

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENCE ARTS AND COMMERCE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FAUNA AND FLORA IN THE PRODUCTION OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN AFRICA

CHARLES NYAKITI ORAWO
MUSIC AND DANCE DEPARTMENT
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
NAIROBI, KENYA.

ABSTRACT

With the coming of history origin of musical instruments stopped being attributed to the gods and heroes (Sachs, 1977). Speculatively, man “was quite unaware, as he stamped the ground or slapped his body, that such actions were seeds of the earliest instruments. It is important to acknowledge that the first source of musical materials came from man’s body. Later, instruments were made from materials got from their immediate environment. They chose from hard wood with sonorous sounds. The use of natural materials in traditional ceremonies and rituals is observed in almost all the communities of Africa. Calabash fruits were used as resonators. River reeds, bamboo and woods with natural holes were used to make special flutes and panpipes. Papyrus provided materials for tuning knobs instead of wooden pegs. Sorghum and elephant grass stalks were used in making zithers and shakers. The making of metal tools helped change the communities’ worldview and improvement of musical instruments making. The importance of music and musical instruments in the lives of the natives of cannot be overemphasized as the two play quite a significant role. It should be noted that not all the inhabitants of Continent are musicians! Performing on the musical instruments is an integral part of the communities’ belief system, which varies from one community to another. Songs entertain during festivals and ceremonies, but rituals teach and give guidance to the community. Not all players of musical instruments make the instruments. Performance of such instruments shows a commitment to the musical event and the gods. An example being that of the Akan drums which are not objects of worship, yet have to receive libations and carry prohibitions because they are repositories of spirit of Tweneboa Kodua

and carry with them associations with ancestor drummers. Some of the instruments like pestles and mortars play double roles. Xylophones as tuned idiophones have varied number of slabs. Music like language is community specific but the use of animals and plants materials in making the instruments cuts across all the communities in Africa. It is therefore correct to note that plants and animal sources from which musical instruments were made had great significance to the natives. The animals and plants were traditionally protected, hence, resulting into prayers being performed whenever animals and trees were killed or cut respectively. In summary, the Africans were aware of their ecology, hence, did all they could to protect the environment!

Keywords: Speculatively, earliest instrument, immediate environment, natural holes, sonorous sound, belief system, community specific, traditionally protected, ecology

Introduction

Africa's pre-history is full of mythical origin of musical instruments among her communities. With the coming of history origin of musical instruments is no longer attributed to the gods and heroes (Curt Sachs, 1940 rep 1977:25). This did not stop scholars' inquisitive minds from trying to establish which of the musical instruments were first to be invented! I agree with Sachs that the earliest man "was quite unaware, as he stamped the ground or slapped his body, that his actions were the seeds of the earliest instruments. Therefore, it is logical to observe that no early instrument was invented!

Before we talk about the natural materials man used from his natural environment to make music, we need to note that the main source of musical materials came from his body. As man moved (that is stood up, stretched his body, walked, ran or carried out other manly activities), such activities were rhythmic, hence, they emitted sound! The same could be said of a hunter running after a wounded animal still holding to weapons. The hunter would not be running at the same speed. During the time, the wooden bow and the arrows would be hitting each other resulting into a very pleasant experience (music of the hunter's bow). From this experience, the hunter might decide to play the bow's string by hitting it with the stick of the arrow; at times, fix a gourd on the wooden bow to be a resonator or modify the instrument to suite his aesthetics.

Material from Natural Environment

People made instruments from materials they got from their immediate environments, some of which became multi-purpose. One of the materials used was the wooden sticks. The sticks chosen were of hard wood trees with sonorous sound. Examples of wooden sticks used were those used for making the hunter's bow; the *Abaluhya ebisalaa* of the *lipala* ensemble; the *Midzi Chenda upatsu* made of a metal plate which is rhythmically hit by two short wooden sticks as part of the *Sengenya* ensemble; a staff (around whose base a set of jingle bells are tied), is rhythmically stamped on the ground to accompany the Luo *thum*, this was before the jingle bells were transferred to the legs as leg bells; the *Dawida musikilingo* rhythmically played as *Kishavi* ensemble (*musi* is a short wooden stick used in hitting *kilingo* a long wooden staff and the *Dawida kitiri-mlingo* (*kitiri* is a long wooden staff vertically used to rhythmically hit *mlingo*, a flat wooden block; and the *Ababukusu chimbengele*, a two pair of two small wooden sticks are used to rhythmically hit a wooden block in the *litungu* ensemble; in a big

