i>	Sadja Djalo, m., ca. 35, <i>kora</i> (bridge harp)
2	<i>Apala</i> - Yoruba drumming lesson	Ladipo family drum teacher, 30, playing <i>iya-ilu</i> (talking drum) to <i>apala</i> basic rhythm (G. Kubik)
3	Pounding millet	Three women, aged 20–25, pound millet in one mortar, producing clicks and sucking noises
4	<i>Visekese</i> dance songs	Eva Kandavire, f., ca. 30, and group with <i>visekese</i> (raft rattles)
5	<i>Bal</i> (reed pipe) dance	Oṅur, f., ca. 30, and other women with one-note reed pipes (<i>bal</i>); gourd rattle by Karap, m., 14
6	<i>Mokutuk</i> (water drumming)	Bilunga Belinga Honorine, f., 17, and other girls, drumming on the surface of the Onelobo river
7	Drum variations with <i>kachacha</i> time-line pattern	Kufuna Kandonga, m., ca. 15, playing <i>tumboi</i> (three-drum set), G. Kubik striking the time line
8	Solo song with <i>kembe</i> (lamellophone)	Marcel Mogaya, m., 60, with <i>kembe</i> (lamellophone), chorus and maḡɔ (time line)
9	<i>Mangolongondo</i> (log xylophone) performance	Waisoni Msusa, m., ca. 35, and two assistants playing a 9-note <i>mangolongondo</i> log xylophone
10	<i>Toba</i> music	Traveling singer Sosu Njako, 40, accompanied by villagers, with twin bell (<i>ogā</i>), gourd (<i>ogo</i>), etc.
11	“ <i>Bombalaka</i> ” (“Staying Alone”)	Mwenda Jean Bosco (alias Mwenda wa Bayeke), born 1930; six-string solo finger-style guitar
12	“ <i>Woyaya</i> ” (<i>Simanje-manje</i>)	Daniel Kachamba, m., 20 (guitar); Donald Kachamba, m., 12 (bass); Josefe Bulhamu, m., 14 (rattle)
13	<i>Mbø toŋ</i> (raffia lamellophone) solo	Elderly Tikar man, ca. 55, with 14-note raffia lamellophone
14	“ <i>Omusango gwa balere</i> ” (“The Case of the Flutists”)	<i>Amadinda</i> (12-note log xylophone) played by Albert Sempeke, 30, and group
15	“ <i>Ndyegulira ekadde</i> ” (“I Will Buy Myself an Old Woman”)	Evaristo Muyinda, born 1922; <i>amadinda</i> (12-note log xylophone)
16	<i>Biɔ</i> (notched flute) solo	Mogbɔlo, m., 35, with solo flute

Language/ethnic group (if applicable)	Place and date of recording	Orig. Tape No.	Duration
Mandij (I.A.2), as spoken in Guiné-Bissau	Lisboa (Portugal), May 20, 1983	A 169/I/1	3:50
Yoruba (I.A.4)	Oshogbo, Nigeria, August 1960	29/I/2	2:21
Chamba (I.A.6)	Disol village, near Genye/Sugu, north-eastern Nigeria, November 1963	R 25/II/2	2:27
Tumbuka (N.21a)	Mlowe, Rumphi District, Malaŵi, July 1967	104/3a	3:29
Ingassana (II.E.1)	Rumeilik, Tabi Mountains, south-east of Ed Damazin, Sudan, January 26, 1977	A33/I/10	0:54
Bulu (A.62)	Möŋɓa, on the road to Mvangane, Ebolowa Region, Cameroon, December 1969	126/I/1	1:48
Mbwela (K.17)	Mupeku village, north of Longa, south-eastern Angola, November 1965	75/II/6b	1:19
Mpyemã (C. group 10)	Bigene, Nola District, Central African Republic, April 1966	85/I/2	1:59
Yao (P.21)	Nkopiti village, north of Makanjila, Mangochi District, Malaŵi, July 22, 1983	A 184/II/4	2:35
Fõ (I.A.4)	Sada Gbonjenji, north of Atakpamé, Togo, January 1970	132/I/2	4:05
Luba (L.33)/Swahili (G.42) mixed	Concert at Ethnological Museum, Berlin, June 30, 1982	MC 21	3:10
Zulu (S.32)/Nyanja (N.31a) mixed	Blantyre, Malaŵi, May 1967	U4/1	3:28
Tikar (Semi-Bantu)	Mambwe village, west of Kong, Central Cameroon, February 1964	R 33/II/2	1:19
Ganda (E.15a)	Kampala, Uganda, November 1967	113/II/3	2:02
Ganda (E.15a)	Nabbale, near Kampala, Uganda, January 1968	120/II/4	3:18
Ngombe (Zone C, group 10)	Mpie-Nyɔɔɔ, near Linjombo, Central African Republic, May 1966	91/II/1	1:23

