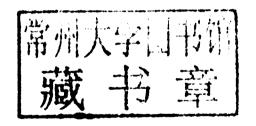


Theory of African Music

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

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 Malaŵian 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 (Malaŵi).

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." 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 <u>Daniel</u> 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.

Contents

Volume II

Author's Preface to Volume II vi

VI. The Cognitive Study of African Musical "Rhythm" 1

Section 1: Cognitive Anthropology and African Music: What We

Can Learn from Each 2

Section 2: Timing Systems 21
Section 3: Time-Line Patterns 52

VII. African Music and Auditory Perception 85

Section 1: Focus on Cross-Cultural Comprehension:

Motor-Accents, Reference Beat and

Metrical Inversion 85

Section 2: Focus on "Auditory Streaming" and the I.P. Effect 107

VIII. Àló—Yoruba Chantefables: An Integrated Approach towards West African Music and Oral Literature 151

IX. Genealogy of a Malaŵian Musician Family: Daniel J. Kachamba (1947–1987) and His Associates 211

X. African Space/Time Concepts and the *Tusona* Ideographs in Luchazi Culture 275

Further Recommended Readings 323

List of Musical Examples on CD II 332

Indexes for Volumes I and II

Index of Artists and Authors 337 Index of African Ethnic-Linguistic Designations 344 Index of Song Titles 348 General Index 353

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, [1] 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 [c], [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 [c] 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 Stroboconn 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. Tav (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: $melody \rightarrow spirit$; $harmony \rightarrow soul$; $rhythm \rightarrow body$. 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 saving 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 thoughtpatterns 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 Sadja 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 Mandiŋ language or relate sound and meaning the same way as a Mandiŋ 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 doubleheaded conical drums played with sticks which seem to have come to Ugogo 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
ngoma	Kiswahili (East Africa)	(a) any kind of drum (b) any kind of community-based music and dance
ng'oma	Kigogo (Tanzania)	women's initiation-related dance with drums; the hourglass-shaped drums used in this dance
ng'oma	Chicheŵa/Cinyanja (Malaŵi, Zambia)	 (a) ng'òma (generic name meaning "drum" (b) ng'ôma (beehive)³
ngoma	Chimbo (Malaŵi)	a specific dance of Ngoni origin

^{3.} The two meanings are kept separate by different speech-tones. Asked whether $ng'\partial ma$ ("drum") and $ng'\partial ma$ ("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.)