wooden slit drum, two short wooden sticks are rhythmically used to hit the two slits of the drum;. In the *dele* mixed dance of the *Chonyi*, a *Midzi Chenda* community, women dancers throw, catch and stamp bamboo staves on the ground as they dance in a semi-circular line around their male partners who dance by stamping their legs around which *mango* fruit rattles are tied.

The use of natural materials in the making of musical instruments used in traditional ceremonies and rituals is observed almost in all the communities in Africa. The communities who live by the rivers where reeds grow or near the forests where bamboo plants grow use both the materials to make musical instruments such as flutes and bridges of their musical instruments, especially the lyres and fiddles. The calabash plant, also another natural material grows in areas where climate is favorable. Calabash fruits which are of different sizes generally have multipurpose usage. In music, for example, calabash fruits are used as resonators of musical bows; as resonators of xylophones; as gourd rattles and as bells of modified or extended horns and trumpets. At times river reeds, bamboo and hollow wood are used to make special flutes such as panpipes, the Fulani flute, Burundi flute and other wooden flutes.

Similarly, the people who live near river banks or swampy environments make use of the materials that grow in and around the area, for example those who live along the rivers where river-reeds grow to make their musical instruments. Since river reeds have natural holes and are quite sonorous, they provides an appropriate raw material for flute making and the same applies to bamboo. In areas where papyrus grows, the people use papyrus materials to make tuning knobs for lyres instead of wooden pegs. Farmers who grow sorghum use its stalks to make zithers, and those who live in grassland areas also use elephant grass stalks to make *kayamba*.

Those who live around the forests where there are big trees and following the discovery of minerals and the making metal tools used in the cutting and carving of logs of wood to make shells for resonators of drums led to the development of small and big wooden drums and xylophones of various types and sizes. The inhabitants of the continent were enabled to carve logs of huge trees into shells of fiddles and drum resonators. Thanks to the discovery of minerals that led to the making of metal tools which helped in the art of carving, that helped change the worldview and so the improvement on the type of musical instruments made by the African people.

Early in the history of the continent, the materials that were used in making of musical instruments were limited to what nature gave the inhabitants. These were in the form of wood, gourds, plant seeds, plant stalks and leaves, tortoise carapace, animal horns, animal skins, and elephant tusks to mention but a few. Later improvements, especially those brought by the discovery of minerals expanded the horizon leading into the manufacture of bigger and more beautifully decorated instruments of the time. There were times when materials with natural bores and of soft wood were those used in making the musical instruments but as metal tools came into being, more and more natives ventured in the improvement in the making of musical instruments that they had. One such instrument is the *mbira* of the *ZeZuru* (Shona of Zimbabwe). The discovery of iron and copper in Hwedza Mountains stopped the *ZeZuru* (a sub-community of the Shona of Zimbabwe) from further migration. They settled around these mountains

extracting copper and iron which they traded in, as well as using the minerals to make hoes, spears, axes and more importantly keys for their religious instrument, *mbira* (Matire, 2008:2).

The Spirit Ownership to Musical Instruments

“With over 800 million people who speak an estimated 1000 distinct languages; covering a vast geographical area, with peoples whose particular histories are complex ‘African Music’ defies a simplistic description” (Carver, 2012:11). Accompanying such peculiar historical complex is the belief that most outstanding musical instruments in the continent have been handed over to the mythical ancestors of the communities by the gods. A case in point is *thum*, the Luo lyre. According to the Luo tradition, *thum* is believed to have been handed over to Ramogi, the undisputed Luo ancestor by the gods (Nyakiti, 2013:45). Omondi (1980:52) observes that “*thum* existed in a large size, more or less similar to Obokano of the *Abagusii of Kenya* (Hyslop, 1975).. Although the size of *thum* has changed, the Style of its construction and playing remains the same.” Before this period (Omondi, *ibid.*) the resonator of *thum* was fashioned from the carapace of a tortoise.



