

**THE CHEWA ART OF DRUMMING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MODERN
MALAWIAN MUSIC**

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Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy
wondrous works declare.

Psalm 75:1 (King James Version)

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family: my wife Cecilia and our four children, David, Deborah,
Angela-Vincentia, and Daniella

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Chapter One

Research Outline

1.1 Personal Background, Motivation and Experiences

The Chewa people are the largest ethnic group in Malawi. Their music performances have contributed significantly to the social and cultural development of the Malawian nation. This contribution has manifested through the practice of Chewa music and dance throughout Malawi's different socio-political dispensations both in rural and urban communities. Other Malawian ethnic groups have also performed Chewa dances both out of choice and as a convenience. Additionally, a number of emerging contemporary music artists have shown preference for Chewa music and dance idioms in their attempt to incorporate cultural elements in their music compositions.

Among the Chewa people, there is a strong relationship between dance and drumming. Almost all Chewa dances have drumming accompaniment. Therefore, to understand Chewa dance philosophies, one has to study the corresponding art of drumming that accompanies the different Chewa dances. Consequently, it becomes imperative to determine what constitutes the Chewa drumming artistry in terms of its technology, ideology, and practice. Another important aspect that requires particular attention is the fact that Chewa drumming does not function in isolation. There are relationships between the drum sound and other forms of sound during every performance. For some dances, these other sound sources include hand-clapping, sound from costumes, feet rattles, shakers, whistles, and bells.

The urge to understand Chewa drum technology, theories, drum performance, and relationships between drumming and dance on the one hand, and drumming and other sound nuances on the other, motivated me to research into the art of drumming within Malawi's dominant cultural group. This motivation included tracing the history of the Chewa people; studying the Chewa settlement systems and ritual practices; investigating on the Chewa music and dance organization; exploring how music and dance functions in Chewa social settings and how drumming helps to fulfil such functions; and describing the Chewa drumming artistry and its various contributions to modern music practice. I engaged in this kind of study with clear understanding that

culture is dynamic, and as such, Chewa music and dance as well as the art of drumming involved have undergone evolution due to different social, cultural, political, and technological influences. Besides, people's tastes change over time, and so performers of different cultural music traditions tend to respond to current trends. Nevertheless, known conservative cultural communities still provide a great deal of unadulterated information through both oral and practical interactions.

I am a Chewa by birth even though I was born and raised away from my parents' original home district. I spent all my life in cities and towns, except when I was doing my secondary school education. As a general Malawian tradition, my parents ensured that we visited our village once every year in order to see grandparents, uncles, and other relatives. In addition, my parents wanted us to appreciate our cultural heritage and learn some Chewa cultural values. These village visits exposed me to many Chewa dance performances.

During each visit to our village, it became clear to me that there were three popular dances that our people performed. I often went to the village in the dry season, and every visit coincided with *gulewamkulu* festivals and wedding ceremonies. I attended all wedding ceremonies that took place near our village together with my elder brother and our cousins. In all these weddings, there were *chimtali* and *mganda* performances. I attended very few *gulewamkulu* functions out of curiosity and where no one knew me very well, because I was never initiated into *gulewamkulu*.

As I grew up, I realised that there were *chimtali* dancers both in my patrilineal and matrilineal villages. Later, both villages formed *mganda* groups, one in 1974 and the other in 1979. I enjoyed watching my cousins perform in these dances, and I became interested in learning *mganda*. Together with my brother, I forced myself to dance behind the dancers whenever they were invited to perform. We were discouraged and criticized for spoiling their performances, but we became stubborn and accompanied the dancing group from my mother's village everywhere they went to perform. This did not please the group members, but my cousin, who was one of the leaders in the group responsible for maintaining discipline, reasoned with the group on several occasions to allow us to go with them, and regard us as merely curious urban children who wanted to learn about village life. Eventually, the group allowed us to accompany

them on several trips and to rehearse with them, but form our own line at the back of the dancers. During these trips, I witnessed different genres of both *mganda* and *chimtali* from not only our district, but also surrounding districts.

We spent an average of two months during every visit to our village. This was always during the school summer holiday. During each visit, I witnessed at least one *gulewamkulu* performance in my father's village and one in my mother's village, which are less than one kilometre apart. Sometimes, these performances took place in other nearby villages, and I heard their night drumming echoing through our compound.

1.2 Other Chewa Dance Experiences

Apart from my experiences of Chewa dances in our village, I had an inclination towards cultural music and dance from youth. One way this inclination manifested itself was through my keen listening to a radio programme called *Nyimbo Za M'maboma* (music from the districts) that ran on state radio Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) between 2.03 pm and 2.45 pm every Monday to Friday. The programme played cultural music of different Malawian ethnic groups from different districts.

Another cultural music programme that was aired on MBC was "Music of the People" an English programme that not only played Malawi's cultural music, but described its origin, its setting, and its style. Of particular interest to me was the usual presenter's oral imitation of the drumming rhythm of such music, and his comparison with modern band music rhythms.

Through both programmes I developed a strong interest in the Chewa dance music that I was already familiar with, and other Chewa music practices that I had not experienced in my home district. Both experiences gave me a wider understanding of the Chewa music traditions and the Chewa art of drumming. Out of curiosity and as a result of presenters' influences, I began to do my own comparisons of the different Malawian music traditions, especially in the area of drumming.

There are ten main ethnic or linguistic groups in Malawi: Chewa, Ngoni, Yao, Tumbuka, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Nkhonde or Kyangonde, Lambya, and Senga. Malawi is a multilingual society with English and Chichewa as official languages. During the first thirty years of Malawi's independence from colonial rule, all radio programming was done in the two official languages. However, repeated playing of music from different cultural groups and languages helped me to get used to the basic configurations of such music, and enabled me to have a diversified view of what constitutes drumming in all those cultures.

Since Malawi attained independence on 6 July 1964, for thirty years the annual Independence celebrations took place over a period of one month: first at national level where the state president was in attendance, then at regional level where regional ministers presided over the ceremonies, followed by district celebrations, constituency celebrations, and area celebrations presided over by various cabinet ministers, members of parliament, and other party officials respectively. In addition to the Independence celebrations, Malawians celebrated Kamuzu Day on 14 May and Mothers Day on 17 October. Other national events included annual party conventions and presidential crop inspection tours.

During all these events men, women and young people presented music and dance performances, military parades and youth displays filling the whole day. Music and dance performers came from the different parts of the country to the Kamuzu Stadium during these national events. Most popular dances included *chimtali*, *mganda* and *gulewamkulu* performances, which from my personal background I recognized as some of Chewa dances. However, except for *mganda* and *gulewamkulu*, the *chimtali* dance was also performed by groups that came from districts that are not considered as Chewa districts.

I participated in *mganda* dancing in my four years of secondary school during presidential crop inspection tours and during the school's annual cultural evenings. In addition, I once joined the school's *gulewamkulu* group by trick and learnt some drumming theories and general transference of both music and dance skills among members.

1.3 Challenges of Research in Chewa Communities

Chewa communities are closed societies owing to their nature and structure. Chewa people's psychological predisposition emanates from both their social organization and historical experiences with people of other tribes as well as their interaction with early Christian missionaries. In general, the Chewa society is closed to the stranger and any outsider to the Chewa segmented communities.

The Chewa society is stratified in terms of both sex and age groups. Men spend their day engaging in men's professions such as sculpture, building houses, attending to domestic animals, hunting, and constructing granaries. Women on the other hand engage themselves with cooking, pounding grain, fetching water and firewood, cleaning food utensils, bathing children, cleaning the house, and telling chant fables. As a result, men do not interfere with women's jobs and vice versa. In addition, men's presence is not allowed where women are busy with their work, just as women's presence is not allowed where men are working. This stratification makes it difficult for male researchers to interview women and vice versa.

In terms of age groups, there is no social participation between members of different age groups. Both boys and girls have no status before puberty. It is only after puberty and relevant initiation rites that boys and girls are regarded as having attained the status of *namwali* – the initiate (Kuthemba-Mwale, 1977:2). At this stage, they are not allowed to play or share jokes with non-initiates as this is considered as lack of self-respect. Ironically, all non-Chewa individuals who have obviously not undergone the Chewa initiation are regarded as young people who do not deserve inside Chewa information regardless of their age.

When young people marry, they gain another status and are forbidden from fraternizing with their unmarried friends who have not learned the different customs and instructions that married people receive. Statuses change when the married people have children, and later grandchildren. The knowledge about the society which researchers may obtain from a young initiate is different from what a father, a member of the council of elders, or a chief may provide. This calls for strategic approaches targeting appropriate community members when collecting data among Chewa people.

While proper strategy may help with sourcing of needed and relevant information, assumed custodians of Chewa culture prefer speaking through their spokespersons that are often cautious in their reporting and are less experienced and knowledgeable in intricate matters.

Another notable challenge when conducting research in Chewa communities is that of language. Chichewa, as the language is called, has undergone various changes due to people's interactions. These changes have affected both the tempo and the intonation of the language. In some cases, new words that are foreign to Chewa speakers have been incorporated into the Chewa language. As a result, most elders from Chewa communities do not understand fully the Chichewa that is spoken in urban centres. Researchers often use the standardized Chichewa which is spoken at national level and is taught in schools.

Creating interview questions in standard Chichewa form for conservative Chewa respondents poses a big challenge. Respondents either give incorrect answers or simply answer in the affirmative in order to get rid of the question. Village elders expect interviewer's maturity that must be demonstrated by slow and composed speech. On the contrary, researchers are often in a hurry to complete their questionnaire and so they may not have the patience of asking questions slowly. The only respondents who can attend to such impatient interviewers are youthful and less experienced individuals. Otherwise, the experienced and knowledgeable respondents get closed up and provide irrelevant information.

Finally, suspicion is one of the marks of the Chewa people. This suspicion originates from the secrecy that characterises Chewa ritual practices. Although some dances play the role of entertainment, basically all Chewa dances have ritualistic phenomena attached to them. Researching into Chewa music and dance practices leaves the researcher with either half truths or deliberately distorted information that help the Chewa people protect their customs. Economic supply of information is also manifested among fellow Chewa people when, for example, one group wishes to learn a particular dance or other art form from another. Deception and withholding of information are acceptable norms, since as the Chewa saying goes, *mtima wamnzako*

ndi tsidya lina (your friend's heart is the other side of the river), meaning you cannot always tell another person's motives.

In addition to suspicion emanating from secretive socio-cultural practices, magic plays a major role in human affairs. While magic may mean different things among peoples of different cultural backgrounds, in the traditional Chewa society magic encompasses life issues such as attracting audiences to individual and group performances, self-protection from malicious performance rival groups, warding off wild animals and witches, inducing good luck, and manipulating one's personality in order to do extraordinary things. In this case, the Chewa people tend to protect their tricks of achievement and are often reluctant to divulge even what many researchers may regard as trivial information.

To overcome challenges outlined above, I used relational connections to help me during both recordings and oral interviews. Some of these relations hold respectable positions in society such as village headman. One relation falls into the category of cultural custodian because of his advanced age. These helped a lot in approaching interviewees, arranging appointments, advising on appropriate villages for successful data collection, advising on tokens of thanks and honoraria, and talking to village elders on my behalf. Of great advantage to me was the fact that these relational aides are initiated into *gulewamkulu* and they have participated in the dancing of *mganda* for a long time. Unfortunately, culture barred us from engaging female aides in the data collection exercise.

1.4 Need for the Study

Many scholars have conducted Malawian music and dance research from different perspectives and to serve specific academic objectives. However, it appears that most researchers into Malawian music and dance in general, and Chewa music and dance in particular, choose to ignore relationships that exist between dance movement, music text, visual arts, auxiliary sounds, and the accompanying drumming artistry as one set of aesthetic ideals. One explanation for this could be the researchers' limited ability to investigate, observe and analyze a complex field of study – the art of drumming within

a specific cultural group. The other reason could be failure to notice that drumming is what makes dance, and that it treasures a people's humanistic and aesthetic ideals.

This study is an attempt to document, describe and analyse Chewa drumming artistry and its positive contributions to the modern Malawian society. Listed below are some of the challenges that the Chewa culture has experienced so that its contributions have either been suppressed or ignored over the years.

1.4.1 Early Missionary Interference

As a way of imposing Western music education in Chewa communities, early missionaries ensured that they stopped practice of Chewa cultural music and dance in mission schools. Quoting Steytler (1939:197), Chanunkha (2005:2-6) asserts that the only aspect of Chewa culture which was included in music education was Chichewa or Chinyanja (vernacular of Achewa). Steytler further observes that the missionaries excluded Chewa music in education, but instead encouraged the Chewa to compose Chichewa (Chinyanja) words to fit Western tunes which were content of music in schools.

Chanunkha further discloses that converted Chewa Christians considered the school as a place for serious business, and so 'playful' indigenous music did not have a place for such seriousness. However, the Chewa people had established institutions for training their youth in matters of wisdom, customs, beliefs, laws and values. These initiation institutions incorporated music and dances such as *gulewamkulu* for boys and *thimbwidza* for girls, which the Western missionary tried to stop by imposing their views on Chewa Christian leaders. These views derived from the fact that there was something sinful in Achewa cultural music because this music was a part of the converted Achewa Christians' pagan life that they had forsaken (Chanunkha 2005:2-9). In particular, the missionaries perceived *gulewamkulu* as promoting heathen and sexually immoral rituals (Kerr, 1998:31).

1.4.2 Political Interference

After attaining political freedom from the British colonialists in 1964, Malawi experienced an evolution of dances that were performed to represent Malawians' expression of celebration for the achievement of political freedom. The dances were also performed to express national solidarity and to cement relationships between peoples of different cultural backgrounds. Above all, dancing before the state president was a manifestation of hero worship, whereby the first republican president was regarded as a liberator, a hero, and a saviour.

It is the last reason that impacted negatively on the traditional Chewa music and dance practices. For example the *chimitali* dance, which uses one big round drum and two drummers, evolved into a dance that uses three to four cylindrical drums. Even though the basic drumming rhythms are maintained, there is usually a mixture of different dances in this modern *chimitali* dance 'to suit the occasion.' In addition, *gulewamkulu*, a traditionally ritual dance turned into a political-entertainment dance, its original value being significantly eroded and the power of its secrecy taken away. During many political functions, *gulewamkulu* dancers found themselves mixed up with 'ordinary' people and were sometimes ridiculed by misunderstanding audiences. Often dancers danced to out-of-tune drums for lack of tuning facilities;¹ and in many instances dancers scrambled for the limited performance time allocated to them, and so several unrelated *gulewamkulu* characters either danced in groups or danced for a very short time. This scenario was tantamount to abuse, underutilization and a distortion of such performances.

Drumming for Chewa dances corresponds to the melody of the text. The advent of political freedom encouraged creation of praise songs for the state president. These songs were either arranged wedding songs or reworded church songs. The Chewa music and dance song creation changed a lot in order to incorporate such praise elements. Because the songs were not originally meant for such dances, they somehow changed in their traditional dance patterns; hence, impacted also on the drumming styles. All the three Chewa dances under study have not been spared this significant

¹ Fire flames are used for tuning *gulewamkulu* drums. During presidential rallies the fire was often unavailable.

change. In addition to text ‘improvisation,’ new *gulewamkulu* characters² have also been ‘created’ in order to dance to such improvised drumming styles. Additionally, drummers for *chimitali* and *mganda* have had to re-learn their skill in order to accommodate these innovations.

1.4.3 Modern Anti-Chewa Advances

The title Chewa as a generic name for the cultural group has brought great controversy among Malawian researchers, linguists and politicians over a long period of time. Due to historical reasons, many scholars argue that Chichewa should be regarded as a dialect of Chinyanja, which as will be discussed in this dissertation, should not be the case. Chinyanja has been described as the language for the Chewa people by early missionaries over decades. However, after independence the first Malawi president embarked on a campaign to correct what he believed was a long standing error of calling what could have been a dialect the main language, and vice versa. Unfortunately, he himself was a Chewa and his move could easily be misinterpreted.

After attaining multiparty democracy, many writers and researchers felt that the former president had been influenced by tribalism to, among other things, declare Chichewa as a national language and assert that Chinyanja was only a dialect of Chichewa. Politicians joined the band wagon of critics. These politicians were also moved by the general feeling that the Chewa people had been favoured by the Chewa president, and so their national dominance had not only been due to their numerical supremacy. As a result, there have been several proposals to revert to Chinyanja as the name of the language both in schools and in the media. Subtle efforts have also been made to erase some Chewa practices, or to balance up cultural issues across the nation.

The success of these moves has been a sharp decline in the Chewa music and dance performances at national events until probably the past four years during the second

² In the late 1970’s there used to be *gulewamkulu* characters known as ‘*tiangwazi*’ named after the title of the first republican president Ngwazi Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. The title ‘ngwazi’ means hero, and the title ‘*tiangwazi*’ means ‘small ngwazis.’ Currently emerging *gulewamkulu* characters include ‘SADC’ and *Zodiak*, names taken after the Southern African Development Community and a pro-rural Malawian radio station Zodiak Broadcasting Corporation

phase of Malawi's multiparty democracy, when these performances resuscitated. These, however, often serve different functions from the traditional ones.

The mushrooming of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups that deal with issues of education, gender, health and environment has also helped to re-organize performing groups by forming clubs. These clubs create music and dance performances to pass on messages to campaign audiences against child abuse, gender-based violence, environmental degradation, HIV and Aids, and school dropout. They are supplied with uniforms, paid allowances, and given basic training on social issues that their music and dance should address.

1.5 Research Questions

This dissertation seeks to address the following general question: What constitutes the Chewa art of drumming, and how has this art been preserved and transferred to modern performers? This question is broken down into three sub-questions:

What technological, theoretical, and practical considerations do Chewa drum makers take into account in order to produce specific drums as instruments for various performances? This sub question deals with drum nomenclature that defines drum sizes, construction considerations, and drum roles in specific Chewa performances.

What processes and institutions do Chewa drumming trainers use in order to transfer drumming knowledge to younger generations? This sub-question seeks to establish existing Chewa systems of knowledge transfer in the area of drumming, and to determine the future of Chewa art of drumming.

How has the Chewa art of drumming evolved and spread over the years? This sub-question addresses the existence of internal and external mechanisms that have helped the Chewa drumming and dance culture to evolve into modern practice and emerge as a typical example of successful transition into other art forms.

These research questions helped in the formulation of the research questionnaire and in determining relevant respondents to the formulated questions.

1.6 Aims of the Study

This study aims at describing drum performances of the three main Chewa dances of *gulewamkulu*, *mganda*, and *chimitali* as practiced in the Central Region of Malawi. A description of drum performances in the three dances will help in exploring music similarities that exist within these famous Chewa dances.

In order to assess the impact of the Chewa art of drumming on modern Malawian music, a determination of what constitutes the essential canon of Chewa traditions, and how far modern performers do justice to the artistry involved, would be imperative. Of vital consideration also would be the analysis of typical Chewa individual as well as group drum performances in order to describe and analyse interrelationships between performers.

A study of cultural and philosophical implications surrounding the drum and its performance in order to inform on Chewa aesthetic values was thus carried out. Furthermore, this study gives specific examples where Malawian music has excelled through use of Chewa drumming idioms, either consciously or unintentionally. These contemporary music examples have served diversified purposes, often different from the original functions among the traditional Chewa performers.

However, the specific aims of this study are as follows:

1. to document the three major Chewa dances, namely *chimitali*, *gulewamkulu*, and *mganda*, in order to describe characteristics and compare drumming similarities or differences among them
2. to identify cultural and philosophical implications surrounding the drum and its performance in Africa, in general, and in Malawi, in particular, in order to inform on the Chewa aesthetic values specific to dance and drum performances
3. to describe the Chewa creativity as reflected in the drum construction, nomenclature, and symbolisms

4. to analyse typical Chewa individual and group drum performances and existing interrelationships between performers
5. to investigate the impact of Chewa art of drumming on modern Malawian society

1.7 Rationale for the Study

The Chewa people and their culture exist in almost all the districts of central and southern Malawi. In addition, about eighty percent of all Malawians speak Chichewa. While there are numerous Chewa dialects scattered across the nation such as *Nyanja*, *Mang'anja*, and *Chipeta*, all these share Chewa roots and cannot be regarded to be independent from the Chewa cultural practices. Their dances and other music performances share several similarities. Their social settings and philosophies do reflect these shared cultural roots. Their food, dress code, personal beauty code, beliefs, architecture, general economic activities, customs, and ritualistic practices, all reflect a specific *Chewa-ness* of all these different groups.

The Chewa people live in all the districts of the Central Region and exist in a good number of the Southern Region districts. In these districts, they adopt cultural practices of the neighbouring ethnic groups while they practice their own. These include music and dance traditions. Consequently, one cannot divorce the Chewa music and dance from the art of drumming that accompanies it. Since culture is dynamic, contemporary components of music and dance in Malawi are equally influenced by the Chewa music and dance practices, including the corresponding art of drumming.

The artistic elements of Chewa drumming are reflected in the drum construction, fine artistry, nomenclature, and symbolisms, all of which are important aspects in providing deeper understanding of the drums performances. Prevalent rhythmic drum patterns, numbers of drummers, drum sizes, acoustic preferences and variations, as well as their systematic combinations with other sound nuances all reflect the Chewa art that could be regarded as a philosophical axle on which modern Malawian music performances hinge.

As the Chewa saying goes: *Mutu Ukakula Sulewa Nkhonya* (He who has a big head cannot avoid blows), I wish to argue that the Chewa people, just like other predominant cultural groups, are often taken for granted, their influences are not grasped in their scope, and their contributions are erased with time. The danger of this state of affairs is that history slowly gets lost, and wrong referencing and acknowledgement cloud the education system, leading to misguided focus on further research orientation. This further leads to loss of cultural heritage and a distortion of important facts.

The study is therefore a reflection of a cultural group's influence on the modern Malawian society in the field of music performances that has not received sufficient attention. This significant scholarly element discourages the prevalent tendency to regard impacts of major ethnic groups in society as being obvious.

1.8 Relevance of the Study

While this study emphasizes, highlights and aims at rediscovering, appreciating and communicating the drumming artistry of a cultural group, through its impact analysis it also seeks to reveal the process of drum music learning and acquisition among the Chewa people, its impartation to other non-Chewa music performers, as well as the preservation of the music's performance styles.

Study of transfer mechanisms of music and dance practices in general, and the art of drumming in particular, among the Chewa people is vital as it helps to determine cultural movement from one generation to the next. There are cultural tools that the Chewa people use formally and informally for them to successfully transfer their drumming art to younger generations. There are also systems that are used to encourage, persuade and motivate the younger generation to learn, acquire and master both music and dance, and the art of drumming.

There are equally methods of assessing learners' abilities and successes in acquiring and mastering the drumming skills. This should explain why Chewa communities have drumming experts. In addition, physiological, psychological, and emotional

factors are some of the general traits that generate differences in all individuals, and determine their abilities (skills), capabilities (competencies), and interests (motivation). Therefore, every successful transfer of skills through systematic approaches and an established institutional set up ensures crystallization of such skills and a general preservation of important cultural traits.

The preceding observations are relevant for in-depth studies in Ethnomusicology or African Performance.

1.9 Research Design

This research presentation discusses drumming practices of the Chewa people of Traditional Authority (T.A.) Kalumo of Ntchisi district and T.A. Dzoole of Dowa district. Dowa and Ntchisi are neighbouring districts of the Central Region. These two districts are relevant examples of Chewa communities that have arguably preserved the Chewa culture over the years and are therefore considered as conservative Chewa districts.

Samples of recorded music were made in six research sites. These sites were distinguished by factors such as:

- Originality of cultural practice
- Level of acculturation and/or cross-culturation
- Area and information accessibility
- Economic considerations for data collection
- Researcher's prior skeleton knowledge of the area and its people

Live field recordings took place in Cholwe, Mavwanje, Jere, Chitete, and Tchale villages of T.A. Kalumo and in Kayaza village of T.A. Dzoole. In addition, oral interviews relating to practitioners and drummers of Chewa dances under study were conducted in these and other villages. Further interviews were conducted targeting culture custodians.

Due to literacy challenges that the researcher anticipated and encountered among the people of these rural communities, a deliberate attempt was made to conduct oral interviews with researchers and directors of cultural institutions. These provided clearer answers to academic questions that the rural respondents struggled to grasp.

In order to compare findings of earlier researchers or data collectors in Chewa communities, consultation with available literature as well as audio-visual recordings of Chewa music and dance was made. These in some way provided raw data where interpretation of the recorded material was not made. They also helped in the formulation of healthy arguments and critique where this researcher's findings disagreed with documented interpretations.

In order to determine the impact of Chewa music, dance, and drumming idioms on modern music, the researcher conducted oral interviews with music artists from the cities of Lilongwe and Blantyre. In total five comprehensive interviews were conducted. The artists were chosen based on five criteria:

- Degree of popularity
- Interest in promotion and performance of traditional music
- Assumed use of Chewa traditional music idioms in their compositions
- Consistency in performance of cultural music
- Artists' accessibility and availability for interviews

Audio-visual recordings of live performances, still pictures, and oral interviews form the basis of data collection techniques from primary sources. Informants included craftsmen, performers, traditional custodians, and performance participants.

Oral interviews involving modern music artists, researchers, and cultural centre directors provide views of both consumers and analysts of Chewa music and dance practices. Archived audio and visual materials of Chewa performances as well as general bibliographic records and reports, reinforce the other data forms. Bibliographic documentations and reports on Chewa culture helped in the balancing of research findings as secondary sources of information.

Apart from villages within Dowa and Ntchisi, research information comes from the cities of Blantyre, Zomba and Lilongwe, and the districts of Mchinji and Dedza. Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, the Ministry of Information, the National Archives, the Museum of Malawi, the Department of Arts and Crafts, the Malawi Dance Troupe, the Kungoni Arts and Crafts Centre, and the University of Malawi library are the main institutions that have provided valuable information for this dissertation.

1.10 Delimitation of the Dissertation

This dissertation discusses the art of drumming as practiced by the Chewa people of specific traditional authorities of Kalumo and Dzoole in Dowa and Ntchisi districts of Central Malawi. While it is strongly believed that these areas represent conservative Chewa groupings, the dissertation is by no means an exhaustive authority of all Chewa drumming practices. Efforts were made to study drumming for three perceived popular Chewa dances as case studies for the Chewa drumming technology, artistry, aesthetics and performance in order to address the research question. This study will definitely provide theoretical and practical insights for future researchers on the same subject.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Literature Review

2.1 Methodology

Available literature on research, culture and ethnography was consulted before embarking on materials related to Chewa culture in general and Chewa music and dance in particular. A qualitative method of inquiry and data collection was used taking into account Gray (2003:12):

In order to investigate complex sets of relationships which are present in cultural processes we require a variety of methods ranging from textual analysis, observation, different ways of gathering knowledge and information from individuals and groups, such as different kinds of interviews and participant observation.

Textual analysis was done through a review of literature on research, research methodologies, and student theses in order to develop an understanding of the different research theories. Additional literature on Chewa history, Chewa music and dance, and Chewa social life was consulted in order to relate the research question to Chewa peripheral issues that have a direct impact on drumming. Sources for textual analysis included library books, journals, and the internet.

In order to collect raw research data, both face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted. This was considered following Chanunkha (2005:7) who quotes Marshal and Rossman (1999:105) as follows: Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information: (a) participation in the setting, (b) direct observation, (c) in-depth interviewing, and (d) analysing documents and material culture. The interviews were conducted using a questionnaire. In addition to the questionnaire, oral narratives about Chewa culture in general and history of Chewa drumming were recorded. Respondents of oral interviews were singers, dancers, drummers, drum makers, village elders, centre directors and researchers, academics, *ex-gulewamkulu* members, and ordinary Chewa informants.

Audio recordings of live performances were also conducted using a voice recorder. These recordings were done in three phases, namely: recording of singers, recording of drummers, and recording of the audience. The drummers were specifically recorded in order to document the different drum rhythms and their relationships; the singers were recorded in order to relate the melody to the drumming; and the audience was recorded in order to document their reaction and comments. Kamlongera *et al* (1992:7) suggest that a music and dance researcher should make every effort to study the shared evaluation, that is, the critical assessments of dance and other integrated art forms, expressed by the artists and audience alike.

This shared evaluation was further enhanced by showing recorded performances to the performers and members of the audience soon after each performance for their natural reactions, comments and evaluations. This helped to determine both aesthetic and extraordinary issues about the just ended performances. This technique was possible through DVD recording of live performances.

In addition to audio and video recordings, still pictures of dancers, drummers and different drums were taken using a digital camera. These pictures helped to explain dance formations, drumming postures, and drums' distinguishing features. They also helped to earmark important aspects of costume that narrate musical and other stories.

Apart from the voice recorder, a notebook was used to record responses to telephone interviews, oral narratives, library information, documentaries, discussions, notes from audio-visual Chewa performances and ceremonies, and viewers' comments. Notebook records were taken informally except for telephone interviews and library information.

Primary data collection was done in the informants' and performers' natural settings. These included village domestic work places, dwelling units, and village dancing arenas. Our physical presence enhanced thoughtful responses and visual signs that helped informants to clarify their points. Recording of live performances in their natural setting ensured flexibility of the performers, availability of supporting audiences, and observation of necessary rituals by the performers. In addition, this ensured the functionality of the hierarchical administrative system at village level for such performances.

These procedures agree with what Kamlongera *et al* (1992:7-8) summarise as proposed research procedures in the study of African dance:

- (a) study the shared evaluation, the critical assessments of dance and other integrated art forms, expressed by artists and audience alike;
- (b) collect a taxonomy of aesthetic terms used by dancers, other artists and the general public attending the dance event;
- (c) film dance events and, thus, record for more in depth analysis at a later time the integration of artistic activities at the dance, as well as the audience's reactions to the dance performance;
- (d) observe the theatrical elements, like the characterizations, setting, costuming and choreography, at the dance event;
- (e) develop a music and dance literacy, and thus add an extra dimension of objective clarity to the observations of the dance;
- (f) make observations of subjects less directly related to the actual dance event;
- (g) make an historical survey of the dance at the event at which the dance is performed, thereby making note of the possible cultural influences affecting the dance;
- (h) Study the dance event and its specific functions in the society.