No.	Title and/or genre	Performer(s), sex, age and instruments
17	Àlô chantefable demonstration	Small girl in the Ladipò family, aged 6, with other children
18	“ <i>Aja aja o ran mi leru</i> ” (“Dog, Dog, Help Me to Carry!”), àlô (chantefable)	Radji, m., ca. 50, with children
19	“ <i>Mori keke kan</i> ”) (“I Have Found an Iron Hoop”), song, àlô (chantefable)	Duro Ladipò, m., ca. 30, and friend
20	“ <i>Alantere o</i> ” (name), àlô (chantefable)	Ahmed Gbadamosi, m., 18, with children
21	“ <i>Erin karele o wajoba</i> ” (“The Elephant Walks to the King”), song, àlô (chantefable)	Small girl in the Ladipò family, aged 7, with other children
22	“ <i>Ará òrun ará òrun o</i> ” (“Inhabitants of Heaven!” “Inhabitants of Heaven!”), song, àlô (chantefable)	Duro Ladipò, m., ca. 30, and friend
23	<i>Nkangala</i> , instrumental piece	Etinala B. Gwede, f., ca. 40, <i>nkangala</i> (mouth-resonated musical stick)
24	“ <i>Matenda</i> ” (“Disease”), beer party song	Piasoni Chinkango, m., ca. 30 (guitar), with White Chinyama and Flora Lekisitala
25	“Rock Three,” <i>sinjonjo</i>	Kachamba Brothers band: Daniel J. Kachamba, ca. 20, guitar; Donald, flute; Josefe Bulahamu, rattle
26	“ <i>Lumba ya Malawi</i> ” (“Malawi Rumba”), <i>lumba</i>	Kachamba Brothers: Daniel, bass guitar; Donald, lead guitar; Josefe Bulahamu, rattle
27	“ <i>We ka na get Emery</i> ” (“Where Can I Get Emery”)	Kachamba Brothers: Daniel (guitar), Donald (flute), Moya A. Malamusi (rattle), and N. N. (bass)
28	“ <i>Maliro aKachamba</i> ” (“The Funeral of Kachamba”)	Kachamba Brothers: Daniel (guitar), Donald (flute), with Luka Khumuwa and Ronol Kaufa (rattle and bass)
29	“ <i>Angoni ajia ngoma</i> ” (“The Agoni Stomp Their Ngoma Dance”)	Kachamba Brothers: Daniel (guitar), Donald (bass), G. Kubik (rattle). Three voices

Note: Bantu languages in the list are classified following Guthrie (1948); non-Bantu languages, according to Greenberg (1966).

Language/ethnic group (if applicable)	Place and date of recording	Orig. Tape No.	Duration
Yoruba (I.A.4)	Oshogbo, Nigeria, August 1960	29/I/12	1:41
Yoruba (I.A.4)	Alatède village, near Oshogbo, Nigeria, July 27, 1963	R22/I/2	2:12
Yoruba (I.A.4)	Oshogbo, Nigeria, August 1960	31/I/19	0:28
Yoruba (I.A.4)	Oshogbo, Nigeria, August 1963	R 24/I/8	6:25
Yoruba (I.A.4)	Oshogbo, Nigeria, August 1960	31/I/1a	0:50
Yoruba (I.A.4)	Oshogbo, Nigeria, August 1960	31/I/22	1:11
Nyanja (N.31a)	Singano village, Chileka, Malaŵi, October 1967	148/5	1:16
Nyanja (N.31a)	Singano village, Chileka, Malaŵi, October 1967	148/1	3:08
Nyanja (N.31a)	Blantyre city, Malaŵi, March 1967	4/7	1:59
Nyanja (N.31a)	Blantyre city, Malaŵi, April 1967	U2/1	3:34
English/Nyanja (N.31a)	Nkata village, Blantyre District, Malaŵi, September 1967	127A/1 (Ciné film)	3:55
Nyanja (N.31a)	Mr. Rice's Bar, Chirimba, Blantyre District, Malaŵi, January 16, 1972	L 31/II/2	2:46
Nyanja (N.31a)/Zulu (S.32)	Concert at Goethe Institute, Dar es Salaam, Sept. 21, 1976	A 18/II	3:09

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Note: Names in the Christian tradition are listed with the surname first. African and other names are listed in the order used by the person's local community, usually with the personal name first, but sometimes the clan name. The author of the present text is listed here only in the contexts in which he appears as an artist.

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