Plate 1: i) Abagusii Obokano player
Nketia 1975:106



ii) Original Luo Thum player



ii) Modern Luo thum player
(the researcher)

Materials for Making the Luo *thum*

The making of *thum* involves the cutting and carving of a big *murembe* tree into a bowl to which a skin membrane is nailed. Two arms made from *siala* tree was fixed to a slightly curved cross bar also made from the *siala* tree. *Puch*, a set of eight strings made of cattle tendons run from a hole at the back through the membrane passes over *osat*, a bridge made up of a set of river reeds held together by *odok*, two lamps of bee wax; to be fixed to the tuning knobs tied around a curved crossbar. The tree from which *thum* resonator is carved *orembe* has ritualistic significance such as the administration of oaths and curses; which parallels the significance of *thum* in the society.

The use of carapace of tortoise, *togo*, papyrus and wetland shrubs in the making of musical instruments also demonstrates the community’s closeness to the wetlands during their migration “from Southern Sudan along the White Nile, the Bahr–el Ghazal and adjacent wetlands through Uganda into Kenya and North Western Tanzania” (Ogot, 2009:10).

Importance of Musical Instruments

The importance of music in the lives of the people of the continent cannot be overemphasized. Music plays a significant role in the lives of the people of the Continent. Rituals and celebrations that mark the life cycle of the people of Africa would not take place without music. All the rites of passage for members of the communities are pegged on music. This by extension shows how important musical

instruments are to the people of Africa. During birth, naming, marriage, funeral ceremonies and other ceremonies in the community music plays quite a significant role. In almost all these rituals and ceremonies musical instruments is key to the success of the occasion. Music is made by individuals and groups during private and social gatherings. Like other sister continents of the world, the people of Africa value and consume music that is professionally created and produced. Hence, the 1000 communities that inhabit the continent have professional musicians who are charged with the responsibility to create and perform what their consumers consider quality. In other words, not all members in the Continent are musicians if by that we mean “professional music makers” and not “consumers”!

Performing and Making of Musical Instruments

The performing and making of musical instruments in the Continent is an integral part of the communities’ belief system. This varies not only from one community to another but also from one village to another depending on the socio-cultural environmental conditions at play. Traditional music like other forms of Art in the continent permeates the community’s life and has a function and a role to play in the community. As already been noted, ”songs are used for religious ceremonies and rituals, to teach and give guidance, to tell stories, to mark stages of life and death and to provide political guidance or express discontent”(P.7). Songs are also used to entertain during ceremonies, and festivals. It should also be noted that not all the persons who play the musical instruments in their solo or ensemble capacities are the makers of such instruments. Once in a while, some of them could be makers of the instruments. Hard and durable materials are the ones commonly used in the making of instruments. Some of the materials used in making the instruments are usually ritualistically held in the minds of those the instruments would be performed. It therefore would not be strange to see instrumental makers perform a sacrifice and a prayer to the plant or the tree before it is cut. This is because such plants and trees are held to be having high spirits. The makers and players of musical instruments are also held to have the same spiritual status. Performance of such musical instruments shows a commitment to the musical event and the gods who are considered the owners of the instruments. Environmental changes have a lot of influence on both the makers and consumers the music. Instruments are made from available materials

String Instruments

String instruments used in the continent are the hunter’s bows, harps, lyres, lutes and one or two string fiddles. The plates below are examples of the hunters’ bows, harps and a lute.



Plate 2 :i) Xhosa Uhadi bow



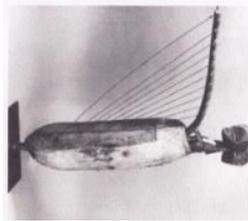
ii) Musical bow



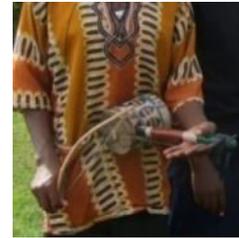
iii) Musial Bow



Plate 3: i) Kora a harp
<http://www.google.com/url?http://graphic.nobody.jp/irom/>



ii) Adungu Harp
 moa.wfu.ed/2012/04/shakeRattle
 -TeacherGuide pdf :15



VI) An Orutu player
 "Permalink to Orutu"