On the other hand, Watanabe (1967:5) suggests basic approaches to music research, among others, as follows:

1. The historical, in which a chronological account of the subject is given
2. The developmental, in which the evolutionary processes of the subject are studied
3. The theoretical, in which the subject is related to such concepts as form, harmony, counterpoint, and devices of composition
4. The analytical, in which the subject is taken apart and reconstructed to learn why and how it functions
5. The comparative, in which several elements may be examined for points of similarity and conversely, the contrastive, in which points of difference are noted
6. The descriptive, in which a subject or a condition is systematically and fully described
7. The speculative, in which a philosophy or a theory may be formulated

However, Watanabe (1967:5) warns that the speculative approach is in danger of becoming too subjective when the researcher allows himself to be carried away by an unsubstantiated idea. In line with this warning, Hanna (1992:316) in her article,

Dance, proposes that because a researcher's theories and methods in some way determine results of inquiry, a combination of approaches from different domains of knowledge may provide the fullest understanding of dance.

Concurring with Watanabe's suggestions above, efforts were made by this researcher to conduct a historical survey of the communities where recorded dances were performed. The survey aimed at determining where the people migrated from, whether they performed the dances in their original settlements, whether they have a Chewa background, and how long they have lived in their present settlements or performed the particular dances. This investigation helped to discover that two of the villages under study had Ngoni background but they adopted Chewa dance performances through acculturation, interest and convenience. Additionally, most of the respondents in these Ngoni villages had Chewa names and testified that the dances in question were historically Chewa dances.

To determine general evolutionary processes that occurred to Chewa dances in general, and drumming for these dances in particular, an inquiry into Chewa dances that may have become extinct was made. Possible change of names and their meanings to existing dances was also investigated. Related dances, their functions, and their characteristics were examined through a questionnaire, and historic references to drum construction and materials used were also explored.

Theoretical issues on drumming were determined by asking drum players to perform without the dancers, first as a group, then individually. The drummers were also asked to change tempo, change accents, or change drums. This helped the researcher to draw conclusions on the performances' rhythmic, timbre, and metric preferences. The drummers' views on the different changes were sought in order to arrive at precise conclusions. In case of *gulewamkulu*, dancers can dance to fewer drums or to singing and clapping only. However, some dance gestures are not expressive enough without a complete set of the drumming.

Parts of the different drums, specific materials used to make them, tools, dimensions, and intangible elements related to the drum were investigated. This analysis helped the researcher to understand why particular drums played particular roles in the

performance, and why particular players handled the drums in particular ways. Names of different dance characters, genres and officials were also inquired in order to relate their historical background to the general performance.

The comparative and contrastive studies of the different dance and drumming elements were accomplished through observation of implicit dance inversions, and a determination of acoustic function of the drums. Related to this is the existence of different genres of the same dance, different characters, and different titles given to similar officials by different dance groups.

Describing Chewa dance and drumming performances based on findings obtained through the above processes has helped this researcher to speculate on specific Chewa drumming theories and other performance experiential preferences. The assertions made are substantiated by available evidence.

2.2 Literature Review

The following is an evaluative report of information found in the literature related to the topic under study that I consulted in order to get a theoretical base for the research and a determination of the nature of my research. This review describes, summarizes, evaluates and clarifies the literature in question. The literature helped me to develop a context for the research; illustrate how and how far a similar study has been done before; take note of gaps and flaws existing in previous research; and refine or refocus my area of study.

2.2.1 Definition, Theories, and Characteristics of the Term ‘Culture’

Culture refers to the general way of life of a particular group of people. This life includes such components as traditions, beliefs, customs, values, norms, dress, cuisine, and music. It is a complex whole that includes learned behaviour, passed from generation to generation. Cultural elements are therefore inherited, used, added to, and transmitted. Shim (1972:32) defines culture as the patterned ways of all people, however simple or complex their life may be.

In addition, culture involves the transfer of knowledge in the areas of belief, the arts, morals, habits, and other behaviours, for personality development (Thompson, 1975:62), social cohesion, and collective identity. Culture therefore provides guidelines on how societies should act in harmony, embrace common beliefs, and perform acceptable practices. In other words, culture clears human confusion and ensures socio-political success. This is perpetuated through social structures that affect individual lifestyles, leading to “merged” behaviour – a kind of institutionalisation and crystallisation.

Chewa culture is well known for the different linguistic dialects that define their geographical locations. Although the different groups perform similar dances, there are clear differences in the dance steps, tempi, organisation, and general presentation. Nevertheless, physiological characteristics, beliefs, rituals, customs, and succession practices are similar in all Chewa communities.

In trying to outline characteristics of culture, Pheto-Moeti (2005:27-28) quotes Runyon (1977:78-80) as follows: culture is functional, social, prescriptive, learned, arbitrary, value-laden, cumulative, and adaptive. As a functional tool, culture provides a stable and dependable framework of common values, traditions, and practices that facilitate human interaction. In addition, culture emanates from human interaction and is human-created, that is, it is unique to humans and is maintained by humans. All cultural behaviours and practices are defined, prescribed, and approved by human society. Music and dance among the Chewa people is the strongest cultural tool that is applicable to all aspects of social and economic life. Through it values are prescribed, learned, accumulated and adapted for the general propagation and continuity of cultural success.

Culture is not genetically inherited, but it is learned through demonstration, observation, imitation, and even rehearsals. Behaviours and practices accepted in one culture may not be acceptable in another culture. Cultural concepts often dictate what ought to be done in a particular society. Some dictates may be similar in many cultures. However, cultural dynamicity and diversity are often a result of generational additions to existing cultures and resultant transmissions to next generations. Music and dance cultures undergo metamorphic transitions as a result of such cultural

dynamics. One can therefore conclude that culture constantly changes to adapt to new sources of knowledge and emerging philosophies. The continuous introduction of new *gulewamkulu* characters, the modification of *mganda* genres, the adaptation of drums with metallic frames from wooden frames, all seem to point to metamorphic changes experienced in Chewa dances.

According to Etherton (1985, 2:20), culture should be studied in order for one to stay as close to the function of performing arts as possible; to tell the history of one's society; to keep the society intact and comprehending it through ritual, dance or music; to celebrate the achievements of the group; and to continually develop the aesthetic of the conviviality of normal society.

2.2.2 Important Cultural Terminologies

a. Cultural Diffusion:

This is a process by which cultural traits are transmitted from one culture to another (Spencer, 1979:69). This process consists of borrowed cultural traits or practices that are often integrated into a new type of cultural complex. Cultures tend to borrow helpful ideas and inventions from each other. Groussert (1968:112) argues that no culture is static; it continually develops through contacts with other groups and making adaptations to meet the changing ways of life.

This research found out that Chewa people adopted some Tumbuka and other words that are foreign to their culture. North of the Chewa "kingdom" live Tumbuka people who came into contact with the Chewa people as early as the sixteenth century (Phiri, 1975:10). The Tumbuka influence manifests itself in such aspects of the Chewa life as chieftaincy and dance songs. Phiri describes this influence as resulting from linguistic incorporation, cultural overlap, and mutual borrowing between whatever Tumbuka and Chewa groups interacted. The title for a Chewa senior chief is "*chalo*," a Tumbuka word for "land" or "country" or "territory." One *mganda* song is a good example of the use of "*chalo*:"

Kale m'malalata ine, m'malalata ine, nili n'o bambo n'o mayi
Once upon a time I used to boast when I had both my father and my mother

Kale m'mavala zisanu nguwo, ina y'o nyalubwe n'o vumbwe
I used to wear five animal skin clothes, one from leopard one from bush cat

Chalo chagwedezeke
The earth (the land/ the territory) is shaken [caused by the death of my parents]

Foreign language and other aspects of cultural tools are common phenomena in Chewa communities where this research was conducted. According to Mr. Foreman Moloko (26 May 2008), one of the informants, there was a famous *mganda* song around 1955 praising the formation of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In this song, English and Tumbuka words were used instead of their Chichewa equivalents. Use of foreign words, foreign emblems, or foreign expressions in *mganda* dance was synonymous with being well-travelled, and therefore civilized. As a result, many *mganda* songs contain names of foreign cities and countries (See also chapter 6).

English and Tumbuka words in the following text appear in bold:

Khingi wethu, *ku Lusaka kwaimika mbendera* (repeat)
Our king, a banner (flag) is raised in Lusaka

Rhodesia Nyasalande chitaganya
Rhodesia and Nyasaland [are in a] federation

It is not quite clear whether the federation banner was indeed raised in Lusaka, Zambia. However, the mention of Lusaka in this song is convenient to the intentions of its “composers.” In the song, the ‘king’ could mean the *mganda* king or the King of England who ruled Nyasaland as a British colony. The following *mganda* song that we recorded (DVD:25) reflects the use of foreign names, words and expressions that do not fully make sense, but that nevertheless fulfil the purpose of their use:

Leader: *Ayi, Joni Baba*
Chorus: *Ayi, Joni Baba*
Leader: *Ayi, Joni Baba [var. Ayi, Joni kumene]*
Chorus: *Ayi, Joni Baba, aa*
Bwerani mudzaone anyamata a mulezya
Kuyamba kwa sitayilo, tidzawina ndi masitepi

Leader: No, John Baba [father, as in Zulu?]
 Chorus: No, John Baba [variation: No, John now]
 Come and see boys from Asia [Malaysia?] or
 (Come and see leisure boys)
 At the beginning of the style, we shall win with the steps

Note: “*Ayi*” literally means “no,” but in this song it may stand for a colourful expression that means “oh, yes.”

b. Acculturation:

This is a change that occurs when two or more previously autonomous cultural traditions come into continuous contact with sufficient intensity to promote extensive changes in any of them. Pheto-Moeti (2005:30) relates this to the process by which members of a distinctive culture internalize the values, behavioural patterns, (and artistic practices) of a majority society.

Related processes on an individual level include cultural assimilation (adoption of a different culture by an individual) and trans-culturation.

The concept of acculturation refers to a cultural, behavioural or value change that is initiated by the conjunction of at least two autonomous cultural systems. Nature, purpose, duration, and permanence of contact contribute to this phenomenon. For example, some costumes of *gulewamkulu* are a direct imitation of Western and Ngoni dress. When European colonisers brought their religion and education in Chewa communities the Chewa people admired some characteristics of this foreign culture and incorporated them in their traditional performances. The other reason for this incorporation of Western cultural elements in Chewa dance performances was to “fight back” Western invasion of the Chewa traditions, through mimicry and satire.

In addition to the Westerners, when the warlike Ngoni people invaded Chewa villages, married Chewa women, and settled within the Chewa communities the Chewa people were fascinated by these Ngoni conquests and admired the dressing of Ngoni warriors among other things. This resulted in the manifestation of Ngoni elements in Chewa dance performances. Examples of *gulewamkulu* characters that demonstrate the aftermath of acculturation include *Bwana D.C.* (Mr. D.C. – Mr. District

Commissioner) and *Zulu Warrior*. These *gulewamkulu* characters took different forms and alternative names, depending on the particular area where they were performed. The following *gulewamkulu* masks represent practical examples of acculturation.



Fig. 2: Mchawa: satire against Yao tribe Bwana D.C. Nkhokomba, the Ngoni Warrior
Source: <http://www.axisgallery.com/exhibitions/maravi>

c. Cultural Change:

Cultures are internally affected by both forces encouraging change and those resisting change. These forces are related to both social structures and natural events, and are involved in the perpetuation of cultural ideas and practices within current structures, which themselves are subject to change. The origin of *mganda* is a typical example of new traditional dances among Chewa people whose intentions were to imitate, mimic and express fascination at the Western military parade operations.

Social conflict and modern technological development can produce changes within a society by altering social dynamics and promoting new cultural models, thereby spurring or enabling generative action. These social shifts may accompany ideological shifts and other types of cultural change. *Gulewamkulu* performances among the Chewa people exemplify a cultural challenge to missionary resistance of this tradition. The emergence of new mask characters is a perpetuation of the fighting spirit of the *gulewamkulu* tradition against the so-called Western interference.

In the context of this study, the above three cultural terminologies help to describe social and cultural dynamics that are existent in the contemporary Chewa music and dance practices. These dynamics are essential determinants for the active artistic phenomena that are prevalent within the Chewa culture whose understanding may

bring about further enlightenment on the current status of the cultural traits that exist in the Chewa dance performances.

2.2.3 Music and Dance as Cultural and Social Identity

Stokes (1994:2) argues that music [and dance] is not just a thing which happens in society; rather society might also be usefully conceived as something which happens in music. It is through music and dance that fundamental aspects of social organization are recognized, ritually articulated, and grasped. In summary, society as a totality might be understood in terms of music.

- a. Music and dance takes place in a society, a place, or a locale. Giddens (1980:18) defines 'locale' as the physical setting of social activity as situated geographically. These settings are penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences, and have a hierarchy of moral and political order. In this order, music and dance play a vital role as symbols of social boundaries. Not only do music and dance reflect cultural patterns and social structures, they also help in the generation of meaning, its manipulation, and its fortification within certain cultural limitations.

In line with the above observation, Stokes (1994:2) concludes that music [and dance] is socially meaningful largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them. Therefore, musical and dance performances provide the means by which ethnicities and identities are constructed and mobilised.

- b. Music and dance are performed by particular social groupings within a larger community. These are organized performance groups that ensure continuity of the different music and dance traditions; hence continuity of the cultural identity of a particular people. Blacking (1976:32) observes that production of such music and dance performances depends on the continuity of the social groups who perform them, and on the way the members of those groups relate to each other. Sustainability of these performing groups depends largely on effective administrative and disciplinary structures as is the case in *gulewamkulu*, *mganda*, and *chimtali*.

In essence, one is able to describe, interpret, understand and identify with a cultural group and its social organization through observance and careful review of the music and dance practices of that particular ethnic entity.

2.2.4 Functions of Music and Dance in Culture

- a. Through music and dance people are able to express social attitudes and cognitive processes. Blacking (1976:55) argues that music [and dance] is only useful and effective when it is heard by the prepared and receptive ears of people who have shared the cultural experiences of its creators. In this way, music and dance confirm what is already present in society and culture, and adds nothing new except patterns of sound.
- b. Music and dance play significant roles in aesthetic expression of a particular people. For example, in certain types of music and dancing within a culture, emotions and movements are deliberately internalized. These are not seen or felt, but they are internally expressed and are relevant to the dance. These expressions play both emotional and aesthetic roles whether they are performed by the dancer or the drummer. According to Zangwill (2007:6-7), aesthetics is the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste.

Judgments of aesthetic value clearly rely on our ability to discriminate at a sensory level what is agreeable to us or what is beautiful. This sense of agreeableness and beauty operates both at individual and group levels.

Quoting Immanuel Kant (1928:52, 136-9) Zangwill (2007:7) observes that the case of "beauty" is different from mere "agreeableness" because, if one proclaims something to be beautiful, then one requires the same liking from others; one then judges not just for oneself but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Concepts of beauty within a particular performance are indeed a property of societies that own such a performance.

Chanunkha (1999:8-11) describes Yao music based on beauty of substance and beauty of appearance. He defines beauty of substance as expressive qualities which the music portrays such as nobility, dignity, loyalty, patriotism and ethical values. He further

explains that beauty of appearance in Yao music refers to pleasant feelings resulting from the richness in melodic ornamentation and the ability to attract, hold and direct interest. Culturally-oriented performance phenomena such as these call for researchers to describe rather than prescribe aesthetic elements of a culture's music and dance.

Our findings pinpointed five determinants of aesthetical expression in the dances that we recorded as: preparedness of the dancers, coordination between the different players within a performance, dancers' mood and levels of fatigue, availability of key dancers, and audience reaction. This conclusion was drawn through observations based on the following factors: when we delayed our recordings due to poor time management; when some group members were informed late about our recording sessions; when performers were not given enough rest between performances; when key players such as drummers and captains missed the recording sessions due to other engagements and their deputies took over; when performers used make-shift costume; and when audience attention was divided between the recording gadgets and the performance. Each of these factors in all applicable instances somehow affected performers' improvisations, right mind frame, and eventual release of their inert potential to entertain, articulate and execute their energies for a satisfying performance.

- c. Music also plays a role in the interpretation of different cultural phenomena. Nettl (1964:5) informs that studies in acculturation, that is, the result of intimate contact between neighbouring cultures, have been pursued through music. One set of the performances that I recorded for this research was done in an Ngoni village called Kayaza. This village is sandwiched between Chewa villages of Dzoole and Chiweza. Different groups performed *chimtali* and *mganda* for our recordings.

The dancing and the drumming for the *chimtali* and *mganda* were not different from what we recorded in the Chewa villages. A great deal of the singing style reflected typical Chewa melodic constructions. However, the Ngoni background of these performers clearly manifested in their way of handling the melodic cadences. Chewa singers have a unique way of singing the last note in their songs. Though they sing in harmony, their songs end in unison (usually only two harmonic voices of soprano and alto/bass are used in *mganda* singing). Besides, the home tone in a major key is

concluded as a combination of two notes: the third subtly resolving to the root. This was clearly absent in the singing of the members of Kayaza village.

2.2.5 Language, Music and Dance

Music has a lot in common with language. The linguistic structure influences the musical structure. This is especially so in tonal languages, where song and dance reflect intonation characteristics of the language. Dance has upper level, middle level and lower level postures that correspond with the drumming and the singing. For example, low level dance postures are often taken in agreement with deep drumming tones and where low language accents exist in song. Similarly, high level postures correspond with high drumming tones and high accents.

Nettl (1983:23) reports that music has been studied as a symbolic system analogous to language, and the methods of language study have been applied to music. Language in Chewa music is employed through use of poetry and storytelling. Chewa music and dance songs are synonymous with explicit packages of narratives laden with instructional content, and conveyed through riddles, metaphors, proverbs and other literary expressions.

Music creation is an inspired activity that finds its way into the thinking of a performer. The performer manipulates and rearranges units of a given vocabulary. Although some creators of music claim that they acquire their music directly from supernatural sources, there is strong evidence that suggests that song creation, dance patterns, and drumming are communally invented and assessed. That is why, rather than talking about music composition among the Chewa people, a more befitting term could be music creation. These creators of music use available language tools in order to produce their music activities.

Chanunkha (1998:53) describes the music creation process model for the Yao as follows: creator meditates alone; tune takes shape; creator begins to hum and to arrange words; creator sings to friends who propose changes; collective singing continues accompanied by rhythmic patterns played on instruments. In this case, the instruments and dance follow and agree with the words or the language.

- a. Basic drumming rhythms for Chewa dances are articulated with mnemonic phrases such as *chili kumunda nchambeu* (what is still in the field is for seed). The meaning of this phrase is to discourage children from eating all the maize that is in the garden, but to keep some of it for seed (This was before hybrid maize was introduced). Language in this case is used to describe drum rhythm for particular dances.

Players of *mbalule*, one of the main drums of *gulewamkulu*, often mnemonically imitate the drum accents with shouts as they play it. This is done in order to emphasize the dance steps. It is also an aesthetic expression as the players show a lot of enthusiasm in the process. The shouting or yelling also acts as an instrumental accompaniment. Finally, the shouts serve as morale booster for the dancer as well as a command, a motivation, a charge, or an “admonishment” to the dancer to do his best. These are all aesthetic phenomena that are only culturally understood by the insiders.

- b. In *Kalewa*, one of *mganda* genres, there is usually one key dancer who plays the role of a captain. This dancer shouts commands at fellow dancers for them to change a dance step. He may say something like *Polisi sitepe apo!* (Police step [there]!) or *Yachikale apo!* (Old [step]!), and the dancers change after concluding the current step (DVD:21). The captain is part of the dancing group but he plays the role of the conductor, cleverly turning his head round throughout the performance, as he monitors his fellow dancers and randomly throws instructions to them. The captain also acts as the central focus of the dance. He is ‘the’ entertainer within the dance. He does not belabour to follow every movement of a particular step, but while maintaining the dance internally, he foregoes some of the twists and turns while “talking too much.” Again, all this is aesthetical.

Just like the *mbalule* drum player, the *kalewa* captain motivates his team, “reprimands” it, and heralds the next step. In addition, he communicates to the audience the beauty of the next step. He sometimes seems to indicate to the audience that although the next step is such a beauty to watch or seemingly complicated, it is an easy assignment for the dancers.

Transcribed below are some of the expressions that were articulated simultaneously with the *mganda* drumming.

Mganda Mnemonic Phrases

$\text{♩} = 80$ *played in the idling style*

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

I - we I - we_ Ya-pa Ya - pa_ I - we I - we_ Ya-pa Ya - pa_ I - we tu! Ya-pa tu!

Nye-ng'e-re Nye-ng'e-re Nye-ng'e-re Nye-ng'e-re Nye-ng'e-re tu!

- c. In *chimtali*, the captain gives instructions to fellow dancers in harmony with the drum. Common expressions include;

Tiye! (Let's go, or go on, or come on!)

Welama! (Bend [your back]!)

Vina! (Dance!) or *vina, iwe!* (Dance, you!)

Aha!...aha!....aha!

Koka!...Koka! (Pull!...Pull! meaning this is the climax) interspersing drum beats that dictate steps.

In the examples given above, language expressions are used in the music and dance of *gulewamkulu*, *mganda*, and *chimtali*. As the different performers yell, scream, howl or shout in harmony with the drumming, their vocal expressions replace or supplement the singing (music); their commands trigger accurate, spontaneous and timely dance steps; and their reprimands preserve ideal dance principles. In this case, language in these particular Chewa music and dance examples has functional, aesthetical, and cultural attributes.

2.2.6 Dance, Theatre, and Performance Context

Knowledge of the structure and pattern of the music and drumming accompanying a particular dance can give a better understanding of what happens in the dance. Musical

elements of form, tonality and rhythm, as well as linguistic patterns can influence dance movement. These elements come to the fore through systematic dance literacy. According to Nahumck (1977:9),

Dance literacy can be an important means of preserving and reconstructing dance, cross-cultural transmission of choreographic information; for tracing historical antecedents of dance traditions, and as a method of apprehending emergent dance forms at the moment when they are in the making.

- a. Chewa dance events involve theatrical elements that manifest in the singing (sometimes through deliberate mouth distortions or side neck bending as in *mganda*), dance movements, costume, characterization, special enactments, instrumentation, and staging. Kamlongera *et al* (1992:11) suggest that study of theatre in dance should encompass dramatic modes of the performance. Theatrical elements as observed in our recordings, and in agreement with Kamlongera *et al*, include:

- i) The staging or setting of the dance performance: whether it takes place indoors, in the round, in a semi-circle, in an arena or in the open air.
- ii) The choreography, i.e., organisation of movement of formation.
- iii) The direction, i.e., how the dance is produced and presented and what kind of theatrical techniques are employed in the production.
- iv) What the costumes portray.
- v) Special scene designs employed in the dance performance
- vi) Special effects such as make up or extraordinary costume and their cultural or aesthetic significance
- vii) Movement – whether mimetic, energetic, or relaxed
- viii) Facial expressions
- ix) Visual arts and the attitudes they express
- x) Pre – performance arrangements, e.g. bowing, whistling, drum beat, etc

- b. *Gulewamkulu*, *mganda*, and *chimtali* performances take place outdoors, in well prepared dance arenas. As a stylised formation dance, *mganda* performances are organized in a linear formation, with dancers facing the drummer(s). *Chimtali* dancers form a circle and move anti-clockwise. The drummers occupy the middle of the circle. *Gulewamkulu* characters perform either as individuals or in pairs inside a circle formed by spectators, administrators and drummers.

- c. In all the three dances, specific dance movements are communally arranged and agreed upon. In *gulewamkulu*, a song is individually created, assessed by fellow members, edited or improved on, and practiced so that it is internalized. The creator or a particular dancer may propose dance steps for the song. Usually, the song creator has a particular *gulewamkulu* character or a category of characters in mind that will dance to the song. He can only demonstrate the dance steps when he himself is part of the targeted category. The dance steps are formulated, edited and rehearsed in their initiation camp (*dambwe*) in the absence of drumming and handclapping. Since no drumming and handclapping are allowed in the *dambwe*, drummers must familiarise themselves with the dance steps for easy drum accompaniment during the performance. Handclapping is done by the women during the performance, who master the song and the corresponding handclapping through trial and error.

Unlike in *gulewamkulu*, dance steps for *mganda* are formulated, taught and practiced during formal rehearsals. The process of song creation and its eventual acquisition by the group is similar to that of *gulewamkulu*. However, the song creator himself usually suggests the dance steps for the group to learn. The group may help to refine the steps by adding one or two movements, or changing a direction in the dance. Some of the groups that we recorded had members who specialised in the creation of dance steps, while in other groups specific members (usually one) specialised in song creation. These specialists either proposed steps for a song that another member created, or created both song and dance steps. Nevertheless, the other members made their contributions to help refine both the text and the dance steps. These specialists held particular positions in the group with identifiable titles such as *wopeka nyimbo* (song creator) or *wopeka masitepi* (step creator).

The drum player accompanies the song and the dance (through observation and trial-and-error) after the refinement of the dance during the rehearsals. Later on the drummer assumes the power to direct the performance. He becomes the centre of the dance experience and helps to fortify the dance movements. Our observation revealed that dancers' bodies are 'strengthened' by the drum sound during every performance. With the drumming the steps are more lucid, and without it the dancers appear less exuberant.

The song creation, dance and drumming processes for *chimitali* are similar with those of *mganda*. Sometimes specific roles are assigned for both song and dance creators. Creators of both song and dance may suggest certain drum accents in order to help emphasize what they consider important dance postures. In both dances, song and dance creators (if one person takes the responsibility of both) test their inventions with one or two fellow dancers or the drummer before the actual rehearsals. These individuals provide support to the ‘trainer’ during rehearsals by singing along or dancing along. *Gulewamkulu* members follow the same principle when they take their performance out to the public.

- c. Costume for Chewa dances can be grouped into two categories: historical (traditional) and contemporary (modern or germane). In *gulewamkulu* for example, masks depict traditional elements of Chewa people as well as modern elements of society. Some of the masks portray customary characteristics of funerals, initiation, marriage, chieftaincy, and health. Some masks display cultural survival traits against foreign interference, attacks on foreign culture, and represent an interaction forum on current affairs. Other masks symbolise cosmic and non-human characters which is a manifestation of the existing deep religious inspiration.
- d. Old *mganda* genres referred to as ‘*mganda wachikale*’ (old *mganda*) have banners fixed at the entrance of the dance arena called the ‘gate.’ The banners display the name of the dancing group, its address, and its motto. The group’s motto depicts the expression that the group is known for – usually what the captain invented and always utters throughout the performance. Some mottos are mere ‘warnings’ to other dancing groups about the ability and achievements of the group. Such ‘warning’ motto inscriptions include: *anyamata aja abweranso* (the boys are back).

In *gulewamkulu* smaller banners are carried by forerunners to the dancing arena. Unlike *mganda* banners, *gulewamkulu* banners are usually dirty and either dull or red in colour to symbolise the presence of ancestral spirits whose abode is the dust of the grave, and whose character is threatening (See DVD:20). *Chimitali* dancers travel to performance venues with one of the members carrying a white or colourful flag. There are no inscriptions on *chimitali* and *gulewamkulu* banners.

2.2.7 Artistry and Aesthetics of the Chewa Drumming

Art is defined as a diverse range of human activities, creations, and expressions that are appealing or attractive to the senses or have some significance to the mind of an individual. The word "art" may be used to cover such arts as music, literature and other forms, but it is mostly used to refer specifically to the visual arts such as painting, sculpture, and ceramics.

Generally art is a product of human activity, made with the intention of stimulating the human senses as well as the human mind; by transmitting emotions and/or ideas. Most Chewa drums incorporate artistic elements through their craft technology. The various forms of ornamentation on the drum frame through carving designs describe traditional artistic elements and beauty specifics of Chewa people. Visual art, described as the arrangement of colours, forms, or other elements in a manner that affects the sense of beauty, specifically involves the production of the beautiful in a graphic medium. The Chewa drums possess this characteristic not only as a way of stimulating human senses, but also as a functional phenomenon that helps to distinguish the different drums. Other distinguishing factors are length, diameter, shape, and volume.

- a. Artistry is of course also to be observed in the performance skills (learned capacity) and talents (inherent capacity). As a skill, Chewa drumming undergoes various processes. Our findings reveal that the foundational principle of drumming skill transfer is interest (curiosity) to be demonstrated by the prospective student. The next level involves potential (aptitude), ability (talent), and capability (competence) of the learner. Skill transfer may then involve some kind of try-out, though not always necessary.

The practical sessions involve hands-on training, where the curious learner is accorded an opportunity to drum for a live performance in case of *gulewamkulu* or for rehearsals in case of *chimtali* and *mganda*. The teacher observes, makes verbal comments, and takes over the drumming as a way of further demonstration. This process takes place while the performance or rehearsal is going on uninterrupted.

At the teacher's discretion, those that have poor coordination are encouraged to try other drums or departments of the dance. This research found out that Chewa drummers do not entirely discard any drumming student who is struggling to grasp the skill; instead they divert his/her interest to another instrument or department. While this may be viewed as an acceptable psycho-social practice, the drummers are also under moral obligation not to "kill" a willing soul.

- b. The rhythmic arrangements of the various drums, the creation and use of rhythmic spaces by alternating drum players, the creation of additional sounds from non-core sound sources such as the drum frame, and the creation of silences and variations within drumming phrases are all skills that a drummer masters through continuous practice. While the teacher may demonstrate a particular drumming style, the learner is expected to improvise his/her own unique style as a manifestation of the unearthing of his/her full potential.

Essentially, drumming art experience among the Chewa people is a communal cultural property that demonstrates their emotional and psycho-social expressions. These expressions allow both the performers and the audience to experience harmony (inter-relationships), balance (social equilibrium), and rhythm (social progress). It also affords them the opportunity to experience the mysterious, express their imaginations, communicate ideals, and execute ritualistic and symbolic functions.

The statements raised in this section show significant relationships between art and aesthetics. The latter is the product of the former. However, aesthetics as a product of art does not exist in a vacuum; there are universals that govern it.

- c. Denis Dutton (n.d) identifies seven "universal signatures" in human aesthetics as quoted below:
 - 1. Expertise or virtuosity – "technical artistic skills are cultivated, recognized, and admired."
 - 2. Non-utilitarian pleasure – "people enjoy art for art's sake, and do not demand that it keeps them warm or put food on the table."
 - 3. Style – "artistic objects and performances satisfy rules of composition that place them in a recognizable style."
 - 4. Criticism – "people make a point of judging, appreciating, and interpreting works of art."
 - 5. Imitation – "with a few important exceptions like music and abstract painting, works of art simulate experiences of the world."
 - 6. Special focus – "art is set aside from ordinary life and made a dramatic focus of experience."