Instruments made of wood

Instruments made from wood range from sticks got from tree branches to provide both the sounds and rhythmic patterns during performances. The sticks may be short ones, hit against one another or used to strike other instruments such as drums, slit drums and xylophones during performance; long staff are used to rhythmically stamp the ground or other instruments placed on the ground. Examples are the *Kishavi* dance-*musi-mlingo* short sticks (plate 3: ii), and; *mlingo-kitiri*, long sticks (plate 3:iii) both are from the Dawida of Kenya; *chembengele* of the Ababukusu of Kenya (see plate 3:i) and *Dele*, a hollow bamboo staff stamped by Chonyi women dancers



Plate 4 (i) Litungu and Chembengele ensemble with (Simiyu,2017)



ii) Kishavi ensemble of Musi-Kilingo (Researcher, 2011:147)



iii) Kishavi Mgange hitting mlingo with kitiri (Researcher, 2011:142)

These instruments produce muffled sounds when rhythmically hit or stamped to accompany dancers. Other instruments that are played by being hit with wooden sticks are the huge slit drum (plate 4:i), wooden slit gong (plate 4:ii) and *opatsu* in the Sengenya drum ensemble (plate 8:vii). Huge slit drum (plate 4:i) played with sticks are performed by those who live or border great forest of the Congo River basin where wood is plenty but skins from large animals for drum heads are few. The use of flutes such as the Ganda *ndere* the Congo *Nyamulera* and the Luo *asili* are common in places where river reeds and/or bamboo grow.



Plate 5:i) Slit drum performer Congo (Carver, 2012:47)



ii) Wooden slit gong TeacherGuide pdf :9

Apart from *thum*, which claims an ancestral origin to Ramogi, the Luo also play instrument such as *poko* or *ajawa*, gourd rattles (plate 5:i) and *bul*, drums (plate 8:i), and quite a number of other instruments such as *Nyabondo tiang*’, sorghum stalk zither (plate 10:i).

Ajawa/Poko Gourd Shakers and the Luo belief in Ancestral Spirits

Poko (5:i) and *bul* are played by members of the community possessed by *juogi* spirits. *Juogi* is a term derived from the Luo word *juokljok*, god. *Juogi* therefore is the Luo ancestral possessing spirits through which wishes of the Luo ancestors are conveyed to members of the community. *Juogi* practices are designed to court the spirits’ favour, both for protection and to avoid the consequences of their displeasure. For a Luo, life is never safe and with an everlasting fear of both the natural and supernatural phenomena there is need for protection. *Juogi* ancestral spiritual cult therefore came to be as a result of the respect/fear the community has for the spirits of dead ancestors. Such respect/fear for the spirit of the dead is a fundamental sanction in which the Luo world view acknowledges that the power of a man does not end with death. This is because the Luo consider the dead as the integral part of life endowed with both the power to bless and/or haunt their living descendants! The *juogi* ancestral cult adherents use both *poko* and *ajawa* alone a long side the playing of drums, dancing, singing and *manyasi*, herbs during their services.



Plate:6: i) An Ajawa or Poko Player
(Researcher, 2011)



ii) A gourd shaker
(Nketia 19757)

The Spirit of the Akan Drum

The attitude of the *Akan* people about their drums is complex as it is derived from their attitude to nature (Nketia,1957), that is, the ‘materials’ from which *tehe* parts of the drum are assembled...”(Nketia,1963:16). The *Akan* drums are not objects of worship, but “have to receive libations and carry prohibitions because they are repositories of the spirit of *Tweneboa Kodua* and carry with them associations with ancestor drummers” (Nketia, 1963:ibid.).

The Trees Used in Making the Akan Drums

The wood commonly used in carving the *Akan* drums is the *tweneboa* or *tweneduo*. Nketia (ibid.:5) notes that “in old days a sacrifice of an egg was made to the tree and prayers for protection from harm were said before the tree was cut down for the Akan held the it to be a tree with a powerful spirit.” The *Akan* tradition has it that “even when such a tree has been cut down and its wood has been used, the finished drum is still identified with the spirit of the wood. Drummers, especially those of the courts and warriors usually begin their performances with invocations to the spirit of the wood for protection. All the *Akan* drums are held in a particular esteem by their users.

The *Dawida Kishavi* and *Mwazindika* Dances

The *Dawida Kishavi* dance uses *mlingo* and *kitiri*. *Kitiri* (traditionally made from *msorongo* cactus tree that grows locally in the hills. *Kitiri* is a heavy piece of wood or an improvised bench placed on the ground. *Mlingo* also known as *yiti* or *mwangoni* is a long stick made from *ngidi* tree which also grows locally in the area. The heavy piece of wood or bench (*kitiri*) must be long enough to accommodate four players. The tradition has it that *mlingo* should not be taller than the user. Another musical instrument used in *Kishavi* performance is *marangi*. It is made of bamboo and is shorter and much thicker than *mlingo*. It is played by a lady; since it is decorated with *njuga*, it provides varieties of percussive accompaniments to the dancers (Nyakiti, 2011). The *Dawida* usually make their *mwazindika* drums: *simba mbaa*, *simba ndogo* and *kingele* from a tree known as *mlungu* which shares its name with the *Dawida* god. The *Dawida* whistle, *filimbo* which is played in both *Kishavi* and *mwazindika* dances is also made of wood.



Plate 7 : i) A set of Luo drums (Researcher,2011)



ii) Donno [http://www.google.com/url?=
http://priscillarproject.weebly.com](http://www.google.com/url?=http://priscillarproject.weebly.com)



iii) Djembe: [http://www.google.com/url?=
http://priscillarproject.weebly.co](http://www.google.com/url?=http://priscillarproject.weebly.co)



iv) Tanzanian Hand drum (Nketia 1975:88)



v) Atumpan drums of the Akan of Ghana (Nketia 1975:89)



vi) Sengenya Drum ensemble- Midzi Chenda Kenya (Nketia, 1975:90)



vii) Shona drummers-Zimbabwe -Yoruba (Murray ,1981:94



viii) *Mwazindika* drum ensemble –*Dawida* Kenya (Nyakiti, 2011:149)

The Luo Drums

The Luo drums were made of wood carved from *murembe* (or *orembe*) a big tree that grows in the territory. The traditional Luo drumset resembles the Ganda drums. This is because the history of the two communities has it that “Buganda is the fourth Luo Kingdom Labong’o (a Luo King) created is the Buganda kingdom of Uganda” (Alenyo, 2009:59). The history continues to state that the “Buganda is a Bantu Kingdom but their royal clans are the Luo Jobito to this day”(Alenyo,ibid.). This in away explains the similarities between the two sets of drums.

The drum shells for their resonators were made of wood from the big trees that abound the territories. Some of the drums were double headed while others were footed with only single heads. The drums

needed skins attached to the heads. The sources for the skins needed for the drum heads came from the many animals reared at home or those game animals they hunted for their meat.

Use of Animal Skins in Musical Instruments

The *Ababukusu* require goat's skin for the membrane used for *litungu* resonator ; the skin from the head of cattle for the Luo *thum* and for *orutu*, the skin of a monitor lizard came handy. The *Abaluhya* used the skin of a monitor lizard for their *Ishiriri* (fiddle); *ingalaphe*, a single headed drum and *ishikuti*, a sets of 3 drums. The *Abaluhya* double headed drum, *ingoma* needs cattle skin for its heads and the *Dawida* also needs cattle skin to peg on heads of their single headed footed drums. The *Midzi Chenda* use both the goat's and cattle's skins for their various footed and bouble headed drums (*Mabumbumbu*, *chirima*, *gandu* and *chapuo*). The *Abagusii* need cattle skin for their *obokano*.

The Pestle and Mortar

Some of the instruments play double roles. A good example is that of pestles and mortars. The communities that use such instruments carve the mortars from hard wood that would not wear out easily. Some communities also have ritualistic bearings on the instrument; therefore, the making of such instruments are usually accompanied with rituals and ceremonies.