7. Imagination – “artists and their audiences entertain hypothetical worlds in the theatre of the imagination.”

Chewa drumming artistry is not art for art’s sake; it is functional, it has a place in the human or social fabric, it reveals hidden cultural construction, and it displays often ignored creative precincts. It is part of ordinary life; hence, a physical manifestation of the imaginations of its creators. While imagination plays the role of uncovering inert talent and encouraging both creativity and improvisation, drum players are influenced by their psycho-social backgrounds and individual life experiences. They do not seek to entertain the hypothetical worlds of their imagination; rather they express their psychological, social, physiological, as well as cultural make up.

Ballantine (1984:1-45) asserts that social structures crystallize in musical structures in various ways and with varying degrees of critical awareness, the musical microcosm replicating the social macrocosm. He thus discourages the viewing of music performances in an atomized way, cutting them off from a fundamental structural intimacy with its social order. Instead he suggests a recovery of ‘the category of’ dynamic totality, a grasp of the concept of the *whole*. This is the viewing of human activity as belonging to a wider context, which extends both spatially and in time and which thus embraces the totality of our social, physical, economic, historical, and cultural world. It is an insistence, therefore, that no part of our activity can be understood by wrenching it out of the whole that gives it its meaning and trying to understand it in isolation.

A good example is events leading to Chewa dance performances. These events are full of anxiety, excitement and great expectation. One expects that Chewa communities should not always display these hyped pre-performance traits for the mere reason that they become used to the performances since they are annual activities. On the contrary, every dance performance seems to provide a new experience to prospective spectators. New clothes are bought in anticipation of a performance, daily schedules are changed to accommodate forthcoming dance events, appointments are cancelled, and there is unprecedented display of generosity between community members in reaction to these dance festivals.

The dance events usually announced by the sound of a drum ‘disturbs’ people’s programmes. Our respondents testified that the Chewa drum has power to attract and

manipulate (this is extensively covered in chapter four). This power comes from the cultural identity and place of the drum in society. Therefore, caution is taken when playing the drum as a symbol of invitation to the performance in order to cause minimal disturbance to the community. These and other dance preparation attributes may not be directly linked to the performance but they are important factors worth observing and attaching to the success of the performances.

During the actual performances, the *tsabwalo* (arena captain for *gulewamkulu*), the corporal (*mganda* director), and the *khingi* (*chimtali* 'King') have endless tasks of controlling crowds that often surge into the dancing arenas in order to watch the performance 'properly.' To ensure that everyone has the chance to view the performers, natural *bwalo* (arena) arrangements take place – children and short people situate themselves in front of the audience crowd. No one interferes with the drumming department by passing in front the drummers, etc. Money tokens (*kusupa* or *msupo*) for the drummers are given sparingly, quickly placed either on the drum or in the drummer's pocket or on the ground. This is done to avoid disturbing the flow of the performance. These moral observations are part of the performance success.

2.2.8 The Chewa Concept of Dance

The Chewa people view dance from four points of view. Dance involves song, instrumentation, movement, and dress. Chewa music (song) compositions are carefully done in order to transfer an effective message to the audience and fellow performers. Use of riddles, metaphors and idioms in Chewa songs is viewed as one of the most effective ways of message delivery. To the Chewa people, a successful song makes a successful dance. Therefore, meanings of Chewa songs should never be taken for granted.

- a. Kamlongera *et al* (1992:45) translate one *gulewamkulu* song as follows:

<i>Madzi akadzala, madzi akadzala</i>	When the pool is full
<i>Mkaolokera poti yee?</i>	How will you cross it?
<i>Madzi akadzala, akadzala</i>	When the pool is full
<i>Mkaolokera pa chala yee, ayaye ayeee</i>	Toes will be used to cross it

This song clearly shows use of a riddle, especially with the suggestion that the filled pool can be crossed with toes. However, there are other Chewa songs that appear complete in meaning, and yet they imply totally different things. In the example above, *gulewamkulu* performers sing this song on the night before a grand *gulewamkulu* finale. On this night, several basketry or burlap animal *nyau* structures flock to the hosting village from surrounding villages. As a prelude to the festival, several *gulewamkulu* masks roam around the hosting village, singing different songs, including the one in question.

Therefore, the meaning of this song is linked to the converging of the guest basketry masks. One or two people “carry” the masks that cover the rest of the body, but one is able to see the feet underneath. The pool that is full is the *nyau* mask, while the toes that will be used to cross the pool are the dancers’ feet that appear underneath. Demanding the audience to interpret songs in this manner is a general trend in music of the Chewa people.

- b. Among the Chewa people dance is not complete if careful consideration of instrumentation is lacking. Existing and prevalent instruments among the Chewa people are membranophones - double-headed drums and single-headed drums. Idiophones such as hand shakers (*nsalamba*) and leg rattles (*njiwili*) are used only as supporting instruments in the *gulewamkulu* dance.

Chewa drums bear different names according to their function, shape, size and the sound that they produce. Certain individual players specialise in particular drums. Kuthemba-Mwale (1977:142-143) observes that some Chewa drums are [considered] more important than others. Each drummer gets an economic reward for his services.

The payments are determined by the type of drum one plays and the richness of the sponsors of the performance...This [practice] enhances rivalry and jealousy among the drummers...In most cases they rival very much when they meet at a performance where a lot of experts converge....only one may play at a time. (Kuthemba-Mwale, 1977:143)

Paying drum experts is not only a motivation for the drummers; it is also an act of appreciation. While dancers receive their monetary rewards from the audience and those that hired them as they dance, drummers are usually separately recognized. One

reason for this is that they cannot receive money while playing on the drum at the same time because this would disrupt the performance. The other reason is that drummers are key players in any performance worth respecting and appreciating in a special way. If drummers refuse to play for any performance there is great panic among organizers.

Performance is a fiasco without drummers. The drummers constitute a class of specialists who enable the success of the performance. (Kuthemba-Mwale, 1977:142)

Kamlongera *et al* (1992:37) describe the role of the *tsang'oma* in *gulewamkulu* in relation to the importance that they place on drummers:

The *tsang'oma's* duties include the collection of drums ... for the performance; knowing the condition of each drum, and ensuring that the drummers receive prizes due to them.

Our findings partially agree with the notion of giving drummers special monetary rewards. A group of informants reported that there is no longer special recognition of drum players over dancers and other performance officials in Chewa communities. However, traditionally a drum player was envied, respected and treated with caution by the different members of the dance and the community. They also admitted the panic that performing groups feel when their key drummer is not available.

Though many drummers are capable of playing different types of drums, there are usually specialists for key and more important drums. More important drums fetch a lot of money. For example, spectators take little notice of *mganda* or *gulewamkulu* lead drums. It appeared to this researcher that drummers graduate from less taxing drums to more demanding drums. As time passes, more people are involved in the playing of key or more important drums. This creates performance competition that may turn nasty as drummers resort to “bewitching” one another (Kuthemba-Mwale, 1977:143). The privileged player may suddenly experience dizziness, or his drum may mysteriously break, or he may simply fail to coordinate with the other drummers. In order to avoid catastrophic consequences of this competition, each drum player learns some defensive mechanisms.

One of our informants, John Manyusa, explained that drum players protect themselves by rubbing magic repellents in their palms every time they exchange drums. Some of them rub their hands against the ground or just rub some soil in their palms before commencing any performance on the drum. Manyusa (28 June 2008) reports:

“When you see drummers doing strange things as they exchange drums; things like: spitting in their palms, rubbing their hands against the ground, putting their hands in the pocket as if they are putting back something, or doing such other strange things, just know that they are protecting themselves from the magical power that the earlier player or the “owner” of that drum may have placed on the drum. The different protective methods always agree with the prescription (*chizimba*) by the one who gave the medicine.”

Among the Chewa people, the ability to perform a particular drum, graduate to more important drums, become a specialist for a particular key drum, maintain dominance for the performance of a particular key drum, protect oneself from competitor attacks, and learn to “silence” rival players, are all indicators of successful drumming.

- c. All formal³ Chewa dances incorporate special dress or costume. This dress helps to identify the dances, tell a story related to the dance, emphasize dance steps, provide body balance, beautify the dance, and act as additional instrumentation. Costume is defined as the artistic arrangement of accessories or a complete style or set of dressing worn at and appropriate to a time, place, or circumstance to portray the wearer as a character or type of character other than their regular persona at a social event such as a masquerade, a fancy dress party or in an artistic theatrical performance.⁴ In Chewa dances costume serves cultural functions such as in *gulewamkulu*, historical functions such as in *mganda* and *gulewamkulu*, musical functions such as in *gulewamkulu*, and decorative functions such as in *chimtali*, *mganda*, and *gulewamkulu*.

While costuming for *mganda* and *chimtali* involve wearing of special smart and colourful dress (as is typical of all Chewa entertainment dances), costuming for *gulewamkulu* involves use of masks and other forms of dress that help portray specific messages to the audience. The masks cover part of the body or the entire body of the dancer. Masking, not only as costume (artistic dress or cover), is practically present in all Chewa cultural music expressions. The following definitions of ‘mask’ from

³ Some Chewa dances are occasionally performed as a reaction to some kind of stimulant, *e.g.*, beer celebrations, such as *kazukuta*; or moonlight, such as *chitelela*.

⁴ Collins English Dictionary

Collins Student's Dictionary (2006:504-505) help to describe the Chewa way of masking as traditional device that is prevalent in both song and dance:

- a. any covering for the whole or a part of the face worn for protection, amusement or disguise
- b. behaviour that hides one's true feelings
- c. a likeness of a face or head, either sculpted or moulded
- d. an image of a face worn by an actor in order to symbolize the character being portrayed
- e. to hide or disguise (verb)

Costuming for *gulewamkulu* is basically meant for concealing the individual dancer's identity. This is the case because all *gulewamkulu* characters are regarded as ancestral spirits. In addition, the costumes help to differentiate characters and to explain their role in the performance and their message to the community. Distinguishing of *gulewamkulu* characters is achieved by the use of masks of different sizes, colours, materials, and combinations. The dancers not only conceal their physical appearance identity, but they also conceal their other human characteristics such as voice and movement.

According to some of the informants, Charles Mkanthama and Davie Josophat, *gulewamkulu* members are able to tell what type of character one dances by just studying their walking or general body posture. Mkanthama (8 February 2006) admits:

“Dancing for *gulewamkulu* for a long time changes the way one walks. This is because as a dancer you have to maintain certain features that you want to portray. That is why it is not difficult for us to tell what *gulewamkulu* character one dances when we meet even for the first time.”

One of the interviewees declined to give recent information about *gulewamkulu* because he stopped dancing a few years ago. The reason was that he failed to change his natural walk in order to adapt to the character that he was performing.

“As a result women easily recognized me when I was in *gulewamkulu* gear, and so I was advised by the elders to stop dancing.” (Name withheld, 26 June 2008)

All *gulewamkulu* dancers that are involved in singing conceal their voices by singing in falsetto and using unintelligible words. The song phrases are shortened and presented as mere introductions for the singing audience to pick up. Often the original melody is varied by among other things presenting it in alto voice and ending ‘the portion’ with a scream or shriek. This concealing or disguise of voice is meant to emphasise the spiritual nature of the *gulewamkulu* characters. It is also an aesthetic element that is maintained in other Chewa dances (See DVD: 6, 9, 10 & 11).

A foreigner to Chewa communities often finds it difficult to understand *mganda* or *chimitali* songs during performances. The use of poetic expressions as well as the ‘masking’ of the words amidst intensive drumming contributes to this difficulty. During one *mganda* recording session, Charles Fulansi (28 June 2008), one of our local assistants and a former *mganda* dancer lamented the consistent ‘masking’ of songs by the Chitete Mganda Group (DVD:25).

“During our time we agreed to sing out the words clearly so that the audience could understand and enjoy the message. What I see here is very strange. How can they keep masking what they are singing? However, I must point out that this is the Chewa way of doing things, because this sounds beautiful to us and, you do not want others to steal your song without passing through proper procedures. Just look at the steps! They deliberately make them complicated by taking out some of the movements and twisting their bodies with exaggeration in order to confuse anyone who may wish to steal them.”

Although I am a Chewa and I can understand all Chewa words, I relied on asking members of the audience what certain songs said or what they implied throughout our recording sessions for all the dances. In some cases, informants gave conflicting interpretations; others said they too did not understand. This experience caused me to interview several people in order to get convincing answers. The irony of this all is that the respondents too tried to ‘mask’ the meanings and clarifications of the songs to this researcher because they became sceptical about why I needed the information.

In view of the facts presented, costuming in Chewa dance and music performances is more than just body cover. It also involves movement cover, voice cover and social cover as a performance beauty and a cultural expression.

Some *gulewamkulu* costumes tell a concoction of stories that the audience relates with. One *gulewamkulu* dancer that we recorded had a face mask that was yellowish in colour with a long nose. The hair was similar to modern day women's hair extensions. (A similar dancer wore a yellow vest on top of a shirt or long sleeved blouse). On top of a truck trouser was a lady's half slip with an exaggerated slit (DVD:13 & 15]. Apparently, this *gulewamkulu* character was a symbol of the modern woman who has diverted herself from traditional ways of dressing and beauty. She has instead resorted to foreign facial make up (yellow colour), artificial hair, wearing of traditionally male clothes (the truck trousers), wearing of indecent clothing (the short slit half-slip), and getting herself confused (the exposing of inner wear – vest and half-slip), in order to look like a white lady (long nose).

Although no one comes forward to interpret the costume or explain the role of the performance as is the case in Western music concerts, villagers are very much aware of the messages and they learn some lessons from the presentations. Songs, drumming accompaniment and dance steps for such characters correspond to the messages being portrayed through use of coded language or metaphors.

Another character similar to the one discussed above but depicting male modernity had a hat on and a female wrapper on top of his trousers (DVD:12). The song for this character did not have comprehensive content as is common with most Chewa songs, and the dancing was rather comical. The words of the song seemed to be a mere urban expression, often a mixture of languages including English. No wonder, the title of this *gulewamkulu* character is Jakobo, probably named after a well-known Malawian comedian. The title 'Jakobo' may also be a disguise for the biblical Jacob who was a cunning personality. The song words for the character Jakobo are written below:

A Big dula!

Mr. Bigman, give us a showy dance!

Dula, eyaye, dula!

Dance, oh yes, dance!

Dula in this song literally means 'cut.' The singers are persuading the dancer 'to cut his waist' – a Chewa colloquial for being showy in dance. The title *A Big* is a short

form for the urban expression ‘big man’, which is colloquial for ‘elder’ or ‘uncle’ or ‘father.’



Fig. 3: Jakobo, the urban youth: A *nyau* mask from Chimbaka Village, T.A. Kalumo in Ntchisi

A similar concocted character, *Nyolonyo Maliya* (See DVD:11), was presented as both male and female (hence the combined name). Though he wore a women’s wrapper (*chitenje*) and had women’s hair, he was presented without breasts, probably representing a nagging or dominating wife who has the tendency of controlling her husband (manly behaviour). One of the songs that this character sang seemed to suggest that she was trying to beg her husband to return home after he had deserted her because of her domineering behaviour. Apparently, the words used in the song point to the fact that her insubordinate behaviour came about due to her ‘urbanized’ lifestyle. Our informants also reported that the character represented an urban prostitute who was enticing somebody’s husband, a Mr. Makaka. But she should not be trusted because of her potentially harmful manly character. The song text is presented below:

Sharp o Makaka, tikuti welo o Makaka
Sharp o Makaka, kabwerani o Makaka

‘Sharp’ Mr. Makaka, we say “well” Mr. Makaka
 ‘Sharp’ Mr. Makaka, please come, Mr. Makaka

In urban language usage, 'sharp' means 'good' or 'fine.' The use of another English word '*welo*' literally meaning 'well' is another characteristic feature of an irresponsible and confused urban character.

- d. As dancers of different Chewa dance traditions move in different directions, with different agility and combinations of movement they discuss social, cultural, and aesthetical issues through their dance. Drumming artists help to interpret and agree with such discussions as the audience members freely join in, give money to the dancers, and motivate the dancers with whistling, ululations, yodelling, crepitating, and screams. Circular movements in all the three Chewa dances are anti-clockwise except for dance supervisors who move clockwise.

2.3 Conclusion

The research techniques and literature cited in this chapter helped to harmonise the continuum of fields that comprise both the Chewa social life and music performances with particular emphasis and examples on drumming or its practical contexts. As has been argued in this chapter, the Chewa social fabric offers researchers a daunting task of deciphering the often ironic and webbed connotations, practices, and cultural traits through multiple approaches. Generally, one focus area in our research attempts provoked many other areas, often leading to prolonged interviews or an interrupted focus. This experience called for a disciplined and focussed approach on our part so that only relevant topics of our investigation were adhered to. In some cases, we engaged in follow-up recording sessions.

Edited dance recordings were later shown to members of other Chewa communities for an independent review or impression. This helped the researcher to obtain unbiased views and create a relaxed debate on terms and meanings of various Chewa ideologies that the researcher put forward. The viewers' reactions and comments on the performances, and especially on the drumming, helped this researcher to compile valuable supplementary notes.

Chapter Three

Chewa History and Culture

3.1 Historical Background of the Chewa People

The Chewa people migrated into Malawi from Zaire now the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the 16th Century. Some scholars have traced Chewa history to the Sudan while others assert that the Chewa people originated from Egypt.

Speaking at the 2007 *Kulamba*⁵ ceremony, Chief Lukwa of Kasungu explained that the Chewa people have been nomadic throughout history. Their origin can be traced to Sudan before they settled in Zaire. He further explained that Sudan was the first more permanent settlement of Chewa people. By this, the chief implied that Chewa history did not necessarily start with Sudan. This researcher's informal discussion with Dr. Hendrina Mazizwa (15 September 2007), a senior lecturer in History in the University of Malawi, revealed that Chewa people originated from Egypt.

The label *Chewa* was, according to some accounts, one they acquired during a sojourn in Zambia before they pressed on and made their way into Malawi. According to Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda (1974 lecture), the first President of the Republic of Malawi, the title Chewa derives from the word *Cheva* or *Sheva* or *Seva*, which applied to them as a migrating group and contained the meaning of "foreigner." The migrating group apparently adopted the nickname and subsequent phonological changes resulted in the word *Chewa*, with their language becoming Chichewa.

3.2 Chewa Hierarchical and Settlement Systems

The leader of the Chewa people from Zaire into Malawi was titled *Kalonga*. Kalonga founded the Maravi Empire in Malawi, and established his headquarters or seat in a place called Mankhamba near Mtakatika, Dedza. He later decided to extend his influence by acquiring more land for his subjects. In order to achieve this, he dispatched a number of his matrilineal relatives to establish settlements in various parts of the country.

⁵ August 25, 2007 at Mkaika Palace, Katete, Zambia: *Kulamba* is an annual thanksgiving ceremony for all the Chewa living in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia.

The Maravi Empire later became Malawi. Malawi means “flames of fire.” East of where the Chewa people first settled is the Lake Malawi. History informs us that the reflection of the rising sun on the lake appeared to the Chewa people as flames of fire. The orthographic differences between “Maravi” and “Malawi” seem merely to be a result of academic development.

Historically, the Chewa society used dual leadership, which reflected the two main clans that it comprised – the Banda and the Phiri (Boucher, n.d:2). The Banda leadership (900 – 1400 AD) emphasized ritual authority and was embodied in the title “Mwali.” Mwali was a female medium associated with rainmaking and general fertility. On the other hand, the Phiri leadership (1400 AD onwards) stressed political role of their leaders and gave them the title *Kalonga*. *Kalonga* is a Chewa word that means ‘the one who enthrones or installs subordinate chiefs.’ In general Chichewa, *kalonga* means “prince,” “lord” or “king” (Phiri, 1972: iv).

Around 1500 AD, the two clans of Banda and Phiri mixed, but the titles of *Mwali* and *Kalonga* retained their value and remained the focus of their individual identity. The Phiri king, the *Kalonga*, played a mystical and spiritual role over the Maravi Empire. The religious belief of the Maravi people made their king the object of entry into the spiritual world and the gift of life and prosperity. In essence, *Kalonga* was god’s living representative (Boucher, n.d:4).

The *Kalonga* was also the custodian of divine fire. For the Maravi/Malawi people, also known as “the people of the fire” (another possible source of the name of the empire), the divine fire symbolized life, health and success. Fire played other significant roles in Chewa culture.

In Phiri ritual, when a king died, people extinguished the royal fire and only the king’s successor relit the fire. (Boucher, n.d:4)

The kindling of the new fire signified new life and the continuity of the Phiri rule. In addition, Chewa people burn fires at the onset of the dry season. The Chewa believe that the smoke from the fires bring rain and prosperity to the country. The Chewa interpreted such gifts as coming from the high god through their powerful dead kings.

3.3 The Chewa Diaspora

By 1600, *Kalonga* ruled over a very large territory north of the Zambezi. Although the territory he had direct rule over was much smaller, he entrusted the rest of the territory to his matrilineal nephews who administered the adjacent regions as territorial chiefs. Political rivalries and succession disputes resulted in breakaway and separation of territorial chiefs.

“Malawi” Empire (which) allegedly underwent political fragmentation prior to the beginning of the 19th Century [and] the tendency towards small units, i.e., chiefdoms, [are] symptomatic of a breakdown in political evolution. (Phiri, 1972:5)

As the Chewa people spread throughout the central and southern parts of Malawi, into eastern Zambia and, into parts of Mozambique, and along the Zambezi River, their language spread too. One can also find traces of Chewa culture in Tanzania and Zimbabwe. There are close to 13 million Chewa people scattered in these neighbouring nations. The supreme chief of the Chewa people lives in Chipata, Zambia. *Kalonga Gawa Undi* is his title. *Gawa* means ‘the one who gives out land’ and *Undi* means ‘the one who protects his subjects.’ *Kalonga* presides over all the installations and funerals of senior chiefs in the “Chewa kingdom” in Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.

The dispersion of *Kalonga*'s relatives and the ensuing Chewa Diaspora resulted in a proliferation of regional varieties of the language. The distinct names that the regional varieties acquired created the impression of the existence of a multiplicity of ethnic groups.

According to Mchombo (unpublished), some of the groups identified themselves by referring to significant features of their habitat. For instance, nearly twenty-percent of the land mass of Malawi is covered by Lake Malawi. From the southern tip of this lake flows the Shire River, which runs through southern Malawi into Mozambique where it flows into the Zambezi River. In the early version of the Chewa Diaspora, some of the people settled along the shores of the lake and along the Shire River, while others moved into the Malawi hinterland.

The Chichewa word for lake is *nyanja*, and the word for tall grass (savannah) is *chipeta*. The people who settled along the lakeshores and along the banks of the Shire River referred to themselves as *Anyanja*, the "lake people", and their particular variety of Chichewa became *Chinyanja*, the language of the lake [people]. Those who moved into the interior, the area of tall grass, were called *Achipeta*, the dwellers of the savannah grassland.

The adoption of these labels, reflecting significant features of their environment, began to obscure the nature of their relationship, except by similarity of their languages. (Mchombo)

The introduction of yet other variations further complicated the situation. According to Mchombo, when the Portuguese began to move into the interior from South-Eastern Africa in the seventeenth century, they came across such ethnic groups as the *Xhosa*, the *Nyika*, the *Tchangani*, etc., who apparently referred to themselves as *amaXhosa*, *amaNyika*, *amaTchangani*, etc. Eventually, when the Portuguese encountered *Achewa* living in Mozambique, who had already adopted the label of *Anyanja*, they modelled their terminology on the morphological structure of the names of the other ethnic groups they had encountered and thus referred to them as *Amanyanja* (Banda, 1974: unpublished). Then, under the influence of Portuguese phonology, the sound *ny*, a palatal nasal, got nasalized to *ng*.

This gave rise to an ostensibly non-distinct and nonexistent ethnic group of *Amang'anja*, whose language they called *Chimang'anja*. This label remained in use and, for many years, contributed to the rather erroneous view that they were a separate ethnic group whose language just happened to be similar to *Chinyanja* and *Chichewa*. (Mchombo, unpublished)

Amang'anja people now live in Chikwawa, one of the districts in southern Malawi, and parts of Nsanje.

Meanwhile, the Chewa people who had settled around the southern end of Lake Malawi and spread into the southeast of Malawi to the area surrounding Lake Chilwa and to the Mozambique part of the shores of Lake Malawi encountered another ethnic group, *Ayao*. The *Yao* word for lake is *nyasa*. The Yao referred to these Nyanja people as *Anyasa*. This original dispersion gave rise to groups identified as *Achewa*, *Achipeta*, *Amang'anja*, *Anyanja*, and *Anyasa*. The last designation contributed to British

colonialists' eventual naming of the country as *Nyasaland*⁶ before it was renamed Malawi after independence.

3.4 Conclusion

There are other Chewa dialects in other parts of the country. For example, Phiri (1972:7) reports that Pike divides the “Malawi” peoples into eight groups:

.....Chewa, Nyanja, Ntumba, Mbo, Chipeta, Zimba and Nsenga. The only importance of his eight divisions is that they make the student of Chewa history aware of the extent to which different “Malawi” groups had grown apart by the mid-19th Century.

However, Phiri (1972:7) posits that the logical approach to this complex issue is to divide the Maravi people into two subdivisions: the Chewa sub-division, which encompasses the Chipeta and Nyanja divisions; and the Mang’anja sub-division.

Within the borders of the Malawi nation, only two subdivisions would merit independent study: the Chewa, now predominantly found in the Central region, and the Mang’anja in the Southern region. Divisions subsumed within these larger groups are often given a separate identity on the basis of the topography of the area they occupy. (Phiri, 1972:7)

Taking Phiri’s argument into account, the area where this research was conducted is probably occupied by the Chipeta division of the Chewa people. But as Phiri (1972:7) further argues, the Mang’anja [only] differed from the Chewa in that they possessed a centralised religion of their own, and absorbed influences from other peoples of the greater Zambezi. He thus refers to the Chipeta Chewa as the Northern Chewa “who inhabit the northern half of Malawi’s central region” (Phiri, 1972:1). Of this division, Phiri (1972:8) adds:

The Northern Chiefdoms of the Chewa division [is] where Chewa influence has been “Malawi”⁷ influence in parochial terms.

⁶ The story goes that the British adventurer who “discovered” the lake happened to have arrived there in a predominantly Yao speaking part of the country. An inquiry into the name of the lake which, unfortunately, took the form, “What do you call that?” elicited the response, “Nyasa,” the Yao word for ‘lake’. From that, without a hint of irony, the lake got its name of Lake Nyasa and, the country around it got its name of Nyasaland, which it had until independence in 1964, when the name of Malawi, the modern pronunciation of the erstwhile Maravi, was then restored. After independence, the lake became Lake Malawi, at least within Malawi. The neighbouring countries of Tanzania and Mozambique maintain the name Lake Nyasa, obviously for political reasons (Mchombo, unpublished).

In the present Malawi, the largest population of the Chewa people live in the Central Region, which has nine districts. There are also pockets of Chewa settlers albeit known by the different labels in more than five of the thirteen districts of the Southern Region. Currently, Malawi has 28 districts and a population of over 13 million. Recent statistics show that over 6 million of Malawi's population are of Chewa ethnic background. Chichewa has been Malawi's national language since 1968.

⁷ Phiri uses this term (in quotation marks) to refer to a 'culturally distinct group' as opposed to the nation Malawi.

Chapter Four

Chewa Drumming Theories⁸

4.1 Introduction

There are many philosophies surrounding the drum as a musical instrument. These philosophies relate to construction decisions, handling, material choice, sound production, and relationships with the performance. Some of the philosophies are gender-related while others are power-related. Power in this case refers to cosmic relationships between human society and mystic forces. Drumming philosophies discussed in this chapter may be related to African culture in general, but the descriptive examples provided are specific to Chewa culture.

The term ‘philosophy’ in this chapter encompasses a system of beliefs and values regarding the drum as a musical object. The term also defines traditional drumming concepts (cognitive interpretations), principles (fundamental performance laws), and theories (standard analytic observations). In general, these drumming philosophies apply to drumming contexts, concepts, and intangible elements attached to the drum by the general Chewa society.

Historically, the Chewa drum is considered as an anthropogenic music instrument, that is, it originates in, is related to, and is determined by human activity as a result of many factors. One such factor is that sculpting a drum requires patience and endurance. The sculptor uses a special axe known as *sompho* to carve a tree trunk until it becomes smooth. He later makes a hole through the wood using a chisel. Long cylindrical drums require that the drum maker observes specific measurements for both the wider and the narrower sections of the drum. Therefore, apart from deciding on the different drum circumferences, the sculptor must also decide on diametric dimensions. For comfortable handling, the sculptor smooths down the drum surface and prepares the drum skin. Instruments used to carve the drum are not as sharp as

⁸ Theory in this case refers to analytical structures that explain a set of observations in the construction, preservation and performance of the Chewa drum. These observations are identified as explanatory thoughts or notions that are at times speculative and certain assertions are made about their underlying reality.

modern technology would provide. Therefore a lot of energy and effort are required to produce one drum.

The cow skin is used to make the drum membrane. The skin is chosen for its durability due to its thickness. Some *gulewamkulu* drums are made of antelope skins so that they can produce a loud, projected sound. Before fixing it on the drum frame, the skin is left to dry for some days, usually a week, to make it sturdy. It is then soaked in a well for one night to soften it and make it pliable. Afterwards, it is left in the sun for a short time to allow the water to evaporate completely. The drum maker then cuts off a section of the skin that is slightly bigger than the drum head and fixes it on to the drum frame using wooden pegs. This time the drum frame is partially dipped in the ground and supported by a number of stones. The sculptor then removes the fur on the section of the skin that will form the drum membrane using a locally made knife. When an antelope skin rather than a cow skin is used, the fur is not scraped off by a knife; the drummers' hands naturally remove the fur in the process of playing – in this case, the older the drum the better its performance.

Most *Chewa* cylindrical drums have tar (*phula*) fixed in the centre of the drum head. The *phula* is made from special tree sap or honey comb. The purpose of the tar is to make the drum head heavier for desired resonance. The drum maker then tunes the drum by passing it above fire flames several times. In the process, he keeps checking whether the drum is properly tuned by beating it at intervals. The tuned drum is sometimes smeared with castor oil (*nsatsi*) for preservation.



Fig. 4: Fire used for tuning cylindrical drums



Fig. 5: Men testing the tuned drums

The processes of drum making described above inevitably make the drum to be an important community property. The drum maker cherishes his long worked for

achievement, the society preserves this product of hard work, and the performer protects this difficult to get commodity.

4.2 Drum Construction Tools and their Functions

The following table presents tools that are used in the drum-making process. A well preserved drum lasts up to twenty years. Sculptors expect consumers of their product to observe certain practices to ensure the long life of the drum. Such practices include:

- a. storing the drum in a kitchen so that it is kept in tune by the heat
- b. regularly applying castor oil on the drum head to lubricate the skin
- c. ensuring that a magic repellent is deposited into the drum against competitors' jealousies
- d. never allowing a breast-feeding mother to touch the drum because she can dilute the magical power
- e. married dancers should refrain from sexual union a day before every performance; otherwise the drum will crack or the performance will flop
- f. if the drums are stored in a house rather than a kitchen, residents of such a house must be single individuals (who will not engage in sexual activity) lest they 'cut'⁹ the drum

Table 4.1 Drum Construction Tools and their Functions

Vernacular name	English Equivalent	Function	Translation
Nkhwangwa	Axe	Kugwetsera mtengo	For felling a tree
Somphe	Chisel axe	Kusemera	Chiselling the outer surface
Chikwalapo	Chisel	Kuchepetsera mjintchi	Drilling the log to reduce thickness

⁹ The Chewa belief that sexual union before a dance performance, a hunting assignment, during initiation period, and other community functions that involve rituals will cause a sickness, a failure, or death of individuals is called *mdulo* (to cut) or *tsempho* (to miss). All rituals that forbid the practice of sex for a period of time are connected to this belief.

Khwangu	Abrasive	Kusalazira	Smoothing the surface
Ntchelero	Scraper	Kupalira	Scraping the surface
Phula or nsatsi	Tar or castor oil	Kuti ng'oma izichita mavume ndi kufewetsa	To enhance a deep drum sound and to lubricate
Chigwandali/Pwitika	Hatchet	Kudulira thunthu kuti lifupike bwino	To obtain desired frame length by cutting
Misomali	Nails	Kukhomerera pansi	For fixing the frame into the ground

The following practices guide the construction, handling and performance of the drum.

4.2.1 Construction considerations

The drum has three basic parts: the frame, the skin, and the pegs or cords. The skin is fixed on the frame to form the drum head. Pegs are used to tighten the skin on long cylindrical drums. Among the Chewa people, such drums are used in dance performances of *gulewamkulu*, *mnjedza*, *chisamba*, and *kazukuta*.

Round double-headed drums do not require pegs in order to tighten the skins. Sliced cow skins (*nsinga* or *nthambo*) are instead used as cords that pull together the drum skins from both heads. Double-headed drums are used in dance performances of *mganda* and *chintali*. Both dances are performed for entertainment.



Fig. 6: The double-headed drum



The cylindrical drum

Frames for all cylindrical drums are made of wood. In contrast, frames for modern double-headed drums are made of old 200 litre barrels called *mgolo*. Traditionally, double-headed drums had wooden frames just like cylindrical drums, but due to scarcity of large trees, this practice is on the decline. Drum makers choose specific trees to make these drum frames. Making drum frames from any other tree leads to premature cracking of the drum frame or general deformation of the drum. The most common trees used to make drum frames are the *m'mbale (muwale)* – a type of brachystegia – and the *mvunguti* – a balm tree. Our informants shared three reasons why the *muwale* or *mvunguti* trees are preferred for drum frame making:

- a. it is easier to burrow (*wofewa podoola*); but we leave a thick wall so that it does not crack easily (*timasiya mnjintchi waukulu kuti isamwanyike*)
- b. it is lighter when dry (*wopepuka ukauma*)
- c. it is durable (*umakhalitsa*)

In addition to careful choice of the tree, the drum maker places a charm in the drum cavity to ensure that the drum lasts long. This applies only to the double-headed drum and some cylindrical drums that have neither side slits nor bottom opening. To ensure sustained longevity of the slit or open-bottom cylindrical drums, the charm is not deposited inside the drum as it can easily fall away, but it is rubbed against the drum skin and/or the drum frame. In this case, all drums literally “survive” on charms.

Extra charms are deposited in drums either by the performers or the double-headed drum makers on request from the performers. The additional charms attract people to dance performances, and move people’s hearts so that they should appreciate the performance and get soul tied to the general activities of the performance. We identified three different charms that are associated with drum performance:

- a. *Nthetemya*

This charm has the power to make the drum sound pleasant for the listener. In general Chichewa, the term *nthetemya* stands for ‘melodious’ sound.

b. *Chikoka*

This charm has the power to attract or draw people to the performance. People always want to associate with the dance and stick to the dancing arena until the end of the performance, often demanding an *encore*. The term *chikoka* means ‘charming.’

c. *Phulankhali*

The *phulankhali* charm causes a very deep drum sound (*mavume*). This deep sound is meant to agitate people’s hearts (*kunyamula mtima*) so that they are manipulated into attending a performance. This charm is the strongest of the three charms. It is also commonly used during dance “competitions,”¹⁰ where one performing group seeks to outdo another. *Phulankhali* means ‘take the cooking pot off the fire [and go to watch the dance]’.

Our informants declined to give specific names for the different magic repellents that they use in connection with the drum. Apparently, as a defensive mechanism, no informant was willing to disclose their survival skills in order to remain ‘safe.’ However, our findings established three functions that these magic repellents serve:

- a. to protect the drum from being magically ‘destroyed’ by malicious competitors
- b. to protect the player from being mysteriously attacked by a rival player
- c. to ensure that the drum produces good quality sound for the dance in spite of possible ‘attacks’ by competing groups

Our respondents informed us that all the counter-charms used for the purposes explained above are called *mankhwala*. The term *mankhwala* simply means ‘medicine’ and gives the connotation of harmlessness or cure in contrast with ‘magic.’

4.2.2 Handling of the drum

In some Chewa societies, there are several restrictions against women handling the drum. Women are often only allowed to play drums for exclusively women’s dances. As such, women do play only the double-headed drum which accompanies such

¹⁰ Chewa dance competitions may not be regarded as such, but rather as festivals since no prizes or rewards are given to the ‘winner’. Usually only two groups participate in these competitions.

dances, while men can play both the double-headed drum for exclusively men's dances and the long cylindrical drum. Manyusa (16 January 2009) informed us that until the early 60's men used to drum for women in the women's *chimitali* dance on the round double-headed drum, a practice that is still common among the Chewa of some parts of Lilongwe.¹¹

Nowadays, the traditional *chimitali* dance¹² and its variations of *dusha* and *kanindo* are accompanied by female drummers only. In this group of dances a singular double-headed drum is used by two players. One maintains the pulse, beating with two plain sticks near the edges of both sides of the drum, producing the high tone. The other, who plays the dance rhythm, stands opposite and plays both the high tones and the low tones alternately by beating both the edges and the centre of each drum head. The latter is the main drummer, and she uses beaters with rubber heads made out of old shoe soles or tyres. Traditionally, beaters had wooden heads, making them look more like hunting clubs (*chamtunga*).

In other women's dances such as *chisamba* and *chimdidi* cylindrical drums are used. In such dances, men play the drums on behalf of the women since men are allowed to play both types of drums.

The general gender stratification in these Chewa societies is one of the factors stopping men from musically interacting with women, especially when they are not married. This is considered as promoting both self-respect and respect of other people's wives or husbands. On the other hand, in terms of drumming, one belief behind drumming restrictions for women is that placing the drum between women's legs may shorten the drum's life or cause the drum skin to instantly crack. This explains why women are not allowed to play on the cylindrical drum, which requires the players to hold it between their legs.

Another reason for restricting women against playing on the cylindrical drum is that its playing posture is considered indecent for women. The last argument is that women

¹¹ Mtonakutha (28 September 2008) holds the view that the Chewa people of the Dowa-Ntchisi area where this research was conducted have been greatly influenced by the Ngoni customs as far as social segmentation between men and women is concerned. This may not be the case in Lilongwe where the informant hails from.

¹² This discussion is extended in chapter seven.

are considered not strong enough to maintain the required drumming posture for a long time on a cylindrical drum.

In general, all women are forbidden from carrying or playing both the cylindrical drum and the double-headed drum that is specifically meant for men's dances. In particular, all menstruating and breast-feeding women are forbidden from handling any drum lest they dilute the power of the drum's charms.¹³

4.2.3 Drum sound

Among the Chewa people, the sound of the drum serves different purposes. A high drum sound serves the purpose of announcing an impending event or merely informing. A deep drum sound serves the purpose of inviting people to a performance or articulating specific dance routines. Careful drum sound production and combinations are observed in order to communicate these relevant concepts.

There are two sounds or tones – low tone and high tone – that one is able to produce from any type of drum. Among the Chewa people, the high tone and the low tone are verbalized as *di-* and *nti-* respectively as tones produced on any main drum. Rests are pronounced with a deep nasalized *m* sound.

On lead drums and pulse keeping drums, the sounds are pronounced differently. In practice, all lead drums and pulse keeping drums are perceived to produce only the high tone. However, Chewa people have a way of distinguishing the high tones played by the different hands – left hand and right hand – on these 'high-toned' lead drums. In essence, there are two contrasting high tones produced on lead drums depending on which hand one uses to play the high tone.

The two high tones on lead drums are *mba-* and *nda-* or *mbi-* and *te-*. The two tones are essentially combined as *mbanda-mbanda* or *mbite-mbite*. Only cylindrical drum sets have lead drums on which these high tones are produced. Psychologically, the first of these contrasting high tones is perceived as being deeper than the second one. (Similarly, the two deep tones on main drums are distinguished by perceiving one of them as being deeper than the other). The player must ensure that he begins playing

¹³ Information provided by members of Namuwawa *Mganda* Boma (28 June 2008), Cholwe Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi

with the right hand, the stronger of the two hands, followed by the left hand, if he is to produce the desired *mbanda-mbanda* or *mbite-mbite* sound.

In general, all deep tones on any type of drum - lead or main drum, double-headed or cylindrical - are played using the right hand, while all high tones are played using the left hand: the stronger the accent the deeper the perceived tone; the weaker the accent the higher the perceived tone.

On the other hand, the two high tones on pulse-keeping drums - usually double-headed drums - are verbalized as *khe-* and *the-*, or *ke-* and *de-*. These pairs of sound are essentially combined as *khethe-khethe* or *kede-kede*. The first combination is used to interpret the high tones produced for the *chimtali* drumming pulse, and the second combination is used for the high tones of *mganda* lead drum. In both cases, the first high tone is perceived as being comparatively deeper than the second high tone.

Therefore, in order to communicate a message through drum sound, the comparative combination and number of deep tones and high tones matters. Drum communication that demands action involves more deep tones than high tones. On the other hand, drum communication that is made for mere information does not necessarily emphasize deep tones, and may incorporate more high tones than deep tones.

This researcher observed that before *mganda* dance rehearsals, the drum is played to mobilize members of the group for the rehearsals. The drum player uses more deep tones than high tones. This is equally true for *chimtali* rehearsals. Similarly, during *gulewamkulu* festivals, especially on the final day, prolonged drum sounds are heard prior to the ceremony. These are meant to remind and mobilize the community to the event. Again, deep drum sounds are predominant.

In contrast, before the actual closing ceremony, there are several *gulewamkulu* night performances in the village. Sometimes drums are played for the sake of informing the community during such festival period. No community action is demanded in this case, and so the drum playing is done casually without emphasis on the deep tones.

In addition, general drum tuning is done by exposing the drums to sunlight for a few hours. To determine whether the drums are fully tuned, several players beat them for some time.

This type of playing is casually done and, while the community may enjoy listening to it, no one is compelled to get closer except for curious children. (Chitete villagers, 27 June 2008)

In these examples, playing of deep tones and high tones effectively communicates different messages to the society.

In summary, high tones excite, entertain, stimulate and inspire. On the other hand, deep tones command, persuade, manipulate and agitate. Deep tones are associated with ritual (sacredness), rigour (severity or seriousness of performance), and *raison d'être* (cause or basis of performance). High tones are associated with performance socialization (relaxation), sublimation (emotional upliftment), and symmetry (regularization or balance) as they contrast with the deep tones.

4.2.4 Drumming power

Section 4.2.3 explains that Chewa societies regard deep drum sounds as being more authoritative than high drum sounds. Therefore, it is common to associate a relatively deeper sounding drum with more power of attraction (*chikoka*) or charm than a high “pitched” drum.

Some of the charms that are deposited inside drums are meant to make the drum produce a much deeper sound. Because of its power of attraction, this deeper sound draws people to performances and ensures maintenance of a large audience. A large audience signifies a performing group’s success. It is common to see people flocking to one specific *mganda* performance during a Chewa wedding, and deserting other groups that are performing simultaneously. One explanation given is that the “successful” group has more power of attraction than the other group(s). The “unsuccessful” groups are therefore termed as “children,” meaning they are not yet advanced in using charms.

This ‘power’ in drums resulted in the forming of generic names for the different Chewa drums. All main drums are called the *phulankhali* in indirect reference to the charm that I have described in this chapter, or the *gunda* (bang) in reference to the authoritative sound that the main drums produce. The lead drum or its rhythm is called *kapelegede* (escort) in reference to the symmetrical or ‘accompanying’ role that the drum plays. Chapters six and seven provide practical details of these drum terms.

One of the reasons why certain animal skins are preferred for making drums is their durability. Traditionally, no drum is made from a goat skin, for example, because it does not last long. However, there are other mystical reasons why drum makers choose certain skins of wild animals. For example, the antelope is associated with speed, sleight and reflex. The antelope skin is often used for making the *gulewamkulu* drums to ensure a projected sound (fast speed), to cause a quick reaction in villagers to attend the dance (reflex action), and to help ‘magically’ carry the dancers’ feet or legs during performances (sleight).

Apparently, apart from being related to its sound (deep or projected) and its capacity to influence or manipulate, drum power is also associated with its ability to ‘aid’ the dancers by fortifying their bodies or lightening them for dance balance. The fact that cows are slower, stronger and more patient causes the belief that their skin will make a more stable, stronger, and more authoritative sounding drum, which will in turn help fortify the dancers’ bodies for well-accented *mganda* steps, for example. In this case, the sources and reasons for drum power are varied and quite complex.

4.2.5 Drum rhythm

There are two rhythms that define the Chewa concept of drumming. The two rhythms are foundational for all drumming performances.

The first rhythm serves as the *kapelegede* for all the ritual dances, all dances that are accompanied by cylindrical drums, and the *chimtali* dance. This *kapelegede* rhythm is orally articulated as *mbite-mbite* or *mbanda-mbanda* when it applies to the dance types mentioned except for the *chimtali*. The *kapelegede* rhythm for the *chimtali* is articulated as *khethe-khethe* as earlier explained, and is much faster than the *mbite-mbite* rhythm. The *gulewamkulu* drum that plays this *kapelegede* rhythm is known as the *mjidiko* (one who lays foundation or fore-runner) because of the drum’s role of ‘setting up’ the dance. The title *mjidiko* is also applied to all cylindrical *kapelegede* drums that accompany any other Chewa dance in addition to the *gulewamkulu*. Since the *kapelegede* for the *chimtali* dance is played on the same *gunda* drum, the term *mjidiko* does not apply. The *mjidiko* rhythm is transcribed below:



style plays variations of the *mkowolo* drum rhythm as their *kapelegede* (See examples in chapter six).

In order to avoid confusing lead drums for the different dance classes (ritual and entertainment), the term *mjidiko* is applied to the lead drum or lead drumming for the ritual and related dances, which are accompanied by cylindrical drums. On the other hand, the term *kapelegede* is loosely applied to all lead drumming on the round double-headed drums, which primarily accompany entertainment dances such as the *chimitali* and *mganda*.

In summary, the Chewa drum rhythm is based on life issues; it is not abstract, but it is a reflection, an interpretation, as well as an application of the Chewa socio-economic system. The two foundational rhythms that I have discussed in this section define the starting point for drum training as they are easily internalized by the drumming ‘students’ who simply relate what they learn with normal life.

Some additional drums play variations or combinations of the *mjidiko/mkowolo* or *kapelegede* rhythms. Other additional drums merely keep the beat of the music as in the *gunda* of the *gulewamkulu*. Main drums play the actual dance steps constantly changing the rhythm in line with the songs or the dance routines.

4.2.6 Other drumming roles

Sometime in 1974, I observed during a *gulewamkulu* ceremony in Blantyre a baby being “baptised” into the *nyau* society by beating a drum into its ears. In this way the drum played a religious role, perceived as a similar act to infant baptism or child dedication in Christianity. The *gulewamkulu* drum sound speaks to the child’s soul and joins the child to the wide Chewa community.

In addition, the Chewa people associate drumming with therapeutic qualities. For instance, heavy and elongated drumming is used in the *malombo* spirit-possession dance.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Malombo* dance originated from the Tumbuka society where it is known as *vimbuza*. The title *malombo* stands for wild animals in reference to the spirits that possess the dancers who manifest psychological disorders. Intensive drumming for these spirit-possessed dancers helps to relieve them.

4.3 Drum Performance Theories

Drumming is an art that requires both inherent skills and systematic training. Drumming for Chewa music and dance performances is particularly challenging because of the complex rhythms involved, as well as the various improvisations that the art demands.

This section discusses African drumming theories in general, that are also particularly applicable to Chewa drumming experiences. These theories emanate from the general African way of life, and are reflected in the music and dance performances as an invincible force that helps to describe rather than prescribe daily human interactions outside their usual informal settings.

The definition of ‘theory’ in this section is a set of statements or observations that are both true and speculative as interpretative principles of practical drumming. I have endeavoured to relate these ‘theories’ to ordinary and pragmatic life issues in order to demonstrate practical elements of drumming.

4.3.1 Dualism and Complementariness

The African social life is described by the tradition of community life. There is clear interdependence in different spheres of the human community. This way of life explains the notion of sharing among people of the same community and households. In fact, among the Chewa people, there are many proverbs whose application seeks to promote dependence on fellow human beings, while discouraging independent ways of life or individualism. The following are examples of common Chewa proverbs that support the point in question:

a) *Kali kokha nkanyama; ali awiri ndi anthu.*

One is an animal; two are humans (Two are better than one)

b) *Ichi nchiyani, nkulinga muli awiri.*

It takes the company of two for one to ask: what is this?

c) *Mutu umodzi susenza denga.*

One head does not carry a roof.

d) *Chala chimodzi sichiswa nsabwe.*

One finger does not kill a louse.

e) *Chikuni chimodzi sichipsetsa mphika.*

One piece of wood does not cook a meal.

These proverbial examples support the notion of human interdependence. However, the following proverbs encourage the spirit of sharing:

a) *Kachipande ka therere kamakoma nkuyenderana*

An okra¹⁷ meal is meaningful where there is reciprocal visitation [between neighbours].

b) *Mnzako akakuti konzu, nawenso umam'ti konzu.*

When someone does something good to you, do likewise.

In addition to proverbs, Chewa practices in different social settings support the notion of interdependence and sharing. For example, Chewa meals are made of thick porridge (*nsima*) made from maize flour and a side plate of either vegetables or meat (*ndiwo*). Several people sit around the plates and pick a portion of *nsima* followed by *ndiwo* using hands. Both the *nsima* and the *ndiwo* are equally important as no meal is complete without one of the two (people sleep on an empty stomach if one of the two is unavailable in the home).

As the people eat the food from one plate, they give each other turns; it is considered as bad manners to have more than one hand in a plate at the same time during a shared meal. While the *nsima* and the *ndiwo* have equal significance, they are nevertheless regarded as two different entities that serve specific purposes. This practice of separating roles for two things that are supplementary is what this thesis discusses as dualism¹⁸ – looking at things in two's and yet regarding them as playing equally important roles in support of each other.

¹⁷ Okra is a fruit vegetable the size of a finger which is slippery when cooked. In the Chewa society, all slippery vegetable relish dishes are called *therere*, translated here as 'okra'.

¹⁸ The term 'dualism' was originally coined to denote co-eternal binary opposition, a meaning that is preserved in metaphysical and philosophical duality discourse but has been diluted in general usage. In Taoism, for example, dualism represents the philosophy of balance, where two opposites co-exist in harmony and are able to transmute into each other. In politics, dualism refers to the separation of legislature and executive powers in order to provide balance and check possible abuse. The Oxford Dictionary (2006:253) defines dualism as a division into two opposed or contrasted aspects, such as good and evil or mind and matter

There are many examples that describe the importance that Chewa people place on two direct opposites, and still regard them differently important. One is usually more powerful than the other but still needs the input of the other. For example, there are clear demarcations between the left hand and the right hand, the former being weaker; male and female, the former being stronger; night and day, the former being more powerful, more dominating, and a source of transfer of wisdom. As a result, left-handed children are discouraged from using their left hand for eating or greeting as this is seen as disrespecting the food or belittling the greeted person respectively. One way of discouraging them from using their left hand is to cut in their left palm with a sharp knife, and as they wait for the wound to heal they get used to using their right hand.

Women are expected to totally submit both to their husbands and all men in the society. For example, no woman greets a man while standing and when a Chewa woman meets any married man while walking along the road, the woman sits or kneels on the side of the road until the man passes. Yet, ironically, women have the power to make a final decision on the installation of chiefs, most of whom are men.

Story-telling is a common tradition among Chewa people in which the old generation tells chante-fables to the younger generation in order to teach them good morals and to instil in them caution on various human issues. These stories are always told at night while they sit around a fire. The fire around which they sit is the symbol of security and community, while the darkness behind their backs plays the role of wise counsel that can be rewarding to the obedient and harmful to the disobedient child.

4.3.2 Dualism and Complementariness in Drumming Performances

The philosophies of dualism and complementariness in drumming apply in two ways. The drummer has a clear awareness about the differences between the left hand and the right hand. He/she is aware that one hand produces a more accentuated sound than the other. Therefore, in order to produce a desired melodic impression, the correct hand must play first followed by the other. This is what he/she will also tell the drumming student.

In this case, while the two hands have different strengths, they need each other in order to complete the drumming assignment. In addition, one hand plays after another

as a complement and not as a competitor of the other. Rarely do both hands play simultaneously, and if they do, they create a feeling of grace notes.

The Thesaurus online dictionary (n.d.) defines complementarity as the interrelation of reciprocity whereby one thing supplements or depends on the other. Different academic disciplines apply the term ‘complementarity’ in different ways. In colour science, for example, the consecutive viewing of two colours creates an after-image of complementary colour, whereby one has the illusion of viewing the complementary colour as a product rather than the original colour components. This concept can further be explained as follows: when one stares at a single colour (red for example) for a sustained period of time, then looks at a white surface, an after-image of the complementary colour will appear.¹⁹ The use of complementary colours is an important aspect of aesthetics in art and graphic design. This also extends to other fields such as contrasting colours in retail display. When placed next to each other, colour complements make each other appear brighter.

In the context of drumming, the interrelation of reciprocity between the right hand and the left hand is regarded as supplementary and musically relevant. The product of this complementary function is a melo-rhythmic drum expression whereby each hand produces clearly perceived melodic tones that contribute to the different drum phrases. Apparently, it is impossible to create such drum ‘melodies’ using one hand. As each hand plays a tone on the different positions of the drum head, the different melodic tones are produced based on two factors: the strength of the hand and the position on the drum where the sound is produced.

By alternating the hands and the drum positions for sound production, the player recognizes the role that each dual partner (the different hands and/or the different tones) plays in the creation of a desired melo-rhythmic phrase. The drummer’s desire is to produce a ‘complementary sound’ for the dancer (and the audience) as an after-image, or an illusion. This complementary sound is produced at both individual level or at group level (sound harmony) where several drummers are involved. As a result, it is common for Chewa people to relate drum sound for particular dances to some melodic expression. Such a single melodic expression is often an after-image

¹⁹ This is one of several aftereffects studied in the psychology of visual perception which are generally ascribed to fatigue in specific parts of the visual system.

(composite melody) of a combination of multiple drum tones, phrases, spaces, and silences.

As earlier explained, the tones are a combination of low and high dual tones; the phrases comprise contrasting rhythmic configurations; the spaces are gaps between rhythmic phrases which are left to be ‘filled’ by other team drummers; and the silences are the rests or temporary pauses within rhythms that each drum player creates through syncopation (delayed beat) or as a way of improvisation. The creation of an after-image melody through these practical observations supports the view of community life, sharing, and social dependence.

4.3.3 The Theory of Spontaneity

While general principles guide the drumming artistry in the manner explained in the previous section, drummers are expected to be spontaneous when drumming for a particular song or dance. Ability to be spontaneous and to improvise is one of the marks of a skilful drummer.

The Collins Student’s Dictionary (2006:814) defines spontaneity as ‘acting from native (natural) feelings, proneness, or temperament, without constraint or external force, i.e., acting from impulse.’ On the other hand, improvisation is defined as ‘the practice of acting, reacting or creating in the moment or on the spot in response to the stimulus of one’s immediate environment and inner feelings.’ This results in the invention of new thought patterns or new ways of acting, based on the practitioner having a thorough intuitive and technical understanding of the necessary skills or concerns within the improvised domain. In drumming, therefore, one needs both the skills of improvisation and the abilities to spontaneously discharge such skills as both a cognitive and an artistic expression.

The order of a typical Chewa dance performance is as follows: song, hand-clapping (or the other way round), drumming, and then dancing. In this way, the drummer drums to the singing and hand-clapping, while the dancer dances to the drumming. However, in the absence of drumming the dancer dances to the hand-clapping, for example in *gulewamkulu*. There is no hand-clapping in all Chewa dances that use double-headed drums.

The drummer's creativity is demonstrated when he blends well with the singing (and the clapping) while dictating the dance steps for the dancer or dancers. In addition, there is need for good communication and coordination between the various drummers. The drummer must observe his/her entry point, maintain both pace and mood, and at the same time improvise interesting phrases. The lead drummer must properly attack the drumming phrases, prescribe a suitable tempo (sometimes disregarding that of the singers), and leave some spaces for the next group of drummers.

In all Chewa dances, the main drummer comes in after one or more other drummers who create the notion of 'general community' that provides support to the drum 'expert' (main drummer). Again, this is a reflection of community life that exists in many African contexts. The dancer or dancers start dancing only after the main drummer has played one or two phrases. The dancer or dancers must also show their mastery by being spontaneous and improvising.



Fig. 7: These three *gulewamkulu* drummers are masters of their art due to their ability to improvise spontaneously.

4.4 Drumming contexts

Contextually, drumming is done within specific circumstances, in a prescribed framework and from an ideal perspective.

In Chewa communities, a specific style of drumming may be used for similar or related dances. For instance, the *gulewamkulu* drums are also performed for the *mnjedza*, *kazukuta*, *chisamba*, or *chinamwali cha mkangali* dances since they have several things in common with the *gulewamkulu*: they function as transitional dances into adulthood or are merely related to adult life, and are performed or monitored only by senior members of the society.

The *mnjedza* is performed by village heads and chiefs, both male and female, just before a *gulewamkulu* performance. The dance is a curtain raiser (*kalambula bwalo*) for the *gulewamkulu* performance. Chiefs and village heads are custodians of the *gulewamkulu* tradition, and have the responsibility to announce all *gulewamkulu* performances on the final day of every festival through the dancing of *mnjedza*. While all the dancers are community leaders, they are also generally advanced in age.

The *kazukuta* is a dance of mature men and women. These people are usually family or household heads, whose village roles include being chiefs' advisors, medicine men, counsellors, and specialists in such community roles as grave digging, drum making, or music making. This group of elderly men and women meet in various forums to discuss current issues. The meetings can either be formal or informal. One such informal setting is a beer party.

When these men and women have drunk to their satisfaction, they often dance the *kazukuta* whose movements are similar to those of the *gulewamkulu*. These similar dance movements are a reflection of the dancers' adulthood achievement through the *gulewamkulu* and other forms of initiation. It is through the *kazukuta* that these men and women merge and are free to comment on society's sacred issues and perform together an otherwise ritually prohibitive 'dance' – the *gulewamkulu* in disguise.

The *chinamwali cha mkangali* is the observance of female transition rites. Both men and women folk observe together the passing of girls through this initiation practice with the participation of the *gulewamkulu*. What is *gulewamkulu* to the male

community is '*chinamwali*' to the female community. Both initiations have their own advisors called the *namkungwi*. These are responsible for instructing initiates on morality and adult life. Male and female *namkungwis* usually meet and plan initiation ceremonies for the adolescent boys and girls in a particular year. They then meet the village head for his authorization and input. This collaboration is necessary to prevent a clash of programmes and promote proper coordination of the two initiations.

While the *chinamwali* is usually the general term for female adolescent initiation, the *chisamba* is performed as an initiation dance for women who have their first conception. All the female initiation 'dances' are accompanied by drumming. Men play the same *gulewamkulu* drums during the closing ceremonies of all the *chinamwali* events. In addition, every 'senior' *chinamwali* ceremony is graced by special *gulewamkulu* performances. As a revolutionary move, women decided to exclude male and the *gulewamkulu* involvement in female initiation rites. A similar dance called *njelelo* was introduced whereby women themselves wear masks and display a kind of 'female *gulewamkulu*' performance.²⁰

Weddings and inter-village festivals provide another context for the performance of entertainment dances of the *chimtali* and *mganda*. In addition, youthful dances such as the *gwanyasa* are performed during school festivals in the contemporary Chewa setting.

All these dance contexts afford drummers the opportunity to rehearse and transfer their drumming skills. It is through these festivals and ceremonies that Chewa drummers observe associated rituals, polish up their skills, improve on individual and group drum performances, advance administrative skills within the drumming culture, and promote awareness for the essence and role of drumming at community level as an important factor in the success of their dances.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to describe specific drumming principles, concepts and theories that are applicable to the Chewa context. The drumming accompaniment in

²⁰ Kwilimbe, telephone interview, 2 July 2008

the various Chewa dances not only reflects the general philosophies of the Chewa society, but it also synchronizes several anthropological trends that are Chewa in construction. To become a drummer, one needs to understand several social concepts, embrace a particular view-point regarding Chewa music institution, and prepare to protect oneself from rival challenges in order to survive in the system.

It is clear from this study that talent, skill, competence, or aptitude, are not adequate tenets for making a good drummer. Intangible elements such as magic play a very important role in the drumming learning process. It is equally true that the drum is the central focus of all Chewa dances as observed: the drum must be protected from malicious attacks so that it lasts long; the drum must be preserved through observation of prescribed rituals; the drummers must learn to protect themselves from envious rivals; the entire performance must be secured from flopping through protecting the drum; and finally, effective drum sound must be enhanced by involving mystical powers.