Plate 8: i) Women pounding maize meal Zambia (Carver,2012:14)

Nyabondo Tiang', the Luo Zither

The Luo are peasant farmers who grow *bel*, sorghum; *kal*, millet; *oduma*, maize and other short term farm produce for their subsistence in addition to keeping domestic animals and poetry. During the main agricultural season, which is a long rainy season, sorghum does well and with the plenty sorghum stalks, the youth, especially the male ones take the opportunity to make, play and enjoy the music that the Season has enabled them to create on their trough zithers

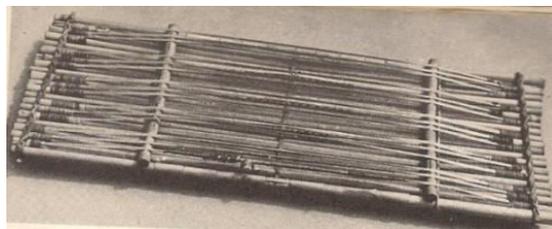


Plate 9)) *Nyabondo tiang'* a Luo trough Zither

The Ganda *Amadinda*-Xylophone

The use of available natural materials in making musical instruments has enabled rulers - chiefs and kings to authorize their musicians and poets to recount genealogies and legends of their kingdoms. For

example, the Ganda king, Kabaka had in his court a flute ensemble, xylophone players, drummers and a royal harpist (Carver, 2012).



Plate 10:) Amadinda bars laid on banana stems-

Types of Xylophones in Africa

According to Nketia (1975:81) xylophone, a tuned idiophone played in many parts of Africa seems to be in three forms as the graduated series of wooden slabs...mounted over a resonance chamber...These he groups as *pit and box xylophones*; second, as ones *with keys laid over two pieces of banana stems and kept in position by sticks affixed to the stem between the keys* and third as those *with keys mounted over a wooden frame, below which a number of gourd resonators are suspended graded in size in relation to the pitches of the wooden slabs*. The number of slabs used in each xylophone varies.



Plate 11i) Chopi timbila xylophone-Mozambique (Carver, 2012:78)



iv) A frame xylophone of 14 keys with gourd Resonators (Nketia, 1975:80)

Wind Instruments, Flutes, Horns and Trumpets

A few wind instruments such as *Odurugya*, end blown flute and *atenteben*, bamboo pipes are not as popular as the drums which are corporately used in social dances or as drums of shrines or those of a chief. The Luo make their wind instruments from river reeds that grow in the territory. The Dawida make *Chivoti*, *nzumari* and *bung'o* from the bamboo that abundantly grow in their territory. The Abaluhya make their *lirere* from the river reeds that grow in their territory. The use of pan pipes, wooden flutes made from materials with natural holes is not unique to communities in Africa, examples being those of the Fulani flutes, Burundi flutes, *Nyamulera* flutes from the Congos, the Pokot wooden flutes, and the Nyanga Pin pipes.



Plate 12: i) Oding, a transverse Flute- Southern Cameroon



ii) Panpipe player -accompanying himself with a rattle-Zimbabwe



iii) Nyamulera flute-Congo



iv) Panpipe



v) Fulani flute



vi) Burundi flute



vii) Wooden flutes



viii) Wooden flutes

The horns and trumpets were made from the natural horns of both wild animals such as the *kudu* and domesticated animals such as cattle, goats .



Plate 13:i) Trumpets made from elephant tusks



ii) Permalink to Bigwala



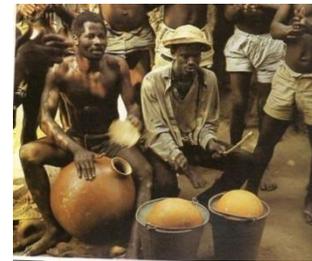
iii) Kudu horns Animal horns are played



iv) Lungo shakers
Permalink to Lungo



v) Shakers manufactured from leaves
moa.wfu.ed/2012/04/shakeRattle



vi) Ago, a afafa and tochnng of 2 pails of water with 2 calabashes floated & hit

The Zezuru belief

The Zezuru believe that their late relatives continue to live with them as *mhepo yevadzimu*, the spirit of the ancestors who look after them (the Zezuru) by providing rain for *mukwerera*, farming; *kurapa*, healing the sick; *ngozi*, protecting the populace from all sorts of evil spirits which bring misfortune or death in families; and helping in *kukadza mambo*, identifying successors to chieftainships in their territory. Traditionally, *mudzimu*, the family ancestral spirits looks after the welfare of the family while *mhondoro* and *makombe* take care of the whole clan (Gelfand, 1987). The Zezuru believe that *vadzimu* connect them to *Mwari*. Whenever a family wants to communicate with *Mwari*, they organize a *bira* ceremony. A spirit medium of the family gets possessed with the spirit of an ancestor who will then talk directly with the family members. The spirit medium is chosen by the spirit to become its host. Such hosts are members of the family who proves to be honest, respectful, polite, forgiving, spiritually clean, one who is free from promiscuity and one who is polite and humble. Through *Mwari* vital force is passed on to the spirit of the dead giving them power to heal, provide rain, foretell future events, increase talent in a living being, protect the living, communicate with *Mwari* Himself and possess a living being. This happens when the spirit medium has been evoked by *mbira* music during a *bira* ceremony. From the look of things the *bira* ceremony greatly depends on the environment! It is no

secret that the ceremony is indebted to the instrument *Mbira* which is made of *gwariva*, a wooden soundboard; *mbiras*, some metal keys mounted on *mutanda*, a crossbar and a *danhiko* bridge. The soundboard is made from wood of *mubvamaropa* and *mufenje* trees and the metal keys are made from any high carbon wire used for making nails. All these are available in the territory. *Mbira* to the Zezuru includes the instrument, its keys, the songs performed as the instrument is played and the dance styles. There are several types of *mbira* distinguished by their origin, function, shape and size (a number of keys). Some *mbira* use calabash to resonate their soft sounds. What is significant here is the tree from which the sound board is made.

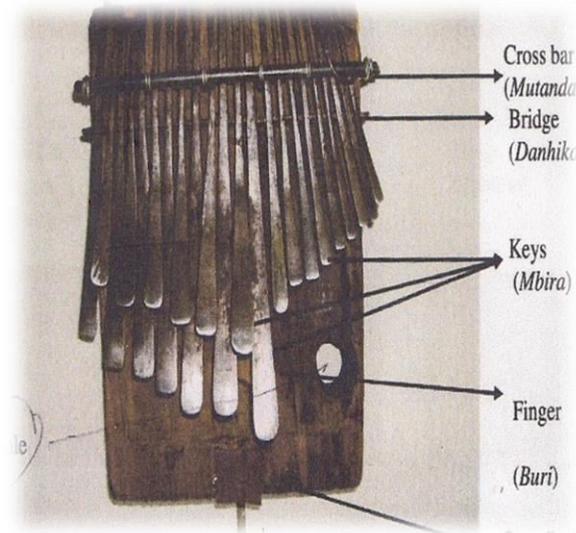


Plate 14 : Parts of the mbira
(Matiure, 2008:21)

Conclusion

It is not strange to highlight the significance of fauna/flora in the making of musical instrument in the continent. Music like language is community specific. With over a thousand communities in the continent it is difficult to talk of African music in terms of musical instruments.

We all acknowledge the diversity that exists in the continent yet the usage of plants and animals as source of the materials used in making musical instruments cuts across all of them. It is reasonable to acknowledge the diversity in the types of musical instruments used in the continent; on the same note to try to place one instrument as the main ones used in the musics in the continent would be misplaced. Drums are found to be used almost all over the continent but communities like the Maasai of both Kenya and Tanzania do not have drums; yet have horns they get from their herds of cattle and horned wild animals that graze in the territory. They also use sticks which they always carry along with them.

It is important to note that most of the musical instruments in the continent play extra musical roles and have unique attachment to the existence of the communities that make, perform and own them. This extra-musical role starts with the materials from which the instruments are made and extends to the role the instrument plays in the community. An example is that of the Akan drums which are not objects of worship, but “have to receive libations and carry prohibitions because they are repositories of the spirit

of *Tweneboa Kodua* and carry with them associations with ancestor drummers. Another example is that of the Zezuru who believe that *mhepo yevadzimu*, the spirit of the ancestors look after the welfare of the family. This happens when the spirit medium has been evoked by *mbira* music during a *bira* ceremony. From the look of things the *bira* ceremony greatly depends on the ceremony which is indebted to the instrument *mbira* which is made of *gwariva*, a wooden soundboard made from wood of *mubvamaropa* and *mufenje* trees.