Chapter Five

The *Gulewamkulu*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is one of the three that describe typical practical Chewa settings for drumming. These settings are in form of dance events that we recorded for purposes of description, comparison, and brief analyses.

Gulewamkulu, literally translated as ‘big dance’ or ‘great dance’, is probably the most popular dance in Malawi. It is a Chewa ritual dance that emanates from boys’ initiation ceremony. Masked dancers of different types, shapes, and forms dance to drums and hand clapping accompanying songs that are often characterized by words of wisdom, instruction, and storytelling, sometimes using coded language. The *gulewamkulu* characters are regarded as ancestral spirits (*mizimu*) that come to join with the world of the living, and in the process leave instructions that will lead to successful co-existence. They are also regarded as beasts or wild animals (*vilombo*) that would harm anyone who does not take heed of the instructions given. The initiation camps are usually within or very close to a graveyard where these ancestral spirits “live.” In modern Malawi, the *gulewamkulu* perform at festivals, political rallies, installation ceremonies, and at funerals of Chewa chiefs and members of the *gulewamkulu* society.

5.2 History of *gulewamkulu*

According to Chewa oral tradition, *gulewamkulu* was initially performed by women in relation to girls’ initiation into womanhood, and their incorporation into the adult society. (Schechner, 1985:36)

Later on, *gulewamkulu* changed in scope and objectives. It now plays a major role in both male and female initiation. In strict modern *gulewamkulu* societies all the characters are male. They sometimes depict female behaviour by merely dressing like women. However, in moderate *gulewamkulu* societies, performers may include both women and men.

The performers wear masks to conceal their identity, and to imitate certain persons and wild animals or beasts. The identity of each character is therefore kept a secret, and the characters are regarded as a reincarnation of dead ancestors that come back to dwell temporarily among the living. Each mask bears the name of the character or personality it portrays. The masks include both carved face masks and basketry (burlap) masks in terms of their physical appearance. Some ‘masks’ are merely head covers (*chisudzo*) made from different types of materials including birds’ feathers and animal skins depending on the function of the character being portrayed.

Gulewamkulu is a generic name for the performance or the (secret) society,²¹ while *vilombo* (singular, *chilombo*) or *gule* (dance) is a generic name for all the mask characters. The society is also referred to as the *nyau*. Traditionally, the term *nyau* refers to all basketry masks such as the *ng’ombe* (the cow), the *njovu* (the elephant) or the *chilembwe* (the “antelope”). In this case, the title *chilombo* is relegated to the other ‘bipedal’ characters. In modern Malawi, the terms *nyau* and *gulewamkulu* are used interchangeably. These two terms as well as the term *gule* are used in this chapter to mean the same thing – the dance, the dancers, or the society/cult.

In conclusion, the term *nyau* refers to a system of secret society religious worship also nicknamed ‘*Mpingo wa Aroni*’ (Aaron’s Church – named after the Biblical Aaron the high priest) with its particular rituals and devotion to ancestral spirits.

The cult and the dance in *nyau* are so intertwined that they are hardly separated from each other. However, oral tradition suggests that the dance came first and developed into a cult. (Kuthemba-Mwale, 1977:26 – paraphrased)

5.3 Functions of *gulewamkulu*

The various *gulewamkulu* characters play different roles in the dance, and their actions contribute to the overall function of the performance. The *gulewamkulu* performance has a number of functions including educational, psychological, social, and aesthetic (Kamlongera, 1992:39-40).

²¹ In a less restricted sense, *gulewamkulu* is the wide community of male initiates. Every Chewa boy is expected to undergo initiation and is regarded as a member of the *gulewamkulu* society.

Educationally, the performance is instructive, thereby making continuous use of the *gulewamkulu* characters to become symbols of particular human behaviour, whose parallels are obvious to the society. This is achieved through songs that are particularly composed to address current issues.

Psychologically, the performance offers an opportunity to the dancers to express suppressed desires, release emotional tensions, and comment on strained relationships. This is achieved through songs directed at attacking the person or persons against whom the *gulewamkulu* character bears a grudge. In this way, the *gulewamkulu* performance offers a structural and socially legitimate means for the expression of such tensions, without resulting into disrupted social relationships within the family members (Kamlongera *et al*, 1992:40).

In addition, the *gulewamkulu* performance offers the audience an opportunity to meet old friends and make new acquaintances. The creative minds behind the construction of various masks and the fascinating dance steps of the different *gulewamkulu* characters also become a source of appreciation by the audience.

5.4 *Gulewamkulu* Organization

The aspect of ‘time’ in *gulewamkulu* performances is a critical element. Like in many African dance performances, time in *gulewamkulu* can be described in three ways – time of the day, i.e., morning, afternoon, or evening; season, i.e., rainy season or dry season; and ‘function’, i.e., funeral, installation ceremony, festival or initiation.

Some *nyau* characters can only perform in the night while others do perform both during day and in the night. Some *nyau* characters only perform during funerals or installation ceremonies, while others perform during celebrations and Chewa festivals.

Except for funerals, the *gulewamkulu* activities take place in the dry season. The dry season is the ‘fallow period’ during which there is little or no work in the fields to keep villagers busy. In addition, the essential *nyau* construction materials such as maize sheaths, sisal, and dry grass are readily available in the dry season.

The *gulewamkulu* is organized in a hierarchy of the characters. Some characters are bipedal, some are quadrupedal and others are non-pedal. The last two *nyau* categories form high-level characters according to the *gulewamkulu* hierarchy. The most senior *nyau* character is the *njovu* (elephant). Drumming patterns, drumming mood, and the type of the main drum for each level of the *gulewamkulu* correspond with the seniority of the characters.

- a. Basketry (burlap) and animal structures of *njovu*, *kasiyamaliro*, and *chilembwe* (DVD:17-20) perform only during functions that are connected with senior community leaders. These leaders include chiefs and *gulewamkulu* executive members. Nowadays, these performances are extended to presidential rallies and political meetings organised by cabinet ministers. Performance of these senior *gulewamkulu* characters signifies honour and authority. Traditionally, the *njovu*, *kasiyamaliro*, and *chilembwe* performed during installation ceremonies (*kulonga ufumu*), women's initiation rites (*chinamwali cha chingondo/mkangali*), at chiefs' and *gulewamkulu* executive members' funerals, and during commemorative rites for deceased *gulewamkulu* members (*mpalo*).

During performances, a number of men often dance and sweep around these 'senior' *gulewamkulu* characters, creating a human shield and causing a lot of dust, thereby making it difficult for the curious eye to make out what the 'animal' looks like [DVD:20].

- b. Since only senior members of the *gulewamkulu* compose songs for the senior *nyau* that are suitable for chiefs' and other community leaders' functions, general rhythmic arrangement of such songs is different from those of the junior *gulewamkulu* (bipedal characters).²² Different also is the mood that such songs portray. These songs are composed for specific dance movements of these *nyau*. The dance movements reflect on the respect and authority as well as status of the people for whom these performances are carried out.²³

²² Singing for such characters as *njovu* or *chilembwe* during *nyau* festivals is led by elderly initiated men only. The singing is referred to as *khowe*.

²³ Josophat (12 July 2008) informed us that one can not describe 'nyau' movements as dance steps. They are best described as big walk movements (*ndawala*). This researcher observed that most songs for these bestial characters contain the expression 'ndawala.'

In addition, different characters have different dance movements in order to portray different moods: some movements depict sorrow, some depict expression of loss, some depict wisdom of elders, and others depict a sense of authority. These different movements are also necessitated by the physical structure of the different characters and the creation of the necessary mood is supported by the ‘dampening’ drum sound.



Fig. 8: A *njovu* statue constructed as a tomb stone (*chiliza*) for a deceased *gulewamkulu* patron, Village Headman Chimbaka. *Nyau* members demonstrate to our team how they dance around a *njovu* character by using this statue.

To ensure compliance of non-society members, the *gulewamkulu* uses coded language as a way of checking invasion into their society. Use of questions and symbols, all describing *nyau* characters and practices at different hierarchy levels, is employed to screen out intruders. The *gule* or their escorts interrogate any suspicious males that they come across using their coded questions or symbols. When the suspect fails to answer, he is punished through scourging or forced initiation. Serious impudence towards the *nyau* society attracts more severe consequences including banishment from the community, or bewitchment by the *gulewamkulu* society.

5.5 The *Gulewamkulu* Organization Settings

There are three settings for the *gulewamkulu* organization: the *dambwe*, the *liunde*, and the *bwalo*.

- a. The *dambwe* is the permanent camp of the *gulewamkulu* society. It is situated away from the village, often inside a graveyard or in a secluded place such as a forest. Once declared *dambwe*, the place is safeguarded from ordinary people's interference.

The Chewa tradition respects graveyards, and allows uncontrolled growth of natural trees and bushes in burial places. For one reason, this is done to preserve trees that are left to dry and later used as firewood during funerals, when need arises. The second reason is that the trees provide shade to grave diggers and mourners during burial ceremonies. The last reason is that the trees and bushes are believed to provide a 'resting place' (*nthunzi* – the shade) for the ancestral spirits. This nature preservation practice provides a ready solution for the establishment and protection of the *dambwe*.

The following are the functions of the *dambwe*.

- i) The *dambwe* acts as the boys' initiation camp, where the initiates receive instructions about adult life. This process involves instruction on responsible behaviour, respect for elders, hard work, and marriage life. To encourage many boys to admire initiated life, experiences in the *dambwe* are kept secret. Any initiate revealing *gulewamkulu* secrets is severely punished.²⁴ Instead, initiates are taught to disguise truth by reporting fantasy, such as daily feasts at the *dambwe* with a beef menu. In fact, the *kasiyamaliro* is referred to as 'meat' or 'the animal' (*nyama*) which the initiates share during these sumptuous feasts.
- ii) In addition, the *dambwe* acts as a workshop for the construction of the *gulewamkulu* masks and storage of the *nyau* structures.²⁵ Since *gulewamkulu* characters are regarded

²⁴ *Dambwe* life encourages survival of the fittest, as members are trained to endure hardships. Fights and other cruel things are common among *nyau* members. No one is allowed to stop a fight or report tough *dambwe* experiences to other members of the community

²⁵ Handy individual masks are kept in dancers' homes especially in boys dwelling units (*mphala*) where traditionally women are not allowed to enter.

as spirits, any invasion of the *dambwe* by both women and the uninitiated men would expose the *dambwe* secrets.²⁶ Hence, the place should always be secured.

- iii) The *dambwe* also serves as a training camp for the *gulewamkulu* dance. It is here where members teach each other songs, dance steps, and drumming patterns.
- b. The second *gulewamkulu* performance setting, the *liunde*, is a temporary camp, or a resting place. During each performance, the *nyau* leave the *dambwe* and camp in a *liunde*, which is situated close to the dancing arena. When the dancing arena is close to the *dambwe*, there is usually no need for a *liunde*. All the dancers go to the *liunde* in full 'regalia,' and use the *liunde* for resting and preparation for the *bwalo*.
- c. The *bwalo* is the dancing arena, which is a clearing large enough to hold a few dozens of participants. The arena is situated within the village close to or away from a grave yard. Most *bwalos* have a big tree nearby that provides shelter for dignitaries during performances. Where natural shade is not available, a temporary *v.i.p.* structure is constructed. *Bwalos* are known and named after some distinguishing features such as trees. Our research found out that in the villages of Khuwi and Mpando of T.A. Kalumo in Ntchisi, their *bwalos* are called 'Ku Muula' and 'Ku Msekese' after the *muula* and *msekeke* trees that provide shade at their respective dancing arenas. Over time these trees have become symbols of the *bwalo*.

5.6 Performance Context and Administration of the *Gulewamkulu*

The common *gulewamkulu* performances take place during the Chewa annual thanksgiving festivals. These festivals usually run for one week or two weeks in some Chewa communities.

The organization of the *gulewamkulu* for public performances involves the executive, the performers, and the audience. The performers include both the dancers and the drummers, while the audience comprises females of any age, boys of less than ten

²⁶ Any kind of exposure of the *gulewamkulu* secrets through both carelessness by members or invasion of the *dambwe* and watching the dance by male non-members is termed "*kufwala gule*" and is considered a very serious crime that attracts hefty fines including death.

years, and initiated men. The executive comprises the village head who is the *mwinimzinda* (patron), the *wakunjira*, the *tsabwalo*, and the *tsang'oma*.

- a. The patron is the honorary owner of the *gulewamkulu* cult and is vested with powers of authorizing all performances. The title *mwinimzinda* literally means “city owner.” Chewa village heads are often elevated to the status of *mwinimzinda* only from the *gulewamkulu* view point when they satisfy certain conditions. Some of the conditions include seniority among other neighbouring village heads, having senior men and women who can conduct initiation rites, and showing general interest in initiation activities through material and moral support. One *mzinda* may consist of several neighbouring villages, each having their village head, but falling under one *gulewamkulu* patron. Apart from deciding when and where *gulewamkulu* performances should take place within his area of jurisdiction, the *mwinimzinda* is also responsible for settling disputes arising during performances.
- b. The *wakunjira* may be compared to a prime minister and is usually the patron’s relative, often a nephew. *Wakunjira* either means “spy” or “monitor” or “supervisor.” He is the likely heir to the throne, and should have hands on training as far as the *gulewamkulu* administration is concerned.²⁷ The *wakunjira* ensures protection of dancers and the performance arena from bewitchment resulting from competition between dancers, and jealousies from other patrons or members of the audience. He also ensures the smooth running of and thorough preparations for the performance.
- c. The term *tsabwalo* means “captain of the arena” or “the owner of the arena” or simply “one who deals with the arena” and, as the name suggests, is responsible for the preparation of the dancing arena. He ensures that the arena (*bwalo*) is cleared and ready for the performance. He is also responsible for fencing the arena and constructing shelters, if need be. In addition, he liaises with the *wakunjira* on the position of the *liunde*.
- d. The last member of the *gulewamkulu* executive committee is the *tsang'oma*. The term stands for one who is responsible for the drums (*ng'oma*). His duties include gathering

²⁷ In Chewa tradition, both chieftaincy succession and systems of inheritance are linked to nephews.

drums for the performance, ensuring good condition of the drums, tuning the drums, and ensuring that the drummers are rewarded and taken care of. He is also entrusted with hiring of extra drums.

The general discussion and descriptions of Section 5.6 are based on the traditional *nyau* practices. Contemporary practices have quite different administrative set ups basically due to the fact that the *nyau* is a progressive cult and so it easily entertains both evolutionary and revolutionary elements in order to respond to contemporary demands. For example, the contemporary title for the leader of the *dambwe*, locally referred to as ‘*wamkulu wa kumadzi*’²⁸ is “*pilisipolo*” (principal) or “*bishopu*” (bishop) according to the area where this research was conducted. The *nyau* patron is no longer always a village head. He may be one of the village elders who is appointed through a defined system of the *nyau* society, or who inherits this role from a deceased or retired relation – the *nyau* cult is nowadays regarded as an independent ‘village.’ Such *nyau* patrons are referred to as *wamzinda* (of the *mzinda* or responsible for the *mzinda*) and not the *mwinimzinda* or *mnuwake mzinda* (the owner of the *mzinda*) as was traditionally the case.

5.7 *Gulewamkulu* Drumming

The *gulewamkulu* dance uses six drums. The dancer needs all the drums, but specifically dances to one drum, which nevertheless depends on the other five drums for the drumming to be complete. Informants reported that there are three basic *gulewamkulu* drums which may successfully be used in any performance. The remaining three merely help to consolidate or ‘harmonize’ the three major drums. The drumming pattern, style, and tempi reflect on the character of a particular mask.

Kerr (1998:26) quotes Blackmun and Schoffeleers on the *gulewamkulu* drumming tempo that corresponds to undesirable characteristics personified by a *gulewamkulu* mask called *tamutamu* as follows:

²⁸ This expression means “the head of the water source.” The *dambwe* is also referred to as a pool or water source (*kumadzi*) because it is imposed that all the *gule* are not man-made but they are ‘fished’ out of this mysterious pool found at the *dambwe*.

This dancer is accompanied by a slow heavy beat on the drums as he takes long, lurching strides, leaning and bumping into others on his way. This heavy quality is reflected by the artist in his treatment of the mask particularly that of the mouthan expression of open-mouthed, drunken stupor

The six drums of the *gulewamkulu* seem to be symbolic as the number *six* is also consistently used in the *gulewamkulu* when interrogating non-initiates. For example, a common *gulewamkulu* question asks how many spots a guinea fowl has. The answer is *six*. This number represents the different types of materials used to construct a basketry mask of *ng'ombe* (ox), or *mkwala*, or *cholemba*. Of course, the initiate is taught what those six types of materials are called in their coded language and we will not present them here for ethical reasons.

The six *gulewamkulu* drums are *mjidiko*, *kamkumbe*, *mpanje*, *gunda*, *mbalule*, and *ndewe*. The drums are named according to their function in the *nyau* performance. While basic drumming patterns are maintained for all *gulewamkulu* performances, different *gule* dance to different drumming rhythm combinations. Different areas have different names for the six *gulewamkulu* drums. The differences come basically from rhythmic descriptions of each drum. Alternative names given to each drum are included in the following descriptions, meanings, and functions of the different *gulewamkulu* drums:

a) *Mjidiko*

This drum is used to provide the foundational rhythm and set the tempo for the dance. It is played as a lead drum before any other drum joins in. Its name is derived from its function – *kujidika* (to set the pace). The *mjidiko* is also known as the *mbitembite*, *mbandambanda*, or *tiyatiya*. The three alternative names are onomatopoeic expressions describing the drum's rhythm.

b) *Kamkumbe*

This is a support drum to the *mjidiko*. Its function is to 'echo' the lead drum (*kupolokozana*) in a kind of conversation. Its name comes from its rhythmic nature of 'unearthing' – *kukumba* or burrowing – *kukolowola*; hence its alternative name of

mkowolo. This drum unearths a typical Chewa dance rhythm of “*chili kumunda nchambewu*” or “*kali kumunda nkambewu*.” It is also known as the *miningo*²⁹ (inviting drum/announcing drum).

c) *Mpanje*

The basic *nyau* dance rhythm is punctuated by the *mpanje* drum. Whereas the *mjidiko* and the *kankumbe* are not treated as ‘drums’ (*ng’oma*) as such, but rather as the ‘*kapelegede*’ (escort or keeping company), the *mpanje* is the first recognizable ‘drum’ before the entry of the other ‘drums.’ The *mpanje* rhythms alternate to provide rhythmic variations that are foundational to a particular dance step. This is in contrast with the *mjidiko* and the *kankumbe* static rhythms. Another name for the *mpanje* is the *mtiwise* – a tool used to press a soft surface – probably coming from its careful determination of the *nyau* ‘delicate’ dance steps.

d) *Gunda*

The *gunda* is responsible for keeping a steady beat just as the foot drum in jazz drumming. The steady beat is necessary for the successful functioning of the *mpanje* whose rhythm keeps changing throughout the performance. The *gunda* drum is often the same as the one used for the *chimtali* and *mganda* performances also known as the *phulankhali*. It is mostly a round double-headed drum, although a ‘make shift’ cylindrical drum may be used as the *gunda*. The *gunda* player sits on the drum frame and beats the drum either with bare hands or with a beater (*chibulilo*). The best description for the *gunda* is ‘bass drum’ (Kwilimbe, 2 July 2008).

e) *Mbalule*

The *mbalule* is the key drum for most *gulewamkulu* bi-pedal characters. It is the loudest drum whose function is to accompany bi-pedal *gulewamkulu* singing. Its name comes from the Chichewa word ‘*kuwalula*’ (to shout aloud/to broadcast/to scream, as in uncontrolled singing). The *mbalule* player screams alongside the drum while

²⁹ Kwilimbe (2 July 2008)

playing apparently discordant rhythms that can only be appreciated by an insider. Nevertheless, disregarding the logical progression of the song, the dancer coordinates well with the rather illogical *mbalule* rhythm. This drum signifies the essence of the *gulewamkulu* drumming. Due to its ‘noisy’ and projected sound, the drum is also referred to as the *songa*, meaning ‘the tip.’

f) *Ndewe*

This is the master drum. Unlike the *mbalule*, this drum is used for the accompaniment of basketry (burlap) or bestial character (*nyau*) performances. As senior dancers in the *gulewamkulu* the *nyau* characters are specifically accompanied by the authoritative *ndewe* drum. The *ndewe* is sometimes used in place of or simultaneously with the *mpanje*. Because most basketry characters do not necessarily dance due to their authority status, but merely move or jostle around (*ndawala*), the *ndewe* rhythm is rather ‘dull’ and monotonous. Our research established that some Chewa areas use the names *ndewe* and *mpanje* interchangeably. The term *ndewe* stands for a hollow or mellow sound while *mpanje* connotes ‘drum for elders or the big man.’

The following is a basic transcription of the six *gulewamkulu* drums. The transcription of each drum represents the ‘idling’ section of the dance (*kusokola sitepi*) and not the main dance section, which varies with each different song.

Gulewamkulu Drum Rhythms

♩. = 140

Mjidiko (Mbitembite) 12/8

Kamkumbe (Mkowolo) 12/8

Gunda 12/8

Mpanje 12/8

Ndewe 12/8

Mbalule (Songa) 12/8

Mjidiko (Mbitembite)

Kamkumbe (Mkowolo)

Gunda

Mpanje

Ndewe

Mbalule (Songa)

5.8 The *Gulewamkulu* Festival

5.8.1 Introduction

Gulewamkulu festivals take place when there is less agricultural activity so that villagers have adequate time to prepare for and stage the performances. In addition, after harvest the people have enough food for the festival. Some of the harvested maize is used to brew beer for the participants who include invited guests from surrounding villages.

The sales of their agricultural products also ensure that the villagers have enough money for sponsoring the *nyau* activities. Some of the money is used to hire drums, buy additional cloths for masks, and give cash rewards (*kusupa*) to *gulewamkulu* dancers.

5.8.2 Preparations

The executive committee fixes dates for the *gulewamkulu* festivals, often more than a month away, to allow enough time for preparations. Preparations involve sending out invitations, making or tuning of drums, collecting mask materials, constructing masks, brewing of beer, composing or arranging of songs, training in new dance patterns, and preparing accommodation for guests.

Different players take different roles in the preparations and all preparations take into consideration several factors. For instance, song composers are either men or women from the community. The compositions take into account current events in the village or surrounding villages. Composers may also discuss old songs in order to accommodate new and fashionable dancing patterns. In this case, there may be a consideration to change the tempo of some of the songs. The composers also teach new songs that they learnt from other villages.

- a. Construction of masks and basketry structures is done by village artists at the *dambwe* in the presence of the *nyau* neophytes. They determine the type, amount, and colours of the materials to be used for their work. This is done to suit the character that they agree to portray. Some of the characters are traditional, but every year new characters are introduced in order to reflect current issues. The new characters are given appropriate names that reflect their performance roles.
- b. Drummers ensure that there are sufficient drums and spare drums for the performances throughout the festival. They also ensure that the available drums are in good shape. In this regard, either new drums are made to take care of any deficit, or extra drums are hired to act as spare drums, and the old drums are tuned for a good performance.
- c. The village women are responsible for collecting firewood for cooking and beer making. They are also responsible for fermenting maize or millet for the beer. On an agreed day, they mobilize each other to grind the fermented maize or millet, pound and soak the maize, and go to the maize mill to have flour made. The women also decorate houses for the guests to the festival.

- d. The executive committee sends out invitations to other villages to request for guest performers or for mere solidarity.³⁰

5.8.3 The Performance Prelude

Preparations for the *gulewamkulu* performance³¹ take a minimum of one week. During this period several activities take place in the host village. Key among these are the official hand over of adolescent boys to the *gulewamkulu* representative for their initiation; and the scouting for mask raw materials by initiated boys and dancers.

- a. The neophytes are kept in the *dambwe* for a minimum of three days. During this period they are instructed and supervised by the *namkungwi* (the instructor). Every boy is assigned a counsellor (*phungu*) who orients the boy on the life in the *dambwe*. The counsellor also helps in reminding the new initiate about what the instructor has taught him. In addition, the counsellor protects the new initiate from abuse by other members. In general, the counsellor is responsible for the neophyte's general welfare.

After the three days of instruction and training, the neophytes are released back to their homes. Since parents bring their sons for initiation on different days within the preparation week, some initiates spend barely a day for their instruction. No initiation takes place after the *gulewamkulu* grand finale. Initiation for the *njovu* is always done a day before the closing ceremony and is given to those old initiates who are interested and are ready to pay the hefty fees of a number of goats or a cow.

- b. At the *dambwe*, the craftsmen get busy with making masks and constructing animal structures (*nyau*) using such materials as banana leaves, maize sheaths, grass, rags, chicken feathers, ashes, sacks, timber, poles, sticks, and paint.

Throughout the week, the *dambwe* is protected from intruders through continuous loud yodelling or crepitating (*kuyeyesa*) by patrol boys. These boys are strategically

³⁰ Chewa people believe in involving others during such functions as maize pounding (*tsokwe*), grave clearing (*dambule*), mass farming (*dima*), weddings, and other community activities. This is one way of showing solidarity. It is imperative that organisers invite friends and neighbours for their support; otherwise failure to invite them is interpreted as having a hidden agenda against them. The term for this solidarity is *chikumu* or *kugula nkhondo*. The term *chikumu* is also used to refer to elopement as an informal way of getting married.

³¹ Performance in this case is the grand finale of the *gulewamkulu* festival.

positioned within the *dambwe* and they act as spies on behalf of the craftsmen to scare away approaching non-initiates and women.

Table 5.1: Roles of *nyau* initiation personnel

Title	Meaning	Responsibilities
Namkungwi	One who does not beat about the bush One who instructs Master instructor A general title used in all initiations, but applied more to girls' initiations For <i>nyau</i> initiation, the <i>namkungwi</i> is the <i>wakunjira</i>	Teaches new initiates good morals: respect for elders; hard work; obedience Orients new initiates on adulthood, marriage life and male responsibilities Trains the new initiates on <i>gulewamkulu</i> traditions and practices
Phungu	Counsellor	Provides guardianship to the new initiate Orients the aspiring initiate on <i>dambwe</i> life Reminds and clarifies to the neophyte all instruction and <i>nyau</i> questions learnt Reports any serious illness to the neophyte's parents Collects neophyte's food from his parents' home

5.8.4 Gathering of Mask Materials

Most materials used for making masks and constructing *nyau* characters are found within the village and in the villagers' farming fields. This poses a challenge for the craftsmen who have to collect mask materials from public places, but still maintain the belief in the community that the *gulewamkulu* characters are neither human nor are they dressed up in costume but they are ancestral spirits. This requires devising a way of collecting the mask materials without raising public suspicion.

- a. Mask characters known as *ajere* or *alende* are responsible for collecting materials in the village and taking them to the *dambwe* for the craftsmen to use for making masks.

In the process of collecting the materials the *ajere* entertain the public. They cover their bodies with maize sheaths and other materials that they gather: around the elbows, waist, knees, and necks. They carry an axe or a club and imitate animal hunters while roaming in the village. As they imitate the hunters, the *ajere* collect the materials from dumping places, suggesting that's the animal that they have killed; and as they carry the materials on their bodies for the *dambwe*, they sing songs that depict a return to their home from a hunting exercise. The whole scenario is so dramatic that instead of raising suspicion it provides entertainment to on-looking women.

- b. Sometimes young men are sent into the village to collect such materials as chicken feathers. They use fish hooks-and-lines with maize grains as the bait. They throw the hooks to unsuspecting chickens, which upon swallowing the bait are hooked away and taken for the *dambwe*. Poles and bamboos are sneaked into the *dambwe* by fastening them around one's ankles and systematically pulling them. Tailors are approached for cut-offs from clothing materials, and these are secretly sneaked into the *dambwe*. Banana leaves and other materials from the gardens are collected by either the *ajere* or the scout boys.
- c. When there is a deficit of costume materials, the *alende* or *akwinimbira* masks (night scavengers) roam the villages on the eve of the festival period, singing in deep voices in the silence of the night, and picking maize sheaths and chicken feathers from rubbish dumps (*nkhuti*). This follows a daytime spying exercise for such materials. The night roaming of the *kwinimbira* masks signifies the beginning of the *nyau* festival week known as *ng'oma zalowa* or *ng'oma zakhala* (literally: 'the drums have entered' or 'the drums have been established').³²

5.8.5 Beer Preparation

Fermentation of maize for beer making takes four days. The maize malt (*chimera*), which is the product of the fermentation, is then dried, ground and boiled at least four days before the beer is served. Women move in groups to the forest to collect

³² The *gulewamkulu* cult is also known as '*ng'oma*' (drum or drums).

firewood or draw water for the beer making. At this time a mask character called the *kang'wingw'i* 'escorts' the women to the forest or to the well.

The *kang'wing'wi* plays the role of an erotic man who is [after courting the women, but is] nevertheless conscious of the society's sexual taboos (Kamlongera *et al*, 1992:43).

The *kang'wing'wi* characters do not sing but they only scream to announce their arrival. They usually appear suddenly where women are busy collecting firewood or drawing water. They scare the women by temporarily running after them and returning, causing the women sing such provocative and mocking songs as:

Leader:	<i>Bwera, bwera!</i>	Come, come!
Response:	<i>Bwera!</i>	Come!
Leader:	<i>Bwera, bwera!</i>	Come, come!
Response:	<i>Bwera!</i>	Come!
Leader:	<i>Nanga umabwerera?</i>	Why did you come then?
All:	<i>Apa ubwerera, ee?</i>	Since you are running away?
	<i>Ee, ee, chilombo msala!</i>	What a sexually aroused animal!
	<i>Chilombo chayaluka!</i>	What a sexually provoked animal!

The *kang'wing'wi* then returns and runs towards the women who keep on teasing him and sexually provoking him. He does not take advantage of the provocation but practices restraint as acceptable community behaviour. He keeps withdrawing from the women, briefly dancing to the singing and the clapping, and then returning to the *dambwe*. Both the *ajere* and the *akang'wing'wi* act as heralds of the *gulewamkulu* performance but, as can be observed, are attached to specifically different functions.



Fig. 9: The *kang'wing'wi* photographed on our way from a *mganda* recording session at Jere Village, T.A. Kalumo in Ntchisi

5.8.6 Other Performance Herald's

During the *gulewamkulu* festival week several other mask characters come out of the *dambwe* into the village in order to interact with the villagers. The characters often come out in the afternoon when villagers are relaxing. The different daytime masks appear in three categories: friendly masks (*zopanda ukali*), semi-dangerous masks (*zaukali pang'ono*), and ferocious masks (*zaukali*). The daytime masks come out spontaneously and their coming serves different purposes.

- a. The friendly mask characters come out to entertain the villagers throughout the week leading to the final performance on the last day of the festival week. In addition, they teach the village women new songs from the *dambwe* as they perform in the village square. These characters interact freely with the village women, solicit songs from them, and teach their own songs to the women. In turn, the *gule* dance stylishly, sing along, engage in conversation, share jokes, and sometimes remind the women of the impending final performance.

Though they carry no weapon in their hands as do the other daytime mask categories, they nevertheless impose their ‘spirit’ status on the women by maintaining a social distance and singing or conversing with a screech voice. Once these characters come out of the *dambwe* and roam around the village, the women mobilize each other, follow them to the village arena or any open space, sing old songs for the characters and allow the characters to teach them any new songs. In the process, women composers also take the opportunity to rehearse newly composed and arranged songs. Only singing and hand clapping are used during these make shift performances. Characters that play these roles include *nyolonyo* and *kasinja* (DVD:6 & 10).

- b. One interesting friendly mask character is the *natola*, the picker or the pick-up. This character comes out unexpectedly and at any time of the day. The *natola* usually comes out mid-morning when villagers are busy with household chores. He does not sing or dance. His role is to take away any property that the villagers leave lying unattended. The *natola* targets such property as utensils, beddings, tools, clothing, and in some cases, children. This character serves to remind the villagers that even in an ideal situation, there are some malicious people within the community who take advantage of other people’s negligence, and steal their property. In this way the character teaches society to take care of personal property in view of the festival period.

This character roams around households screaming “*Natola!*” (I have picked) to announce his arrival. Once he identifies neglected property, he sits by it and screams:

“*Natola tere! Sinchoka tere! Nigona pampano tere!*”
Now I have picked something! I am not leaving this place! I will spend my night right here!

By insisting on spending the night at the property owner’s home, the mask character gives a chance to the owner to redeem his or her property. To redeem the property, owners give the *gule* some cash or some eggs.

All property that is not redeemed is taken to the *dambwe* and kept until the owner comes to redeem it through the *dambwe* officials. Before leaving for the *dambwe*, the mask character announces his departure by screaming:

“*Napita tere! Ukanipeza ku mangwiriri!*”

Now I am leaving! If you want me, meet me at the *mangwiriri*! (colloquial for *dambwe*).

This whole drama speaks of a healthy interaction between the *gule* and the general community. The announcing of the mask’s arrival suggests that the mask does not mean to offend or harm the villagers. He gives them the chance to hide or keep safe all neglected property before he claims new ownership. The fact that the mask allows the owners to redeem their property better explains the role of this mask – this is mere advice to the villagers to take good care of their precious property. In addition, by demanding a ransom the mask seems to remind the villager that there is a price to pay for all negligence.

The *natola* comes unarmed, engages in conversation with villagers as they plead for leniency or give excuses for their negligence, and does not in any way scare away the property owners. In a mockery fashion, some property owners encourage the *natola* to carry away their property especially when they know it is too heavy to be carried, such as grain pounding mortars and pestles. Some villagers even give rotten chicken eggs (remnant eggs after hatching – *zinzinzi*) as a ransom for their property to the unsuspecting *natola*. All this is part of the drama that affords lighter moments to both the ‘ancestral spirits’ and the human society.

- c. Examples of semi-dangerous *gulewamkulu* characters are *kamkwakwa* and *mbunde*. This category of daytime heralds roams around the villages either armed with a whip or closely monitored by a human guide. These masks dance to women’s singing and clapping but are unpredictable in behaviour. They often dance to one or two songs and walk away. They may even chase the women singers, threaten to whip them or indeed whip them when they catch up with them.

Unlike the friendly masks, these do not sing with the women. The *kamkwakwa* – who is made of grass or banana leaves covering the whole body – only screams throughout the brief dancing moments while threatening the singing women like a mentally disturbed person. The *mbunde* – usually a red faced *nyau* character – does not produce any sound but dances with aggression, often rolling on the ground and banging his big head against the ground or shaking it now and again like a lunatic. Songs for these

characters are usually composed by the women themselves who take advantage through these compositions to mock the dancer's behaviour.

The semi-dangerous mask characters allow for restricted interaction with the human society. Not only do they scare singers during performances; they also scare away any person that they meet as they roam about. While they may give some tolerance to some men who show bravery after meeting them because of their being initiated, the semi-dangerous mask characters remain unpredictable and often change their mind too easily. This category of characters represents community members who are unpredictable and may be a thorn in the society.

- d. The last category of day time mask characters is the dangerous type. Examples of this category are *kamano* and *namnyikwi*. These *gulewamkulu* characters do not appear often, and they do not dress up at the *dambwe*. They come out spontaneously, near a river, at the fields, near the village, or in some forest. They are always armed with either an axe or a machete. They do not dance to any music. They do not walk but run around in the village, often in a straight line, and for a few minutes. They attack whatever they come across; human, animal and other *nyau* characters. They produce a groaning sound as they run around the village.

All the people are expected to hide in their houses or any shelter when these *gule* come out. In case the shelter does not fully cover the hiding person, or the house door is not fully closed, these vicious characters do not attack anyone who makes efforts to hide. They also do not run after any person who desperately runs away from them but only those who challenge them by not giving them way. However, all the *gule* do not attack or force to flee any physically challenged people or old people.

While displaying their advisory role as ancestral spirits, these vicious characters obviously portray the possible existence of harmful personalities within communities and admonish the society to guard themselves against such elements.

5.8.7 Evening Performances

In addition to the daytime performances or heralds, some performances take place in the evenings of the festival week. These performances are more organized and they act as joint rehearsals between dancers from the host village and those from surrounding villages. In addition, these performances are merely part of celebrations during such festival seasons. Performances usually take place at the same venue of the final performance (the main village arena). Women release their new compositions, men introduce their own compositions, and guest performers also teach their songs.

Different categories of masks perform during these evening gatherings that last for three to five hours. Full drumming accompaniment is incorporated to allow the drummers some live rehearsals. The women correct each other in their singing and hand clapping as a way of polishing up their department.

- a. In addition to most of the friendly daytime masks, other night-time masks perform during these evening performances. These night-time mask characters include *chiudza* (*chaudza*), *kumasazi*, *mkwala*, *sajeni* (*kwalale*), and *kwinimbira* or *pilimindira*. The vicious and semi-vicious day-time *nyau* do not perform during the evening performances. On the other hand, the night-time *nyau* perform different roles ranging from being festival and performance heralds to being community night overseers. The former role is played by such characters as the *yayawe*, the *lende*, and the *kwinimbira*, while the latter role is played by such *gule* as the *mkwala* and the *sajeni* (sergeant).
- b. As reported in this chapter, on the first night of the *gulewamkulu* festival week, the *yayawe* and *lende* mask characters roam around the village. These are a band of partially masked men who only cover their faces with a piece of cloth, and represent the passage of ancestral spirits like wind through the village, announcing the forthcoming festival. Most night-time bipedal *gule* are partially or casually masked while some move about naked with only a head gear and some fluffy costume that leaves the lower waist bare. As the *yayawe* roam around the village in the silence of the night, they sing in deep voices songs such as:

Song One –

Leader:	<i>Yayawe, yayawe, yayawe, yayawe!</i>	(Disguised expression for night mongers)
Chorus:	<i>Um-moo! Um-moo! Um-moo! Um-moo!</i>	(Scaring screams)

Song Two –

Leader:	<i>Lende, lende nthuwe</i>	<i>Lende, you man lende</i>
	<i>Lende, walendewera!</i>	<i>Lende, is hanging on a swing!</i>
Chorus:	<i>Lende, lende nthuwe</i>	<i>Lende, you man lende</i>
	<i>Lende, walendewera!</i>	<i>Lende, is hanging on a swing!</i>

N.B. In ordinary language, *lende* means a ‘swing.’ The use of this term for these night harbingers signifies in disguise the hanging of the different *nyau* mask materials around their bodies which they ‘steal’ from the dumping pits.

During this passage of ancestral spirits, all the villagers remain indoors and listen in silence to the ancestral singing. At the same time, the villagers’ excitement and anticipation are raised by this announcement of the forthcoming festival. The following day witnesses the onset of day-time performances and subsequent evening performances. The role of the *lende* changes as the week progresses; they join the group of night-time dancers.

- c. During these evening performances, the spirit overseers of basketry structures such as the *mkwala* or *cholemba* and the *sajeni* perform together with other mask characters. The *cholemba* represents the elementary-level initiation (*kugula njira*) that takes place during the week. Most of the orientation of the new initiates revolves around the anatomy of this basketry mask. This mask takes the shape of a cow (*ng’ombe*) and has a body made of woven maize sheaths and/or thin slit bamboos or the *chanzi* shrub, making the body look more like a granary. One person drives it as it dances to women’s singing and drumming. One informant explained that the *mkwala* is not so much for dancing but it acts as a spirit escort for the initiated men and other characters that move from one village to another to perform at the night performances.

The *mkwala* and *ng'ombe* characters belong to the *kasiyamaliro* category, the mother spirit. The essence of *gulewamkulu* initiation is when the aspiring initiate enters into the *kasiyamaliro*, a ceremony known among the initiates as *kumila* (to drown/to sink/to dive). Consequently, initiation is known as *kulowa* (to enter). In the absence of the act of *kumila* one is not regarded as having been initiated even though he undergoes the full *gulewamkulu* curriculum.

The *sajeni* is a very tall basketry character of about five metres that dances at a distance from the audience. It has long hands that have clubs or stones attached to them. This *nyau* dances by swinging his arms in a military parade fashion, and making restricted lower movements. This character represents the performance's sergeant (*sajeni*)³³ and acts as the spirit overseer of the evening performances. On other occasions, the *sajeni* participates in the grand finale performance, but comes out late in the afternoon, probably to pronounce good will to the participants and the dancers as they return to their various "homes."

- d. One distinct night character is the *chiudza* or *chaudza* according to the area of study. The *chaudza* is a young character (about 15 years old) who dances alone or as a pair (DVD:14). This character has only the head covered (like most bipedal night characters) and wears some tight shorts. The body is smeared with mud and one little stick is carried in each hand.

Dancing is done with emphasis on the waist area. The dancing is suggestive but it agrees with the message that the character portrays. The following song explains the role of this *gulewamkulu* character to the community:

<i>Aa, e aye, e aye, ee</i>	Oh, no, oh, no!
<i>Kalanga zina alaula, e aye</i>	Dear me, certain things are abominable, oh no!
<i>Nkhondo m'kan'nenere</i>	This is an invasion, help me tell somebody
<i>E, aye! Chaudza uyo!</i>	Oh, yes! What a strange (man)!

³³ The term *sajeni* is a mockery imitation of the British sergeant who exercised strong authority over the peasants in colonial days.

Our informants reported that the song (and the character) represents society's disapproval of a man's deplorable behaviour of committing incest with his own daughter. This is a taboo (*kulaula*) and an abomination that can bring a curse to the society. The term *chaudza* seems to be a coded expression for 'strange phenomenon' (*madzeradzera*).



Fig. 10: The *chaudza* in action: Chimbaka Village, T.A. Kalumo in Ntchisi

Chaudza Zina alaula

trad. Gulewamkulu

♩. = 132

Voice:

 Clapping 1:

 Clapping 2:

 Mjidiko:

 Mbalule:

5

Voice:

 Clapping 1:

 Clapping 2:

 Mjidiko:

 Mbalule:

9

Voice:

 Clapping 1:

 Clapping 2:

 Mjidiko:

 Mbalule:

song repeated from here...

13

Voice:

 Clapping 1:

 Clapping 2:

 Mjidiko:

 Mbalule:

etc.

5.9 The Final Performance

5.9.1 The Performance Setting

The dancing arena is properly organized to ensure a smooth progression of the ceremonies. The dancers, drummers, officials (elders), singers, and the audience are positioned and grouped in a way that allows for orderliness.

At the entrance of the *bwalo* from the *liunde* are positioned the elders (officials and executive members). Their role is to signal the dancers to take the stage and inspect their costume before they appear to the audience. Next to them are the drummers that are lined up facing the audience. In the immediate front of the drummers is the dancing space for the mask characters. On the right hand side, facing the drummers, are the singing men and, behind them women. On the opposite side of this singing group are men who sit according to their social status in the *gulewamkulu* society. The audience composed of women girls, and boys, faces the drummers and the elders in a horse-shoe formation.

The performance takes place from noon with the mask and basketry characters taking dancing turns from the *liunde*. The order of the typical closing ceremony is compiled on the DVD accompanying this thesis.

5.9.2 The Performance Event

The performance opens with drumming and hand clapping at the signal of the *wakunjira* who is the master of ceremonies. A procession of the village elders performs the *mnjedza* as part of the opening formula (DVD: 2). They dance in a linear semi-circle, turning left and right at intervals, as they sing the *chiwoye* or *khowe* (a kind of yodelling fanfare music) and making sweeping gestures. This sweeping symbolises the cleansing of the dancing arena, to ensure that it is safe for the other performers. The elders are believed to have cleansing powers by virtue of their positions in society.



Fig. 11: A typical *gulewamkulu* dancing arena: Captured in action is *magileti* mask facing a *mpanje* drummer.

After the *mnjedza* dancers comes the *kalulu* (the hare – the clever one) animal structure, also known as *kalulu mtengo wabwalo* (*kalulu* the magic of the arena), whose role is to finalise the cleansing of the *bwalo* in case the *mnjedza* elders missed out some evil powers (DVD:1). In the Chewa communities where this research was conducted, this *nyau* character is referred to as the *kalulu mkulu wabwalo* (*kalulu* the boss or head of the arena).

A typical song for the *kalulu mkulu wabwalo* goes as follows:

<i>Eede, bwandende, ede bwandende</i>	Oh, dispeller of evil spirits
<i>Kalulu mkulu wabwalo!</i>	Kalulu the boss of the arena!
<i>Eede, bwandende, ede bwandende</i>	Oh, dispeller of evil spirits
<i>Wadza mkoma kuli yede!</i>	Here comes the helpful one! OR

“Here comes one who is good/ helpful at dawn – meaning ‘before the other dancers take stage.’”

Following the cleansing ceremony by both the *mnjedza* and the *kalulu*, different bipedal masks take the stage in turns. A catalogue of such masks is presented at the end of this chapter. The last set of masks comprises different animal structures (*nyau*) who also dance in turns as they “officially” close the ceremony. As the *nyau* characters come into the arena, the drummers automatically split into half with drummers of *ndewe*, *gunda*, and *mpanje* drums accompanying male singers, who sing fanfare music (*khowe*) in anticipation of these *nyau* characters (See DVD:16).

Meanwhile, the women keep on singing for the last bi-pedal dancer who dances to a combination of *mjidiko*, *kankumbe* and *mbalule* drumming. Both the men and the women sing loudly for their separate causes until the first animal structure appears with a group of other men. Immediately, the women stop their music and the last bi-pedal dancer joins the men who dance around the ‘animal’ alongside other bi-pedal characters.

One *khowe* song that we recorded and managed to understand is as follows:

<i>Oo, mwanangayu n'ching'ombeng'ombe,</i>	O, this child of mine is cow-like
<i>E, tate!</i>	Yes, my father!
<i>Ng'ombeyo!</i>	Here comes the cow!
<i>Yoyera edee!</i>	A white one! Sure!
<i>Oo, mwanangayu n'ching'ombeng'ombe,</i>	O, this child of mine is cow-like
<i>E, tate!</i>	Yes, my father!
<i>Ng'ombeyo!</i>	Here comes the cow!
<i>Waiona ndiwe dee!</i>	Are you the one who bore/saw it? Sure?

The *kasiyamaliro* is white, sometimes with red spots, and it looks more like a giraffe (DVD:18). The other *kasiyamaliro* category masks of *mkwala* or *cholemba* or *ng'ombe* (See DVD:19) are greyish. (Refer also to the mask directory at the end of this chapter). The above song describes the white *kasiyamaliro*.

5.10 Conclusion

Chapter five is an attempt to describe the background of the *gulewamkulu* both as a ritual dance and a cult; the general features of the different dancers; the descriptions and performance characteristics of the *nyau* drums; and the organizational set up of the *gulewamkulu* festivals. Due to the complex nature of the *gulewamkulu* cult and the incessant introduction of new *nyau* characters, it is a lengthy exercise to try discussing all the available categories of the different masks. In any case, this research focuses on the drumming that accompanies the music for the *nyau* dancers rather than the dancers themselves. Nevertheless, in trying to explain how the drumming fits into the different categories of the *nyau* performances, I have engaged in a more comprehensive discussion of the entire *nyau* setting in order to give a clearer picture of the *gulewamkulu* system to any curious outsider.

The following table summarises the discussion of this chapter as far as *gulewamkulu* categories are concerned. The table samples the most common and generic examples of the *nyau* in each category. The characteristics of each example and the functions that it serves within the *nyau* cult are included in order to provide a clearer understanding.

Table 5.2 *Gulewamkulu* categories

Category	Examples	Characteristics	Function
Friendly/ Non-violent	Kasinja (one who grinds)	All-feather head cover Sings and dances	Accompanies women grinders
	Nyolonyo (distorted voice)	Dances in groups or pairs Beautiful and uniform attire and dance steps Head gear pointed forward and backward Sings and dances	Entertainment
	Chadzunda (big man)	Black faced Big head Sometimes a frowning face (maturity sign) Dances but does not sing	Represents a typically responsible African man Father-head

	Simoni (Biblical Simon Peter)	Red or yellowish face Normal size face Dances but does not sing Sometimes produces very low screams	Mockery of white missionaries who condemned the <i>nyau</i> sect
	Mbano (open mouth)	Animal head with wide open mouth Dances alone but usually in pairs Sings with a slightly deeper voice	Entertainment Wild animal representation
	Pedegu (one with big ears)	Big head and very big ears Dances to drumming and handclapping Has no song Keeps missing direction, bumping into women, taking wrong direction to get to the drummers	Disobedient character who often finds himself in trouble One who does not make use of his ears though they are big
	Mbiyazodooka (Cracked pots)	Carries a cracked pot on the head Goes straight to the <i>bwalo</i> by-passing <i>liunde</i> Dances quite briefly	A corpse representing brokenness Life is vanity Never cling to things that will not benefit
	Kavinsabwe (one filled with lice)	Wears very dirty rags all over the body Keeps scratching the body Does not dance but litters around the <i>bwalo</i>	Teaches personal hygiene
	Nsalu umachapa (it's good to wash your cloth)	Wears a very dirty cloth around the body Dances and sings	Teaches hygiene specifically to old women
	Natola (I have picked something)	Does not dance	Teaches community to care for property during <i>nyau</i> festival period
	Makanja ("A very tall man")	A stilt dancer who walks and dances on pole Sings in very low voice only to choose a song	Probably entertainment Walking on poles seen as magical since dancers can cross unsafe bridges and easily after falling A mockery of whites who were much taller than the Chewa

	Amna a chilonda (A husband with a wound)	Stilt dancer with one leg tied to a pole for walking, looking like a one short-legged <i>makanja</i> Dances on the long 'leg' and sings with the women	Symbolizes a man with deplorable behaviour A man with bad habits that he is unwilling to abandon, such as adultery A man with a sexually transmitted illness
Semi-dangerous (<i>zaukali pang'ono</i>)	Kang'wing'wi (one who screams)	Whole body covered in leaves or dry grass Head has pointed top Carries a whip Dances to handclapping only but does not sing Screams	A screaming character Herald of the <i>nyau</i> festival
	Kamkwakwa (one who scares away with a whip)	A type of kang'wing'wi More aggressive Body covered in green leaves Rarely dances to handclapping	Festival herald Scares away people to allow boys to collect <i>nyau</i> construction materials
	Kampini (carrier of a hoe handle)	A type of kang'wing'wi Dances to handclapping only Carries hoe handle	Fearful husband
Dangerous (vicious) <i>Zaukali</i>	Nyikwi or namnyikwi (probably one who devours)	Head partially covered with hair showing Body covered with mud and a piece of cloth or very dirty shorts around waist Carries weapons such as machet Does not dance or sing Attacks everything on his way Groans as he runs around the village Runs in straight lines Walks away from anyone who climbs an ant hill, probably to avoid exposing the head part that is not covered	Probably to signify the power of ancestors
	Kamano (one with exposed teeth)	Very much similar to <i>nyikwi</i> The teeth are exposed and a smelling substance is deposited in the open mouth to attract flies	Same as <i>nyikwi</i> The flies make him look scary: signifies death or a decomposing corpse

	Kapoli (one who is dirty with dust or ashes)	The body is covered in dust Very minimal cover of head and waist Carries a club	Warning against dirtiness Forces people to take a bath
Basketry or burlap animal structures (<i>Nyau</i>)	Kasiyamaliro (one who deserts a corpse)	Looks like a giraffe It is all white or has red spots or other decorated body	Mother spirit Goes ahead of mourners to the graveyard Leaves for <i>dambwe</i> before burial apparently to 'welcome' the deceased as he arrives (being lowered in the grave)
	Mkwala or cholemba (scratched or designed by sketching on the ground)	A type of <i>kasiyamaliro</i> Escorts <i>nyau</i> members to and from the <i>bwalo</i> in the night Performs only in the night because of its casual construction (the dancer can easily be seen inside)	A <i>nyau</i> herald for evening performances
	Chilembwe (unknown)	Black quadrupedal horse-like character Dances to drumming and men/women singing	Probably named after John Chilembwe, the 1915 freedom fighter Leadership or redemption Imaginary wild animal
	M'dondo (in the thick forest)	A very rare three metre tall and ten to fifteen metre long <i>nyau</i> Black and white spots, black tail and silver tusks Performs in the company of men only Women may participate from a distance Has many legs like a millipede, coils and recoils like an accordion in its forward and backward movements	Performs during funeral memorial functions Signifies ancestral spirits that were responsible for the death of the deceased

Other <i>nyau</i> characters (These are self-explanatory imitations of creatures and represent reincarnated ancestral spirits)	Nkhwere (Monkey)	Monkey face/posture	Entertainment
	Mkango (Lion)	Lion dances after all dancers	Ancestral worship
	Nkhuku (Hen)	All features of a big chicken	Demonstration of artistic work
	Nkhukundembo (peacock)	Features of a peacock	Evolution in the <i>nyau</i> cult

Chapter Six

Mganda

6.1 Introduction

Mganda is a popular Chewa military imitation men's dance. It takes different forms that imply the existence of the different genres within the *mganda* dance tradition. Apart from the Chewa people, different Malawi ethnic groups perform the *mganda*, but adopt their own styles and names.

The *mganda* is performed in two or more straight lines depending on the number of dancers. The dancers dress smartly in military or police-like attire, dancing stylishly with mostly leg movements and limited arm gesticulation. They carry kazoos in the right hand and small flags in their left hand. The kazoo sound that interspaces the singing is an imitation of the British brass band trumpets in the colonial days.

The *mganda* performances are common in the Chewa districts of Lilongwe, Kasungu, Dowa and Ntchisi. The age of the *mganda* dance participants ranges from fourteen years to about fifty years.

6.2 Historical Background and Meaning of *Mganda*

In the areas where this research took place, the term *mganda* stands for the leg movements as they stretch forward in agreement with the drum sound. In essence, the two syllables of the word *mganda* are separated to represent the drum sounds played by each one of the two hands. In Tanzania where this dance is also performed, the word *mganda* stands for 'drum.'

While the real meaning of the word '*mganda*' remains contentious considering its use by people of different nationalities and linguistic backgrounds, Mr. Moloko (26 May 2008) maintains that:

“We should never forget that there are Chewa people who migrated into Tanzania. These are likely to have taken the name there irrespective of who now performs the dance. As far as we are concerned, the term *mganda* is derived from the two syllables: [m]ga- and nda-. You can clearly ‘hear’ them in the *gunda* drum sound. As legs are stretched out and later hit the ground in harmony with the drumming, they ‘pronounce’ these syllables.”

However, a number of literature sources point to the fact that the dance was invented in Tanzania among the Amatengo and was first adopted by people living along Lake Malawi who later changed its name to *malipenga*. The dance later spread to Malawi’s hinterland where the Achewa maintained the original Tanzanian name. Tsuruta (2003:219) lists *mganda* among Tanzania’s men’s dances performed by the Ngoni, Nyasa and Matengo peoples. He further suspects that *mganda* was a remnant of *beni*, a dance which he says was invented during the 1890s in the old Swahili towns along the Kenyan coasts of Mombasa and Lamu, to imitate military drills and the accompanying brass bands of the British navy. However, Tsuruta notes that *beni* basically grew out of pre-existing traditions of competitive dance societies in urban Swahili communities. The title ‘*beni*’ comes from the English word ‘band’.

On the other hand, Hill (2002:30) only compares *mganda* with *beni* as follows:

Some important similarities are the use of European-derived movement styles (marching and parading), instruments, costumes (military uniforms or British colonial clothing, particularly white shorts), and military titles and command hierarchies.

Nevertheless, two observations can be made from Tsuruta’s account:

1. One of the mentioned groups who performed *mganda* is the Nyasa people, probably the sub-grouping of the Chewa people. These could have influenced the name of the dance according to Mr. Moloko’s assertions.
2. Either *mganda* or *beni* could be the remnant of the other or a mere similar development adding on to pre-existing competitive dance traditions.

In his article, *The Mganda Traditional Dance among the Tumbuka of Zambia*, Tembo (1995:3), seems to agree with Moloko on the origin and meaning of the term *mganda*:

The *mganda* dance is a classic case of the creative capacity of human beings. Britain, up to October 24, 1964 was a colonial power in the then Northern Rhodesia. During

the Second World War, many young men among the Tumbuka were conscripted into the army to fight on the side of the British in North Africa and Burma in Asia. The men came back with new knowledge about military uniforms, yelling commands, parades, drills, whistles, carrying and use of rifles. All these new experiences inspired the birth of a new dance; the *mganda*. The name of the dance is derived from the Tumbuka language term *ganda* which means "to march like soldiers." The name of the dance also depicts the loud boom sound from the large marching band style drum that is used during the dance.

Due to several similarities in Bantu languages, the meaning of the word *mganda* suggests the same things both in Chichewa and Chitumbuka.³⁴ According to both Moloko and Tembo, the name depicts both leg movements and drum sound, each of the informants attributing the meaning to their mother tongues of Chichewa and Chitumbuka respectively.

Steven Hill's account (2002:27-35) of the practice of *mganda* among the Amatengo of Tanzania somehow helps to solve the problem of origin of the dance. Hill reports that Wamatengo are very open to outside influences, adopting and adapting readily.

They are likewise quick to abandon older practices no longer relevant to social life and adopt new ones that fit better with contemporary realities.

He further explains that through this openness to outside influences, *mganda* and *chioda* came to Umatengo from Malawi in the 1950s and replaced the *muhambo* dance, then considered *passé*. Since the 1950s *mganda* and *chioda* group dance competitions have been the high point of the Matengo social calendar as well as potent distillations of Matengo life ways. However, Hill (2002:29) observes that *chioda* and *mganda* came to Tanganyika from across the lake in Malawi beginning in the 1920s, and although its history is not clear, *mganda* closely resembles the *beni* dance complex. Therefore, Hill (2002:30) concludes that regardless of its ultimate origin, the Malawian version of this dance is strongly syncretic, arose in and firmly reflects colonialism, and was the model for the Tanzanian *mganda*.

All the above reports reasonably agree on the several characteristics of the *mganda* dance as follows:

³⁴ In Malawi, the majority of the Tumbuka ethnic group lives in the Northern Region

1. Its origin: a linear men's dance that borrows heavily from colonial military brass band practice in costumes, instruments, movement styles, and hierarchies of command and control
2. Its meaning: the name comes from either the leg movements or the drum sound or both
3. Its features: the dance incorporates vigorous energetic synchronized movements, as a competitive single-sex group dance that represents modernity among its performers

6.3 Versions of *Mganda*

The two well known Malawian versions of this dance are *mganda* and *malipenga*. This chapter has observed that the term '*mganda*' is used among the Chewa people of Malawi, the Tumbuka peoples of Malawi and Zambia, as well as the Amatengo of Tanzania.

The term *malipenga* is used among the Tonga people of the lakeshore region of northern Malawi. There are two major districts where *malipenga* is performed: the island of Likoma and Nkhata Bay. In addition, pockets of rural communities in the Northern Region as well as Nkhotakota district of the Central region perform *malipenga*.

Malipenga means "trumpets" [sing. *lipenga*], a term used to refer to the brass band trumpets of the marching British soldiers. Another sister dance of *mganda* is the *mabenenga*, which is performed by the Lambya and Ndali peoples of Chitipa district in northern Malawi. Its history is similar to that of *mganda* or *malipenga* and the title "*mabenenga*" [sing. *benenga*] stands for "kazoos."

6.4 Descriptions of the Central Region *Mganda*

The *mganda* dance tradition is multifaceted owing to the different geographical locations where it is performed. The following descriptions of *mganda* are streamlined for specific Malawi's central region districts of Dowa, Ntchisi, Lilongwe and Kasungu. These descriptions may also apply to the *mganda* that is performed in parts

of other districts that share boundaries with the named districts, which include Nkhotakota and Mchinji.

6.4.1 Formation and Structure

Dancers form straight lines facing the drummer or drummers. Depending on the number of dancers, there are up to four lines of not more than six dancers each. Some genres of *mganda* have as few as only three dancers. Each line of dancers is called “dilamu” in the vernacular for the English “drum.” Members of each *dilamu* are selected according to their competence and mastery of the dance in addition to roles that they play in the dance.

Each row of dancers is numerically identified from the front row to the back row as *Dilamu 1*, *Dilamu 2*, etc. All song leaders occupy *Dilamu 1* while the less competent and novices occupy the last row. With time these graduate to the next front rows or straight to *Dilamu 1* if they demonstrate a particular talent such as song leading or more creative dancing. For the sake of continuity, as more and more people join the group, some members of *Dilamu 1* graduate to other advisory roles within the dance. Sometimes two groups are formed with titles A and B in order to accommodate the growing numbers of dancers.