It is not farfetched to observe that the sources from which all the materials musical instruments were made in the Continent, be they from fauna or from flora, were of great significance to the existence of the communities. The animals from which the horns, skins and tendons; the materials used in making musical instruments were highly valued by the communities. The plants, whether elephant grass, river reeds, papyrus, bamboo or the trees of various sizes, were highly valued by the communities. Such animals and plants were understandably protected by members of the community as their livelihood depended on them. Any contrary behaviour that endangered the existence of the animals and plants in the territory led to the wrath of ancestors, resulting into epidemics, drought and other forms negative consequences befalling the whole community. These are some of the reasons why prayers were performed when animals and trees were respectively killed or cut. In summary, the African was aware of the ecology, hence, did all that they could to protect their environment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agordoh, A.A.(1994). *Studies in African Music*. Accra: New Age Publications Ho
- Alenyo, G.W. (2009). *The Luo: A Legendary History of the Luo people of Africa from A Biblical Perspective; History of Descendants of Jews in the Nile Valley Who became know as the Luo*. Kampala: Shalom Books Ltd.
- Blacking, J. (1967). *Venda Children's Songs*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press
- Carver, M. (2012). *Understanding African Music*. Grahams town: International Library of African Music.
- Matiure, P. (2008) . "The relationship between *Mbira Dzavadzimu* Modes and Zezuru Ancestral Spirit Possession." MA Thesis: University of Kwa -Zulu Natal
- Murray, J. (1998). *Cultural Atlas of Africa (Revised Edition)*. New York: Checkmark Books.
- Nketia, J.H.K.(1975). *The Music of Africa*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- Nketia, J.H.K.(1963). *Drumming in Akan Communities of Ghana*. Accra: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd
- Nyakiti, C.O. (2013). *Life and Work of Four African Composers with Reference to the Influence of Luo Traditional Music and Dance*. Eldoret: Utafiti Foundation.
- Nyakiti, C.O. (2011). *Music Traditions of Africa: A Study of the Music of the People of Busia, Kenya*. Berlin: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller.
- Nyakiti, C.O. (2011). *Music Traditions of Africa: A Study of the Music of the Dawida*. Berlin: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller.
- Nyakiti, C.O. (1997). "Seven Traditional Dances of Selected Groups in Kenya" in Esther A. Dargan (ed.) *The Spirit's Dance in Africa: Evolution, Transformation and Continuity i Sub-Sahara*. Westmount: Galerie Amrad African Art Publications. Pp.284-291

- Ogot, B.A. (2009). *A History of the Luo-Speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd
- Omondi, W.A.(1980). *Thum: Traditional Lyre Music of the Luo of Kenya*. Ph.D. Thesis .London:The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
- Sachs, C. (1977). *The History of Musical Instruments*. London: J, M. Dents & Sons.
- Simiyu, N.R. (2011). “Socio-cultural Significance of Circumcision Songs within a changing Ababukusu Community of Bumula Division, South Bungoma District, Western Province of Kenya”. MA Thesis Kenyatta University.
- Williams, G. (1982). *Jazz & Blues*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- http://www.google.com/url?url=http://graphic.nobody.jp/irom/musical_instruments/index.
- <http://www.google.com/url?url=http://pricillasproject.weebly.com/instruments-membranophones>.
- https://www.google.com/urk?url=https://arncastillon.wordpress.com/2012/02/10/music-from-africa-and-its-musial_instruments-2/
- <http://www.google.com/url?url=http://www.hamillgallery.com/DRUMS/Horns/SudanHorn01>
- <http://www.google.com/url?url=http://music.africamuseum.be/instruments/english/burundi/burundi>.
- <http://www.google.com/url?url=http://www.contemporary-african-art.com/african-musical-instruments>

A SHORT RESUME:



Charles Nyakiti Orawo, Professor of African Music and Ethnomusicology in the Department of Music and Dance, Kenyatta University, Nairobi (Kenya); born in 1947 and holds a Ph.D. (The Queen’s University of Belfast) in Ethnomusicology and is one of the last students of the late Professor John Blacking. He is an ethnomusicologist, supported with extensive field research experiences in Music traditions of Africa; has organized and participated in many International Conferences and Symposiums both locally and worldwide. Prof. Nyakiti has authored ten books on the music traditions of Kenyan communities; contributed chapters and articles to books and renowned International Journals.