6.4.2 The Attire

There are numerous forms of attire for the *mganda* dance. The attire is in many ways intended to represent military or police uniform. However, due to several factors such as traditional, cultural, practical, economic and political, different dance groups and genres adopt different styles for their attire. While most of these styles have a semblance of military dress, some of them portray mere characteristics of military life such as smartness.

Irrespective of the genre, all *mganda* sets of attire are smart, well pressed and of bright colours. The attire includes long or short sleeved shirts and pairs of khaki shorts or trousers with colourful strips on each side. Shirts for the khaki shorts or trousers are made of thick cotton and are usually of secondary colours of orange, yellow or bright

pink. However, some groups prefer blue, green, and red colours for their shirts. The shirts have military marks such as epaulettes or rank badges on and around the shoulders. The two pockets of the shirts and the back pockets of the pairs of shorts/trousers are decorated with colourful pieces of cloth that are aligned to form V-shapes.

Traditionally, all *mganda* genres that use bright thick cotton shirts and khaki bottoms belong to old categories. More recent *mganda* genres use polyester cotton shirts (often white or blue) and white linen shorts or black/dark blue pairs of trousers. There are no military marks, strips or multiple colours on the shirts or shorts/trousers of the more recent *mganda* genres.

Old *mganda* genre performers wear military boots or black shoes and combat boot socks or thermal liner socks. In addition, the dancers wear head caps or berets and sun glasses. They use canvas or leather belts for their trousers and wear neck gaiters or scarves around their necks. In contrast, the recent *mganda* categories wear white (or blue) canvas shoes and white socks with no hats, no sun-glasses, and no gaiters or scarves. Ordinary belts are used to tighten the dancers' trousers. All *mganda* dancers observe the code of smartness by always trimming their hair and shaving their beard. A piece of cloth is sometimes placed between the collar of the shirt and the neck in order to avoid dirtying the shirt with one's sweat.

Each dancer carries a flag in the left hand and a kazoo in the right hand. In most of the older *mganda* categories a stick or a cloth (handkerchief) is carried in the left hand rather than a flag.

6.4.3 Instrumentation

The two types of instruments used in *mganda* are kazoos and drums. The vernacular for kazoo is *badza*. The kazoo is made of a dried gourd (*chipanda*) and a membrane (*nemba*) from either an egg shell or mostly a spider's cobweb. A hole is drilled on one end of the gourd and all the seeds are emptied to form a resonating hole. The handle of the gourd is maintained and a hole is made at its tip. Another hole is made about five centimetres away from the tip to act as the mouth piece. The cobweb is glued at the tip

of the gourd handle using special sap (*mambedza*) from the *nkhadze* tree (a leafless evergreen supple plant that the Chewa people often grow in graveyards due to its high resistance to drought to provide long lasting shade).

Not all gourds have natural handles that are long enough to act as *badza* handles. In such cases, a hollowed bamboo or any other hollowed stem is fixed onto the bottom of the gourd by leather strands (*mphira*). The resonating hole is thus made on the other end of the gourd where a natural handle was. In summary, parts of the *mganda* kazoo are resonating chamber, resonating hole, resonating membrane, mouth hole, and handle. All *mganda* genres use this type of kazoo; however, older *mganda* categories use smaller high pitched kazoos (*tinala*) in addition to the kazoos described above. The small kazoos resemble the handles of the main kazoos as described.

The *mganda* dance tradition uses either one drum or two drums. All recent categories use one big round double-headed drum, whereas all older categories use a smaller double-headed *kapelegede* drum in addition to the big *gunda* drum. The *gunda* or *phulankhali* has a diameter of about 60 cm and a width of about 30 cm while the *kapelegede* has a diameter of about 15 cm and a width of 8 cm.

6.4.4 Evolution and Performance Settings of *Mganda*

Over the years, the *mganda* dance tradition has evolved both in style and function. This evolution has seen the emergence of numerous genres and a shift from traditional functionality to contemporary complex practice. Traditionally, the *mganda* dance was performed for entertainment and recreation at such ceremonies as weddings and inter-village competitions (*mpalo*). In the modern day, *mganda* performances are done at weddings, annual festivals, political rallies, and inter-village competitions.

Several *mganda* groups are hired to perform at locally organized weddings (N.B. only Christian church officiated weddings have celebrations where *mganda* performances take place. Other marriage types include elopement (*chikumu*) where no celebrations occur). Most Chewa communities of Lilongwe and Dowa have fully-fledged engagement ceremonies where *mganda* performances also take place. Apart from entertaining patrons at such weddings or engagements, the hired *mganda* groups

engage in underground competition by out-performing each other. The group that is perceived by wedding organizers to have outdone the rest is accorded the honour to lead a procession of taking the bride and the groom out of their resting house (*kutulutsa mkwati*) for a *perekani-perekani/kusupa* (present giving) ceremony.

During the *mpalo* events, two *mganda* groups meet on an arranged day in the host village. A group of judges from both the host village and the guest village sit facing the dancers as the two groups take turns to perform before the judges and the crowd. The groups are allowed several rounds before the judges declare the winner. The dance groups tactfully start with less exciting steps and bring in more complex and fascinating steps in each subsequent round. The judges base their decision on the dancers' smartness, creativity, coherent singing, drumming mastery, as well as spectator reactions. No prizes or rewards are given to the winning group.

Politicians hire or demand *mganda* groups to perform at their political rallies as a way of both attracting and entertaining their crowds. In very few cases, *mganda* performances are organized during Christmas and New Year celebrations.



Fig. 12: The *gunda* and *kapelegede* players of Kayaza Village, T.A. Dzoole in Dowa: The other two men support the drums by holding the beam (*mtanda*) instead of the v-shaped poles (*mphanda*).

6.5 Existing *Mganda* Genres

This section discusses the various *mganda* genres performed in Ntchisi and Dowa districts which were the geographical focus of our live field recordings. The section further classifies each genre into different categories and gives a brief description and distinguishing features in each category or species.

6.5.1 Reasons for the different genres

The following are some of the reasons that we identified for the existence of the different *mganda* genres, styles, and categories:

- a. Historical – some genres exist for historical or conservative reasons. Some villages take pride in maintaining old *mganda* genres, and so help preserve the traditional values attached to them.
- b. Progressive – some genres exist as a result of both evolutionary and revolutionary factors that act on its performers as inevitable causative agents of change.
- c. Functional – some *mganda* genres exist for pure entertainment while others exist for political entertainment both at local and external settings. Political entertainment functions of *mganda* manifested in colonial days, post-colonial days and nationalistic occasions. Cultural or customary functions include weddings and ‘competition’ festivals.
- d. Preferential – some villages prefer certain *mganda* genres because of such factors as their tempi and their association with a particular class. Novel movements and attire are usually incorporated to existing genres for purposes of desired interpretations about the ‘new’ dance.

6.5.2 The genres and their classifications

I have classified the genres in their vernacular and in their chronological order: *Kayalika*, *Jasoni*, *Kalewa* and *Manyanda*. These are generic names for the various *mganda* species that are performed in Dowa-Ntchisi areas.

a. *Kayalika*

This is the oldest identifiable *mganda* genre which is commonly known as *wachikale*, meaning “old type.” The *kayalika* uses the two drums of *kapelegede* and *gunda*. The drumming is dragged and more articulate just as the dance steps are. The dressing is military-like: starched khaki shorts, epaulettes and rank badges on shirts, as well as other military features explained in this chapter.

The *kayalika* category includes the *chikanula* and *ng’ombe zayambana* species. In the *chikanula*, the dancing is slightly faster and dancers’ movements are more in the squatting position than the mostly upright posture of the *kayalika*. The broadening of the distance between the dancers’ legs is what is called *kukanula*, the origin of the title *chikanula*. There are more commands given by the captain of the *chikanula* than those given in the *kayalika* (see chapter 2:24). The attire for *chikanula* is less strictly military-like to allow for more relaxed movements of the dancers.

On the other hand, the *ng’ombe zayambana* is not performed in the Dowa-Ntchisi area but in parts of Lilongwe south. Only three dancers form the dancing department with two drummers and a ‘tenor’ department of four to five members. The dancers are not engaged in singing but shout a few exclamations with intermittent kazoo phrases. Concentration is on the dancing whose movements require a lot of energy as dancers lift their legs shoulder high and drop them backwards in a Kung Fu fashion. Each movement is followed by backward sliding and hip wriggling with elaborate forward bending. *Ng’ombe zayambana* literally means “bull fight,” a possible connotation of the aggression involved in the dance.

The following is a transcription of the *kayalika* drumming:

Kayalika

$\text{♩} = 60$

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

b. Jasoni

The name of this genre seems to originate from the name of a person who developed this particular *genre*. The military “commands” associated with this genre help to support this assumption. One observes that the dance captain often shouts: *aa! seventeen wachikale Jasoni!* (Come on! old type 17, Jason)³⁵ and other expressions. Dancers of this genre often wear maroon or red shirts and khaki shorts with all the decorations. In addition, they usually wear glasses and do more dancing than singing (DVD:22).

Two drums are used in the *jasoni* but the *kapelegede* drummer plays off-beat on only one side of the drum, alternating with the main drummer who plays on-beat. This is done in the idling section of the dance (*kushawa/kusokola masitepi*). As the dance movement idles, the dancers limp on the right leg, occasionally slightly lifting their left leg. “Limping” is the main characteristic feature of the *jasoni* (DVD:22). This genre has been performed since the late 1940s and is still one of the most favourite among the people of Dowa and Ntchisi districts. The drum rhythms below represent a section of the *jasoni* drumming pattern:

³⁵ The command probably stands for a particular step. *Mganda* dancers often identify steps by numbers. The expression ‘old type’ refers to the original step known as ‘seventeen.’ This is in contrast with ‘seventeen wapakati’ which is also commonly used to mean ‘the middle seventeen.’ All the informants that we interviewed agreed that Jasoni is the name of a famous dancer or originator of this *mganda* genre.

Jasoni

$\text{♩} = 48$

The musical notation for Jasoni consists of two systems. Each system has two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Kapelegede' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Gunda (Phulankhali)'. The time signature is 2/2. The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 48. The notation uses various rhythmic symbols including eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and rests, with some notes having accents or slurs. The first system shows a rhythmic pattern that repeats, while the second system shows a more complex pattern with many sixteenth notes.

c. *Kalewa*

It is difficult to determine whether the *kalewa* or the *manyanda* style is the older of the two genres (see d. below) because of the many transformations that took place in the *kalewa* style. Most informants consider the *kalewa* as the older genre but agree that it only became popular in the Dowa-Ntchisi areas from the late 1970s. Swift, agile and complex steps, swift drumming on both drums, wearing of caps and glasses, as well as dramatised scenes within the dance are some of the features that are exceptional to the *kalewa* style.

Through my observation, it is quite difficult to transcribe the *kalewa* lead drumming due to the fast tempo used and the embellished tones. However, one can clearly tell that the drumming is a faster version of the *kayalika* style with melo-rhythmic embellishment.³⁶

The attire for the *kalewa* is similar to that of the *kayalika* but sometimes t-shirts and canvas shoes are worn instead of the cotton shirts and leather shoes in order to maintain a light body that is necessary for the dance.

The most recent version of the *kalewa* is the *boba*, a genre which incorporates dance elements from the *kayalika*, the *jasoni* and the *kalewa* styles. Informants agree that the *boba* style is a category of the *kalewa* genre. Namuwawa Boma of Cholwe village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi that we recorded performed *boba* (DVD:24). A synonym to the

³⁶ The melo-rythmic embellishment of this *kalewa* lead drum (*kapelegede*) makes it to sound like the *kamkumbe* drum of *gulewamkulu* (see also chapter four on foundational Chewa rhythms).

boba style is the *kandale*, translated as ‘the tripper,’ a nickname that describes the dance’s convoluted leg movements. Transcribed below is the *boba* drumming pattern:

Boba (Kandale)

$\text{♩} = 90$

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

f etc.

d. Manyanda

This genre exists in different forms a fact that made it difficult for informants to pinpoint key differences among the different categories. The *manyanda* is a generic name for the *kasodo*, *kanindo* and *vugo* styles, but it is also considered as an independent species.

All the *manyanda* categories are distinctly separated from the old *mganda* genres. The *manyanda* represents the “new” genres, though this expression does not exist in the areas where this research was conducted. The major characteristic features of this genre are: the use of only the *gunda* drum, the absence of the *tinale* kazoos, the wearing of official looking attire with neck-ties, the absence of multiple decorative colours on the attire, and the absence of sunglasses and military emblems.

Though our informants referred the title *manyanda* to all the categories falling under this generic name, our investigations and closer observations came up with unique descriptions and distinguishing features of the *manyanda* dance as an independent category. The *manyanda* as a self-existing species of this genre is performed at normal

pace. Dancers wear white/blue shirts and, especially, black/blue trousers. Few groups prefer wearing pairs of white shorts, but all groups wear white canvas shoes. The leg movements are stylish, precise and easy to follow. The steps were described by informants as *odikiza* (patient and relaxed) (DVD:25).

Kasodo is described as *othamanga ndi kujowajowa* (fast and ‘skipping’ type). The distinguishing features of this *manyanda* category are: dancers always wear white shirts, white shorts and white canvas shoes; the dancing is quite fast with elaborate leg movements; the drummer often uses “slaps” on the drum as he emphasizes the dance accents; there are occasional break-ups of dancers’ rows as they move around, twisting and turning to provoke and engage the audience. *Kasodo* performances are best described as “lively and noisy.”

The *kanindo* is similar to the *kasodo* in attire: white shirts, white shorts, and white canvas shoes. The major difference is that the *kanindo* is much slower than the *kasodo* and emphasizes the twisting of the waist (*amavina ngati akudukula*). In addition, the *kanindo* has two sets of steps for each song: the main steps and an extension of the steps at the end of the main steps. The main steps are done along with the singing and/or kazooing. The extended steps are done without the singing or kazooing but amidst loud drumming and ‘commands’ from the leader, such as ‘*chikicha!*’³⁷ This unique way of dancing *kanindo* is apparently a reflection of the long play *kanindo* music from East Africa.

The *vugo* is the least decent category of the *manyanda* genre which shares similar characteristics with the other categories in terms of attire and formation, but lacks the general discipline and modesty that the *manyanda* is known for. At the same tempo and using same stylish and precise movements as those of the “*manyanda*,” dancers exaggerate their twists and turns, disregarding the traditional smartness and neatness associated with the “*manyanda*,” and dancing for a forced and showy impression on the audience. As they exaggerate their movements they aim at theatrical entertainment. The drumming is also exaggerated with heavy accents, making the drummer to sweat

³⁷ This expression means “show how best to do it!”

profusely and causing the dancers to respond with less cautious but controlled dancing, sometimes their shirts flinging out of their trousers and dust filling the air.



Fig. 13: The *manyanda* dancers of Chitete Village, T.A. Kalumo in Ntchisi

6.6 Organization of *Mganda*

The *mganda* dance is organized at village level in a *boma*. A *boma* is a group of *mganda* dancers with its own administrative structures. An *mganda boma* is therefore a centralized authority system whose membership applies for recruitment, undergoes competence scrutiny and pays allegiance to all its governing statutes in matters dealing with dance performance, its improvement, members' relationships, discipline, and the group's general success.

A *boma* is obtained from an existing *boma* (*kutenga boma*) through systematic and traditionally 'legal' processes. The resultant relationship between the original *boma* and the new one is that of mother and child (*mayi ndi mwana*). The child submits to the mother for a number of years until the child becomes a mother to another *boma*. One of our respondents, 44 year old Mathews Buleya, described obtaining a *boma* as simply learning steps from an existing *mganda* group that attained a *boma* status by virtue of its creating and developing its own *mganda* structures.

6.6.1 The process of obtaining a *Boma*

Men of a particular village mobilize each other to discuss the need for establishing an *mganda* dance group. Upon agreement, they debate on what *mganda* genre is ideal for their village after considering existing genres in nearby villages. They often decide on a genre that is competitive enough and so they go for ‘latest,’ distant, or uncommon genres to their area.

The process of acquiring a *boma* involves the prospective ‘children’ travelling to the prospective ‘mother’ village and spending a week in a training camp. Usually, camping is done in the outskirts of the host village in a secluded place. The entire training camp process is summarised as follows:

- a. applicants are assessed and grouped according to the roles that they will play in the dance;³⁸ for example, drumming, dancing, and administration
- b. each group is assigned trainers who are experts in their specific departments
- c. training is through explanation, demonstration, observation, imitation, and memorization; tools of assessment and encouragement include use of verbal praise and special attention given to particular individuals
- d. on the final day both the trainers and the trainees (*anamwali*) conduct a public performance at the host village’s dance arena before the village elders and ordinary villagers to mark the official closing ceremony; the trainers (mothers) perform first followed by the trainees, or a mixed group of both trainers and trainees; speeches are made before releasing the trainees for their home village; a date is announced for a follow-up assessment trip to the trainees’ village by their ‘mothers’

³⁸ According to informant Buleya (28 June 2008), choice of departments by aspiring *mganda* trainees is based on one’s curiosity and interest, vocal ability adjudged by fellow aspirants or trainers, and body flexibility demonstrated before a group of trainers.

- e. since not all the trainees fully grasp all the steps, singing, and drumming, trainers identify competent trainees and encourage them to help sharpen their friends over the weeks leading to the follow-up assessment exercise; the follow-up session is meant to accord villagers and elders of the new *boma* to appreciate what their ‘men’ have gone through and celebrate the establishment of an *mganda* group in their own village
- f. the last ceremony on the follow-up assessment day is a declaration by the ‘mother’ group that the new group had succeeded in obtaining the *boma*; the mother group’s spokesman and a few other executive members then publicly counsel the group on proper administration, group relationships, conflict resolution, code of conduct, and general success tips.

Like in any training workshop, the prospective trainees are asked to pay training fees as tuition and for the acquisition of such instruments as the kazoos. To ensure ease of learning, trainers release simpler steps in the initial training. More intricate steps are then taught to the aspiring group during the follow-up assessment. Usually mother groups have a policy of not releasing ‘all the steps’ to aspiring teams in order to maintain their competitiveness or to give room for creativity as the aspiring groups invent their own steps or improve on what they learnt.

No group is allowed to dance steps that were not officially handed over to them by their ‘mother’ group. If by watching their ‘mother’ perform at an event, members of the new group “steal” the forbidden steps and perform them without their mother’s consent, they are fined. In any case, new *bomas* can apply for additional training lessons attended by a few leaders to specifically learn more intricate steps. Even in that case, some steps may be reserved so that the ‘mother’ remains competitive. If in the early months of acquiring a *boma*, both the ‘mother’ and the ‘child’ are hired to perform at a particular event, the ‘mother’ may decline the invitation in order not to ‘compete’ with their own ‘child.’ If they honour the invitation, they usually perform casually or shorten their episodes in order to ease the pressure on their ‘children’ or to simply withhold advanced steps.

6.6.2 Administrative Structures of *Mganda*³⁹

Mganda administration is based on the roles that the different players play both at village level and at group level. The village head through his advisors (*nduna*) give moral and advisory support to their village *boma*. They also help settling disputes when internal structures fail to handle misunderstandings within the *mganda* group.

- The Executive Committee

Our research established that *mganda* groups have a well structured executive committee system. Members of the committee include chairman, secretary, treasurer and discipline master. Their roles are similar to those of any organization in line with their designated offices.

- Corporal or King

In addition to the executive committee, each group has a corporal (*kopolo*) or king (*khingi*) whose duties include supervising the dancers during performances, ensuring maintenance of straight lines by the dancers, controlling the audience from interfering with the dance, assisting dancers with picking of flags when they accidentally fall in the middle of the dance, and maintaining enough dancing space during performances. Some groups have up to four corporals that move around the four corners of the arena.⁴⁰ In some cases, the corporal/king plays the role of chairman. The corporal is the most senior member of the *mganda boma*.

- Captain or Commander

The role of the captain or commander involves giving instructions to fellow dancers to change or maintain the step. He may also express his displeasure of the dance's progress by 'shouting' at the drummer or fellow dancers in a military fashion. He is

³⁹ Chapter Two contains some information on this topic. The extra information is hereby presented to add substance to what is contained in chapter two.

⁴⁰ This information was given during an informal discussion with Mr. Sadwick Mtonakutha (28 September 2008) of SADC Secretariat, Gaborone, Botswana. The informant made reference to *mganda* practices of Lilongwe district which was not part of this research.

also responsible for communicating the group's motto as he keeps 'making noise' throughout the performance, thereby adding beauty to the dance.

6.6.3 Departments of *Mganda*

Different *mganda* genres have different departments or sections. For the sake of clarity, I classify these genres into two types: *manyanda* and *kalewa*. The former represents all the *mganda* traditions that have one drummer, and the latter represents all *mganda* traditions that have two drummers as already discussed in this chapter. *Manyanda* therefore stands for all the 'new' genres, while *kalewa* stands for all the 'old' genres as described earlier.

The *manyanda* genre has only two departments: the dancers ("step" department) and the drummer (drumming department). Rarely does a *manyanda boma* have a king or a corporal.

On the other hand, the *kalewa* genre has three departments: the dancers/step department (*gulu la masitepi* or *dilamu*), the 'tenor' department (*gulu la tinala*) – small kazoos, and the drummers department (*gulu la ng'oma*). Corporals or kings form an independent superintendent department.

6.7 The Actual Performance

This section describes a typical *mganda* performance giving details of the performance arena, the performance setting, the performance process and the audience participation. Efforts are made to describe separately generic genres of *manyanda* and *kalewa* where necessary divergent information is required.

6.7.1 The Arena

The dancing arena for *mganda* is a well-cleared place that is large enough to hold more than 100 people irrespective of whether the dancing is done at a wedding celebration, a festival or an inter-village competition. During wedding receptions that take place at the bride's compound, various groups are allocated places a few metres away from each other to act as dance arenas. No two dance groups use the same arena.

Our research found out that most groups have a tendency to deposit some charms in their dancing space, especially where the drum is to be placed. The charm is meant to enhance the group's good performance and/or to protect the group from malicious attacks by 'rival' groups. It is generally believed that the power of success comes from the drumming, and so the attackers usually target the drum or the drummer. The setting is different for festivals, competitions and political rallies where several groups use one *bwalo*, and 'self-protection' is only done at individual level.

Two v-shaped poles (*mphanda*) are fixed in front of the arena about a metre apart, where the drums supported by a beam (*mtanda*) are hung. The spectators stand around the dancing space of about six metres square. Initially, the audience encloses the drummer(s) – the front – and the sides of the dancing area leaving an opening at the back which acts as the dancers' entrance (the gate). After the dancers have 'entered' the *bwalo*, the audience closes in. As the dancers move forward, backward and sideways in the process of the dancing, the *bwalo* keeps changing in size and shape as the spectators give more space for the dancers; and as the corporal shifts the side audience to create more 'breathing' space for the dancers.

The drummers are kept about three metres away from the dancers' front row to allow movement space for the corporal and the spectators to give their money or cheer up the dancers. The space also allows the main drummers to have a clear view of the dancers for easy communication.



Fig. 14: The *jasoni/kalewa* dancers of Jere village, T.A. Kalumo in Ntchisi: Note the position of the corporal dancing between the dancers and the drummers (not captured) as dancers finalise line formation in this dance introductory phase.

6.7.2 Introducing the Dance

The two genres of *manyanda* and *kalewa* have different ways of introducing their performances. These differences arise from the genres' different structures, approaches, and styles.

- i) In *manyanda* dancers take their positions at the gate facing the drummer who is positioned about ten metres away. The dancers test their kazoos by blowing them randomly a few times to gain composure. The drummer beats each side of the drum once or twice both as a test and as a signal of readiness. When all is set the dancers start with an opening song which they sing in harmony in a call-and-chorus fashion, while standing in one place, but using hand gestures towards the left and right sides of the audience.

The opening song usually announces the 'arrival of the boys' as a warning to the rival groups, or describes some important current affair that the audience is familiar with. During our research we recorded four such songs, two on development and politics,

one on famine, and one on HIV and Aids (DVD:25). Texts for two of the songs with translations are presented below:

Song one:

Leader: *Chitukuko cha dziko lino, nanga*

(This country's development)

Chorus: *Chitukuko cha dziko lino chili ndi mafumu*

(This country's development lies with the chiefs)

Dzana tinali nd'alendo, dzulo tinali nd'alendo monga yawa (repeat)

(Two days ago we had visitors; yesterday we had visitors like these ones)

Mafumu, tukulani dziko

(Chiefs, develop the country)

Song two:

Leader: *Kuno ku Ntchisi athu m'madandaulo*

(Here in Ntchisi we are complaining)

Chorus: *Kuno ku Ntchisi athu m'madandaulo njalayi yatipweteka*

(Here in Ntchisi we are complaining because the famine has hit us hard)

O, ngakhale ku Dowa, O, ngakhale ku Ntchisi njalayi yatipweteka

(Even in Dowa, even in Ntchisi this famine has hit us hard)

The interpretation of the first song is that the dancers are representing the voice of all the villagers in appreciating the fame, integrity and competence of their chief, which contribute to the attraction of visitors to the village. These visitors are potential investors who will help in the development of their area. To them, visitors bring development. The expressions *dzana* and *dzulo* ('the day before' and 'yesterday') only signify the frequency of the visitors to the village.

The second song is political in nature. Though it talks about hunger in Ntchisi and Dowa, its meaning may be different. It is an indirect criticism of government's failure to provide for its citizens. The Dowa-Ntchisi belt is one of the most successful

agricultural areas where maize production is high and famine is rarely experienced. In addition, our recordings took place soon after harvest in one of the years when Malawi experienced a bumper maize harvest.

The *manyanda* introductory song is often clear with very few metaphors because it is meant to make the audience meditate upon its content and prepare for the performance.

The next set of songs following the opening song(s) are preliminary dance songs (*nyimbo zolowera*). These songs are sung as the *manyanda* dancers ‘enter’ the arena. This preliminary part of the dance is characterised by:

- Songs with brief statements or messages
- Songs that provoke rival groups or emphasize a challenging attitude towards the audience by outlining the group’s former successes, etc
- Simple steps as dancers engage in forward movement
- Only singing, drumming, dancing, and no kazooing take place until dancers reach their predetermined position

Titles of some of preliminary songs that we recorded are listed below:

- a. *O, ife tawina* (Yes, we have won)
- b. *Kaneneni k’o manu* (Go and report to your mother)
- c. *Anyamata a Malawi kuvala sanza mleke* (You Malawian boys, stop wearing worn out clothes)
- d. *Kagule kopanda boma muluza nako ntchito* (Your *boma*-less dance will make you lose)
- e. *Manyanda a m’tauni awoda sipekita* (Ours is urban *manyanda*; we even hired an inspector)

The above songs can be interpreted as follows:

The first song discusses Malawi's independence from colonial rule. It is the freed Malawians who have won while the British colonialists have lost the battle. The song acknowledges the role of the first republican president in 'setting Malawians free.'

Songs two, three and four are mockery or teasing songs to other *mganda* groups that perform at the same event. 'Go and report to your mother' is a statement made to rival groups insinuating that they should report to their mother *boma* that the competition is proving to be tough for them – they need extra coaching and training.

Song three mocks rival groups' attire, suggesting that their uniform is not good looking. It is as good as ragged clothes. In *kagule kopanda boma* (*boma*-less dance), the singers belittle the rival groups demonstrated by the use of the Chichewa diminutive *ka-*. The song further questions whether this group indeed has a *boma*, meaning a 'mother,' judging from their seemingly flawed performance.

These negative statements are meant to cause anxiety in the rival groups so that they should lose self-confidence, as part of the 'game.' *Muluza nako ntchito* literally means 'you will lose your job.' This probably describes the economic aspect of the *mganda* tradition. In colloquial Chichewa, this expression simply means 'you will be out of business,' as in *zantchito* (we mean business).

In the last song, the singers are boasting about their group, which is a common *mganda* practice. The use of English words: *tauni* (town), *awoda* (to order), and *sipekita* (inspector) serves to prove to the rival groups that members of this particular group are well-travelled and well-informed – urban boys.

- ii) The *kalewa* genre has different ways of introducing it. I will describe only one way that is viewed as the standard for all the categories of this genre except the *jasoni* category. As different groups in this genre nowadays prefer merging different dance styles in their performance, both the *jasoni* and 'kalewa' styles may be incorporated in one dance (See DVD:22 & 23). The general *kalewa* introduction follows the pattern described below.

A banner is hung on two-and-a-half metre vertical poles at the gate of the *bwalo*, covering the entire width. Two horizontal poles support the top and the bottom edges of the banner, leaving a space of about one metre from the ground. The drummers take their position some ten metres away from the gate with the audience standing at the front and the two sides of the dancing space. Other audience members hang around loosely at the back of the dancing area. The “tenor” department takes position just in front of the banner inside the dancing area, facing one side of the audience in a straight line and at right angles with the banner. The “dancers” (*dilamu/masitepi*) department line up behind the banner.

The event begins with kazoo music played by the dancers and supported by the “tenor” department or a song (DVD:21 & 24). Afterwards, the “tenor” department takes over by playing some pieces, joined by the *kapelegede* and later the *gunda* drum. A command is heard from behind the banner, and then the dancers begin to appear to the expectant audience as they ‘enter’ the dancing arena.

Entry into the arena takes different forms – dancers either squat underneath the banner row by row in an organized movement; or they squat through one at a time forming a line opposite the “tenor” department as they dance forward; or they enter in a single file through one side of the banner opposite the “tenor” department. The dancers have exciting ways of positioning themselves in their various rows in the process of the dance. They may maintain the single line, curving it near the drummers and turning back through the “tenor” department, and then lining up (the first row taking their position followed by the second row behind them, etc). All this is done amidst the drumming and the kazooing by the “tenor” department. I call this section of the dance the introductory phase.

Finally, the dancers’ introductory steps take them back to the gate where the preliminary steps begin. This time the *bwalo* is enclosed by the audience. Unlike in *manyanda*, both the introductory and preliminary phases of *kalewa* have no singing by the dancers. The singing is done by the “tenor” department occasionally interspersing the kazoo music. Several music and song pieces are done as the dancers ‘settle down’ to the main steps.

6.7.3 The Dance

The preceding section discusses introductory performance features of the *manyanda* and the *kalewa*. The following details explain the dances' progress and conclusion.

i) *Manyanda*

The 'main body' of *manyanda* dancing involves singing (call and response) alongside dancing, then singing (call) followed by playing of kazoos amidst dancing. The drumming accompanies this process throughout. In summary:

- a. leader sings
- b. group responds until end of the song
- c. leader sings again
- d. group responds through kazoos until the end of the song

Note: processes a. and b. may take place while dancers are standing still but showing some gestures emphasizing the singing. Then the drum comes in together with the steps before the leader sings again followed by the kazoos. Several songs are sung following the process described above with each one of them having its own unique step arrangement. A song may be repeated once or twice, but it is the song leader's prerogative to change songs. In that way he allows for some 'idling' as he prepares to slot in another song. Alternatively, he may give a command to the group for a temporary break in which he will introduce the new song and allow the dancers some rest.

The *manyanda* dance process is summarised as follows:

Table 6.1: The *Manyanda* dance process

Section	Activity	Meaning	Features	Translation
Introduction	Nyimbo yotsekulira bwalo/gule Technical term: "Kusokola gule"	Opening/introductory song "To fetch the dance"	Yochotsera mantha Yotsekulira mawu Yoyesera mawu Yoitanira anthu Yolengezera gule	To gain confidence. To clear the voice. To balance the voices.

				To invite the audience. To announce the dance.
Introductory steps	Nyimbo ndi masitepi olowera	Songs and steps for entering (the arena)	Nyimbo imodzi kapena ziwiri ngati sanakhutire ndi yoyamba	One song or two songs until composure is gained
Main dance	Nyimbo zovinira	Dance songs	Nyimbo Ng'oma Sitepi Badza Kupuma pang'ono (Kuuzana zizindikiro ndi wang'oma) Nyimbo ina ETC	Song. Drumming. Dance steps. Kazoo music. Break (communication with drummer). Another song. ETC.
Conclusion	Nyimbo yotsekera bwalo OR Kutseka mwadzidzidzi	Closing song OR Abrupt end	Nyimbo yopanda ng'oma kapena Kudukiza nyimbo sitepi ili mkati	Singing without drumming & dancing or Abrupt stop amidst dancing

ii) *Kalewa*

Kalewa's main body is slightly different from *manyanda*. The preliminary section that follows the introductory section eventually translates into the main body of the dance. This is so because the preliminary section is elongated and interspaced by other sections that could be presumed as fragments of the 'main body.' For the sake of clarity, I will discuss these 'two sections' inclusively as one section.

Kalewa dancing involves more drumming and dancing but limited singing by the *dilamu* department. Most of the singing is left to the 'tenor' department as the dancers concentrate on the steps. Singing by the 'tenor' department interspaces the kazoo playing with light leg movements, always following the direction of the dancers, in a

perpendicular straight line. The kazoo music does not necessarily always play the songs' melodies as demonstrated in the following transcription.

Kalewa

$\text{♩} = 90$

The musical score for 'Kalewa' is written for five parts: Kazoo 1, Kazoo 2, Kapelegede, Gunda (Phulankhali), and Voice. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 90$. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into four systems. The first system shows the initial entry of the instruments. The second and third systems continue the instrumental parts, with Kazoo 1 and 2 featuring triplets and slurs. The fourth system introduces the vocal part with the lyrics: 'Le - ro kwa-thu le - ro, le - ro, kwa-thu le -ro, ka-dzu-lo - eee!'. The Gunda part includes a 5:7 ratio marking in the third and fourth systems.

In the transcription, the kazoo melody is distinctly different from the vocal melody, which makes it interesting and beautiful. In addition, one of the two musics in this song is an adaptation from the *gulewamkulu*. In this area, *kadzulo* is a well-known *gulewamkulu* song whose text is translated below:

Lero, kwathu lero, lero kwathu lero, kadzulo 'ye Today at home today, today at
home today [we will eat] *kadzulo*

Kadzulo is a leafy wild vegetable plant that is eaten as okra relish. In the *gulewamkulu* a *kang'wing'wi* character that is made of green banana leaves covering the whole body is nicknamed *kadzulo*. The song talks about 'eating' *kadzulo* as a disguise for this *gulewamkulu* character.

The dancers use energetic leg and arm movements, often sweating in the process and losing breath. This explains why most of the singing is relegated to the 'tenor' department. However, there are short breaks between the step patterns when the dancers prepare for the next step. The whole process in this section is as follows:

- a. leader sings his part
- b. 'tenor' kazoo melody
- c. response joins in
- d. the above process is repeated amidst dancing but no drumming (both 'dancers' and 'tenor' players dance along the singing)
- e. lead drum followed by the *gunda* drum accompany the singing/dancing first as dancers 'idle'
- f. leader sings his part again
- g. 'tenor' kazoo melody plays in direct correspondence (similar rhythmic arrangement) with the *gunda* drum as they prepare the dancers' response
- h. the dancers respond with kazoos this time
- i. processes f to h are repeated as the 'section' progresses

The following example, *Chidindo cha Jombo*, is one of the most popular *mganda* songs performed in Dowa. It is presented here as an example of *kalewa* songs, with all the different sections and instrumentations included.

Chidindo Cha Jombo

$\text{♩} = 80$

Voice 1

Voice 2

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

played in the idling style

I - we mka-zi wa - nga

6

Voice 1

Voice 2

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

i - ne nta - fu - nsa chi-di-ndo cha jo - mbo cha-bwe-ra bwa - nji mnyu-mba mwa -

11

A

Voice 1

Voice 2

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

nga mu-no. Oo! n'o She - ma ya-wa

Oo! n'o She - ma ya-wa

(played actively preparing the dancers)

f

first dancing step takes place here

15

Voice 1

Voice 2

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

o - ma-fu-na mo - wa k'o Na - nde - ge. ge. Bo - dza, bo -

o - ma-fu-na mo - wa k'o Na - nde - ge. ge. Bo -

1. 2.

B

19

Voice 1
dza mka-zi wa-nga;— bo - dza mka-zi wa-nga o-me-ne-wa o-ma-fu-na i -

Voice 2
dza mka-zi wa-nga;— Bo - dza mka-zi wa-nga;— o-ma-fu-na i -

Kapelegede

Gunda
(Phulankhali)

24

Voice 1
we o-me-ne-wa o-ma-fu-na i - we chi-fu-kwa chi - ya - ni o sa-ndi - u -

Voice 2
we o-ma-fu-na i - we chi-fu-kwa chi - ya - ni o sa-ndi - u -

Kapelegede

Gunda
(Phulankhali)

C

29

Voice 1
1. za?Bo - dza, bo - za?— A-mu - na a - nga i-nu mu-li ndi nsa - nje i nu...

Voice 2
za? Bo - za? i- nu— mu-li ndi nsa - nje i nu...

Kapelegede

Gunda
(Phulankhali)

Voice 1
Chi - di-ndo cha jo - mbo cha-ndi ma - su - la ba - nja la - nga.---

Voice 2
Chi - di-ndo cha jo - mbo cha-ndi ma - su - la ba - nja la - nga.

Kapelegede

Gunda
(Phulankhali)

The words of *Chidindo cha Jombo* (Boot Mark) song are translated as follows:

Iwe mkazi wanga, ine ntafunsa

You, my wife, let me ask

Chidindo cha jombo chabwera bwanji m'nyumba mwanga muno?

How did this boot mark find its way in this house of mine?

O, n'o Shema yawa, omafunu mowa k'o Nandege

Oh, this is Mr. Shema; he was looking for beer at Nandege's

Bodza mkazi wanga, amenewa omafunu iwe; chifukwa chiyani osandiuza?

You are lying, my wife, this man was after you; why did you not tell me?

Omuna wanga inu, muli ndi nsanje inu; chidindo cha jombo chandimasula banja langa!

My husband, you are such a jealous man; this boot mark has destroyed my marriage!



Fig. 15: The *kayalika* dancers of Kayaza Village, T.A. Dzoole in Dowa: Note that the captain (with a cap) dresses differently and supervises fellow dancers in the process of the dance. The t-shirts do not form part of the traditional uniform but were a donation from a civil rights organization whose emblem appears on the t-shirts.

6.8 Functions of *mganda*

The dance serves as a medium for social interaction for young men and women from different villages to know and admire each other often leading to marriages.

In communities where the rate of illiteracy is still high and people have no access to newspapers and other media through which they could express themselves on current issues in their communities, the *mganda* dance provides such a popular forum. The dance routines and many song texts often explain such commentary. For example, a particular song and dance routine might portray and criticize a polygamous man who shows unfair attention and love to a junior wife.

The *mganda* dance is also a channel for community and individual artistic self expression that depict elements of joy, confrontation, political and social caricature and mimicry of the past and present, expressed in the song lyrics and, especially dance routines.

Perhaps one of the most significant functions is that the *mganda* dance encourages healthy competitions and bodily cleanliness among communities. Dancers are judged by the public and spectators on how clean and well groomed their bodies are and how well their uniform clothes were ironed. All these functions create a sense of community and belonging, which are important in creating community vitality.

Table 6.2 General Characteristics of *Mganda* Genres

Genre	Species	General Characteristics			
		Instruments	Dress	Dance Execution	Other Features
Kalewa	Kayalika	2 drums: <i>kapelegede</i> , <i>gunda</i> 2 kazoo types: <i>tinala</i> , <i>badza</i>	Short sleeve shirt; khaki shorts; military marks on shirts; strips on shorts	Upright posture and straightened leg movements	Military boots; thermal liner socks; sweat absorbing cloth; hand flags; gate
	Chikanula	2 drums: <i>kapelegede</i> , <i>gunda</i> 2 kazoo types: <i>tinala</i> , <i>badza</i>	Short sleeve shirt usually maroon; khaki shorts; ignored military marks	Largely squatting dance posture with feet astride	Leather or canvas shoes; combat socks; hand flags; gate

	Kalewa/Boba	2 drums: <i>kapelegede</i> , <i>gunda</i> 2 kazoo types: <i>tinala</i> , <i>badza</i>	Long sleeve shirt; khaki trousers; military marks; hats; sunglasses	Quite fast movements in a squatting dance posture	Gate; canvas shoes; hand flags; Boba has khaki shorts, T-shirts, no gate; hand flags; thermal socks
	Jasoni/Kalewa	2 drums: <i>kapelegede</i> , <i>gunda</i> 2 kazoo types: <i>tinala</i> , <i>badza</i>	Maroon short sleeve shirt; khaki shorts; rank badges; sunglasses	Limping on the left leg and a lot of 'military' commands	Gate or no gate; hand flags; military boots; thermal liner socks
	Ng'ombe/zayambana	1 drum: <i>gunda</i> 1 kazoo type: <i>badza</i>	Any and a mixture of the above attire	'Rough' leg movements and uncontrolled interaction with audience	Hand flag; light shoes; handkerchiefs
Manyanda	Manyanda	1 drum: <i>gunda</i> 1 kazoo type: <i>badza</i>	Long white/blue shirt; black/dark blue trousers	Smart and decent leg and arm movements	Blue/white canvas shoes or black leather shoes; Malawi hand flag
	Kasodo	1 drum: <i>gunda</i> 1 kazoo type: <i>badza</i>	Short sleeve white shirt; white shorts	Stylish body movements	White canvas shoes; white socks; Malawi hand flag
	Kanindo	1 drum: <i>gunda</i> 1 kazoo type: <i>badza</i>	White/blue shirt; black trousers	Staccato dance movements	Black leather shoes; Malawi hand flag
	Vugo	1 drum: <i>gunda</i> 1 kazoo type: <i>badza</i>	Often blue shirt; black trousers	Skippping and more mobile dance movements	Blue canvas shoes; Malawi hand flags

Chapter Seven

Chim tali

7.1 Introduction

Chim tali is a women's dance in which dancers perform in a circle surrounding drummers. Traditionally, the *chim tali* uses one big round double-headed drum and two drummers who play different rhythms on the same drum; one maintaining the general pulse and the other playing according to the dance steps.

In the Chewa communities where this research was conducted this dance is called *chim tala*. Although it is difficult to determine the correct name for the dance, almost all conservative Chewa communities prefer the name *chim tala* to *chim tali*. Studying closely the two titles of the dance – *chim tala* and *chim tali* – one finds more convenience in the use of the latter rather than the former terminology because of the syllables –*tali*. In Chichewa, these syllables form the root for English words “tall” or “long,” an expression that is in common usage. On the other hand, the root –*tala* as in *chim tala* poses a challenge in meaning especially to modern Chichewa speakers in reference to this dance.

On the face of it the root –*tala* may stand for *litala* (a termite trap) or, superficially, *tala* (a Chewanised English word for ‘tar’ or ‘tarmac’). Yet the latter implication is rather adopted in conservative Chewa language as –*thala*. Very few contemporary Chichewa speakers have knowledge of both the existence and use of *litala* and *thala*. This obviously poses the problem in determining the correct rendering of the title for this dance. While many can justify correctness in the term *chim tali* due to its apparent sensible morphological and semantic construction, the insistence by both conservative performers of the dance and some cultural researchers that I interviewed on the use of the term *chim tala* cannot be totally dismissed.

7.2 Possible definitions and meaning of the dance

The following definitions are based on the descriptions of the *chim tali/chim tala* dance formations and aspects of its performance.

Malawi's Deputy Director of Culture (Arts and Crafts), Bernard Kwilimbe (2 July 2008) informed that the proper title for the dance is *chimtala*. According to him, this comes from an onomatopoeic expression for 'foot shuffling' known as "*kutala*" or "*kusesela*" which is what the dancers do. Therefore, the use of the title *chimtali* in reference to this dance seems to be a mere distortion by non-Chewa groups.

Mr. Chiphwanya (27 June 2008) of Nyalavu village informed us that *chimtala* stands for a "long moving/winding line" – *mtala*. He emphasized that the line must be moving in a dance-like fashion. To the people of this area, reference is made more to the line than the dance-like movement. The use of the syllable *chi-* signifies that the line is "big," or correctly, "long."

Additionally, seventy year old Moloko (26 May 2008) of Chikoteka village explained that the term *chimtali* was never used to describe this dance as far as he could remember. His past travels to different parts of Malawi exposed him to the people who named this dance *chimtali*.

Notwithstanding all arguments in support of *chimtala* terminology, the standardised title of *chimtali* still stands in Malawi. A logical conclusion can thus be drawn:

- a. both terminologies have a connotation of 'long-ness'
- b. a good number of arguments point to the fact that the term refers to a moving line of people who are shuffling or dancing
- c. a descriptive combination of a long winding line of women who are moving in a shuffling or skidding manner is the possible meaning of either terminology in reference to this dance

This thesis uses the standardised terminology of *chimtali* to refer to this dance. Where convenience or direct quotation is preferred, the use of *chimtala* is opted for.

7.3 *Chimitali* versions

There are three *chimitali* versions in the areas where this research was conducted. These versions are identified by three factors:

- a. dance movements
- b. structure of drumming
- c. type of drums and number of drummers

To differentiate dance movements among these three *chimitali* versions, additional or complementary costume is used. Different drumming approaches are distinguished by the different drumming styles. When untraditional drums are used, both the number of drums and the sex of drummers change.

7.3.1 *Chimtala*

This is the most common version where this research was conducted. Because of its moderate movements, elderly women participate in the dancing. It is the core *chimitali* style which represents general traditional values of society and a display of femaleness in the Chewa dance domain.

Drumming for the *chimtala* involves two female players on the *gunda/phulankhali* drum. One plays the *kapelegede* rhythm and the other plays the main dance rhythm. (See 7.4.1a and 7.4.1b)

The *chimtala* costume involves uniformed or non-uniformed bright coloured dress (DVD:26) and a *chitenje* which is wrapped around the dancer's waist, extending to the ankles. Elderly members of *chimtala* wear a head scarf or doek (*duku*) while their youthful counterparts prefer folding their *duku* so that it looks more like a head band (*m'bambe*) in order to expose a good part of their hair.

The *chimtala* dance steps are described as decent and respectable (*odzilemekeza*).

7.3.2 *Kanindo or Dusha*

The best description for this *chimtali* version is fast, aggressive, exciting and energetic. Only youthful and energetic women perform *dusha*. Our informants indicated that this *chimtala* version is no longer common because it does not promote self-respect. They further informed us that the dance is normally performed by suitor-seeking girls who use their rigorous hip dance movements to impress young men.

However, further investigations established that *dusha* or *kanindo* was a result of the *chimtala* evolution that helped in providing variety to the existing tradition. The more exciting movements and dance style made it become a more liked option; its aggressive and energetic body movement segregated curious and prospective members; and its emphasis on waist wriggling was viewed as showing lack of dignity.

The *dusha kapelegede* is much faster with the *gunda* player emphasizing on one side of the drum with the beater, and dampening or slapping the other with the palm. At the end of each song cycle, there is an extension of the drumming and dance with vigorous waist and shoulder movement. This extension is a reflection of the long play East African rumba music called *kanindo* as also adopted in *mganda*.

Costume for *dusha* involves often non-uniformed bright coloured clothes: dress, or blouse and skirt. A wrapper (*chitenje*) is folded to form a strap that is tightly tied around the lower waist region for emphasizing waist movements. In order to appear more decent, dancers avoid wrapping themselves with this waist band; instead they dance without a wrapper at all unlike in *chimtala*. Ironically, dancing without the wrapper (*chitenje*) is still viewed as being indecent, because the wearing of the *chitenje* is a general Chewa norm of women's decency.

Loose bottom clothing in *dusha* helps the dancers to articulate their body movements (exposure) and extricate their body aggression (dance balance). The word '*dusha*' comes from the wriggling of the dancers' hips. The following is the extended section of the *dusha* dance.

Dusha extended drumming

$\text{♩} = 140$

Kapelegede

Gunda

(ta-le-ka nta-la - wa)

The mnemonic drum rhythm of *taleka ntalawa* in the above transcription is a common Chewa expression that means “allow me to taste it.” The expression is derived from the Chewa female domain and stands for a woman wishing to taste relish before it is served in order to check whether it is well cooked or whether there is enough salt. This mnemonic phrase is easily recognized in *gunda* rhythms and is one of the identifiable ways of teaching drumming.

7.3.2 *Chimtala chamakono*

The term *chimtala chamakono* is translated as ‘modern *chimtali*.’ It is also referred to as ‘*chimtala chaboma*’ meaning ‘government or political *chimtali*.’ The evolution of this *chimtali* category follows a modification of the *chimtala* in two ways:

- instead of using one round drum, two or more cylindrical drums are used
- unlike in *chimtala*, men are involved in the drumming for *chimtala chamakono*

The drums used in *chimtala chamakono* are the same as those used in *gulewamkulu*. Several characteristics such as the attire, dance formations and movements are quite similar to those of the *chimtala*.

7.4 Instrumentation for *chimitali*

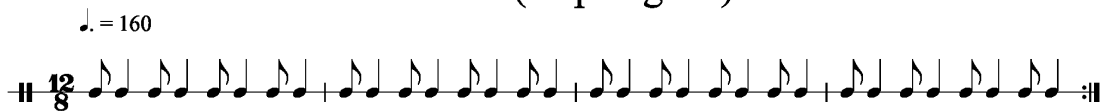
This section summarises the different modes of drumming for the three *chimitali* versions.

7.4.1 *Chimtala*

a) *Kapelegede*

The *kapelegede* beaters have no heads, but are just sticks about 30 cm long. The *kapelegede* rhythm is regular throughout the performance.

Chimtala (Kapelegede)



b) *Gunda*

This research has established that the term *gunda* stands for the main drum for Chewa dances and the authoritative deep sound that such drums produce. In *chimitali*, the *gunda* drummer basically plays in the middle part of the drum heads, occasionally drumming on both the edges and the drum frame as she alternates the different tones.

Our recordings observed that some *gunda* players were the central focus of the dance as they were also song leaders. As such, they helped directing the dance, occasionally joining in the dancing, going back to the drumming, shouting commands, with the *kapelegede* player continuously filling the gaps. The beaters (*zibulilo*) for *gunda* drumming are rubber-headed 30 cm sticks. The following is the *gunda* drum pattern:

Chimtala (Gunda)



7.4.2 *Dusha*

Unlike in *chimtala*, drumming for *dusha* is faster and more jovial. The *gunda* accent is often on the second and fourth beats in a 12/8 metric pattern. The drumming concurs with the often bouncing body movements of the dancers. The emphasis by the *gunda* player on one side of the drum seems to help her catch up with the rather fast *kapelegede*. The concentrated playing on the right hand side helps to produce more accented and authoritative sounds.

7.4.3 *Chimtala chamakono*

a) The *Kapelegede*

The *kapelegede* for *chimtala chamakono* is the long cylindrical *mjidiko* or *mbitembite* drum whose player uses bare hands.

b) The *Kamkumbe*

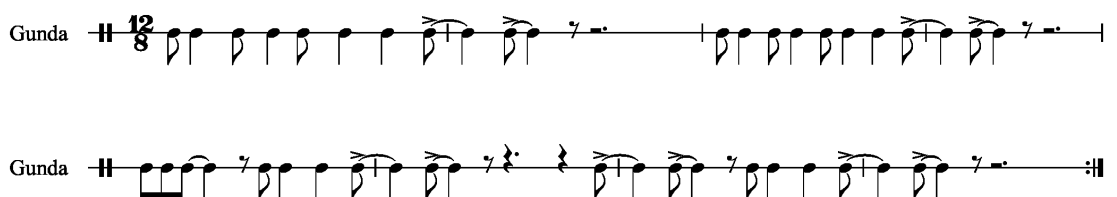
When more than two drums are used in *chimtala chamakono*, an additional drum that supports the *kapelegede* is used. The *kamkumbe* drum plays the common Chewa rhythm discussed in chapter five.

c) *Gunda*

The *gunda* for *chimtala chamakono* is a long cylindrical drum that produces deeper tones than the *kapelegede* and the *kamkumbe*. Its rhythmic construction is different from that of *chimtala* as described below.

Chimtala Chamakono (Gunda)

♩. = 160



7.5 Dance formation and presentation for *chimtali*

Regardless of the version, *chimtali* dancers perform in a circle enclosing the drummers. Lead singers occupy the space between the other dancers and the drummers. Lead singing is done by one or two pairs of singers that exchange roles in the process of the dance – singing and organizing fellow dancers. Dance captains form part of this group. Corporals position themselves between the dancers and the audience to:

- a. organize the line of the dancers (*kukonza mfolo*)
- b. ensure enough dancing space when the audience surges in (*kukuza bwalo akapuya*)
- c. generally regulate and control the crowd where necessary (*kulongosola anthu obwera kudzasupa*)

Singing is done in call-and-response. Song leaders lead in soprano and alto with each cadence taken in unison. The chorus responds in soprano and alto, with the alto voice tending to resolve to bass or splitting an octave apart creating a third parallel voice. Some songs allow for the creation of a high tenor voice.

7.5.1 Dance structure

As an entertainment dance, the *chimtali* dance structure has a lot in common with *mganda*. The dancers line themselves up 15 to 20 metres away from the drummers at the *bwalo*'s 'gate.' The dancers may introduce their dance with an opening song without the drumming (*nyimbo yotsekulira gule/bwalo*) or the opening may involve dancing in a single file towards the *bwalo* without singing until after the circle is formed. After a number of songs, the dancers dance out of the arena in a single line.

The *chimtala chamakono* dancers introduce their dance by squatting in rows a few metres away from the drummers. At the signal of the main drummer, they rise and get set for the dance. After the *kapelegede*, *kamkumbe* and *gunda* have drummed for one or two cycles, the dancers respond with dancing into the arena with or without a song until a circle is completed.



Fig. 16: *Chimtala* dancers entering the arena in two rows: Kayaza Village, T.A. Dzoole in Dowa

7.5.2 *Chimtali* songs

Chimtali songs discuss current village issues, represent women's world view on social-political matters, create debates and cultural discourses on emerging issues, and deliberate customary institutions such as in-law traditions. The following transcription represents the last description of *chimtali* songs with the standard *kapelegede* and *gunda* rhythms.

The song, titled *Onake Mudzi*, discusses social conflict between a married woman and her in-laws. She teams up with fellow daughters-in-law in challenging that without them the village would crumble and life would come to a standstill, since they are in control by providing such services as cooking, drawing water, cleaning the house, pounding grain, farming, etc. This is expressed in the phrase *mudzi ndi w'otengwa* (this village belongs to the in-laws).

Onake Mudzi

♩. = 96

call

O - na - ke Mu - dzi

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

4

Call

to to!

Response 1

O - na - ke Mu - dzi ku-nya-da mu-sa - ma-nya - de mu - dzi

Response 2

O - na - ke Mu - dzi ku-nya-da mu-sa - ma-nya - de mu - dzi

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

7

Call

Ko - to 'chi-mwe-ne.

Response 1

ndi w'o-te - ngwa; Ba-yi ba-yi nda-pi - ta

Response 2

ndi w'o-te - ngwa; Ba-yi ba-yi nda-pi - ta

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

11

Call

Ndu - pi - ta i-ne kwa - thu.

Response 1

nda-pi - ta A-yi yo wo - wo wo - wo

Response 2

nda-pi - ta A-yi yo wo - wo wo - wo

Kapelegede

Gunda (Phulankhali)

2

15

call

Kwa - thu ndi - li na - ko.

respons1

A-yi yo wo - wo_____

A-yi yo wo - wo_____

wo - wo_____

respons2

A-yi yo wo - wo_____

A-yi yo wo - wo_____

wo - wo_____

Kapelegede

Gunda
(Phulankhali)

19

call

O-na-ke Mu - dzi

respons1

A-yi yo wo - wo_____

O-na-ke Mu dzi ku-nya-da mu-sa-ma-nya-de mu - dzi

respons2

A-yi yo wo - wo_____

O-na-ke Mu dzi ku-nya-da mu-sa-ma-nya-de mu - dzi

Kapelegede

Gunda
(Phulankhali)

23

call

Ko - to 'schi mwene.

respons1

ndi w'o-te - ngwa;

Ba-yi ba-yi nda-pi - ta_____

respons2

ndi w'o-te - ngwa;

Ba-yi ba-yi nda-pi - ta_____

Kapelegede

Gunda
(Phulankhali)

The text of the *Onake Mudzi* song is translated as follows:

<i>Onake mudzi, toto</i>	Village owners, no!
<i>Onake mudzi kunyada musamanyade</i>	Village owners stop boasting
<i>Mudzi ndi w'otengwa</i>	This village belongs to in-laws
<i>Koto ochimwene</i>	Sorry, my brother
<i>Bayi, bayi ndapita!</i>	Bye-bye, I am gone!
<i>Nd'upita ine kwathu</i>	I am going back to my village
<i>Ayiyo owo, owo, ayiyo owo</i>	(Decorative language)
<i>Kwathu ndili nako</i>	I too have a home
<i>Onake mudzi kunyada musamanyade</i>	Village owners stop boasting
<i>Mudzi ndi w'otengwa</i>	This village belongs to in-laws
<i>Koto ochimwene</i>	Sorry, my brother
<i>Bayi, bayi ndapita!</i>	Bye-bye, I am gone!

The following musical features are clear in the song:

- a. Style: call and response
- b. Meter: triple compound with underlying feeling of 4/4
- c. Instrumentation: the entry point for the *gunda* drum is on the second beat

These three characteristics are common in *chimtala* dance music. In this song, the call takes short phrases that are repeated and completed by the chorus. In some instances, the call sings the whole sentence and the response repeats it.

Words of the second example, *Namanyada*, describe a lazy daughter who spends time admiring herself instead of learning domestic work in preparation for married life.

<i>Mwanangayu, o! o! o!</i>	This daughter of mine, oh! oh! oh!
<i>Mwanangayu n'Namanyada ee!</i>	My daughter is Namanyada, yes!
<i>Namanyada!</i>	Namanyada!
<i>Alulira, k'onawake</i>	She is crying, in a foreign land
<i>Mwanangayu n'Namanyada ee!</i>	My daughter is Namanyada, yes!
<i>Namanyada!</i>	Namanyada!

The word *Namanyada* means the proud one, and is used in this song to refer to a lazy girl who after getting married finds life at her in-laws tough because she refused to learn from her mother how to do house work before she got married.

The song uses language figures such as: *Namanyada* (the proud beauty); *alulira* (is crying – though not literally); *k'onawake* (in a foreign land – at her in-laws' place); *mwanangayu n'Namanyada* (my daughter's name is Namanyada). This is a typical example of use of decorative language in *chimtali* compositions.



Fig. 17: *Chimtali* dancers of “*Onake Mudzi*” song: Nyalavu Village, T.A. Kalumo in Ntchisi

In the next song, the women are discouraging their chief from engaging in polygamy.

<i>O Nyalavu ndi mfumu yotchuka, toto!</i>	Chief Nyalavu is a famous chief, oh no!
<i>Awiri yayi, toto!</i>	Not two, please!
<i>Asudzuleni ine!</i>	Divorce her, dear me!
<i>Anatenga cheke cha ndalama, toto!</i>	He even took a cheque book, oh no!
<i>Awiri yayi, toto!</i>	Not two, please!
<i>Asudzuleni ine!</i>	Divorce her, dear me!
<i>Anapatsa mkazi wachilendo, toto!</i>	He gave it to a strange woman, oh no!
<i>Awiri yayi, toto!</i>	Not two, please!
<i>Asudzuleni ine!</i>	Divorce her, dear me!

The story being told in the song may be real or speculative; nevertheless, it narrates what most famous men do and seeks to drive home the women's representative voice against polygamy. The song starts by praising the chief and later disagreeing with his idea of having two wives. The women then propose a solution: 'divorce her!' They finally disclose what the chief did in order to attract the second wife: he used money (*cheke cha ndalama*) to entice her.

7.6 Organizational administration

A *chimitali* dance group is referred to as a *boma*. The acquisition and administration of a *chimitali boma* is similar to that of *mganda*. The *boma*'s executive committee comprises a Chairperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer. In addition, each *boma* has a King whose main duties are to handle disciplinary matters and resolve conflicts within the group. Corporals have specific assignments during performances as described in Section 7.4.

Captains are basically song leaders, directors or commanders of dance performances. They also help with training of new dancers and advise on effective drumming.

7.7 Identified functions of *chimitali*

The following is a report on the functions of *chimitali* in communities where this research was conducted. These functions were identified through both interviewing respondents and this researcher's observations.

- a. Leisure: *chimitali* is performed for entertainment.
- b. Pleasure: dancers get enjoyment from dancing *chimitali*.
- c. Health: most informants indicated that *chimitali* affords them an opportunity to do physical exercises, and so contributes to their strong and healthy bodies. The neatness that is promoted among members of the group is one way of maintaining hygiene.
- d. Social cohesion: through *chimitali* dancers and the general community learn to co-exist, work as a team, and develop their organizational skills.

- e. Moral responsibility: as *chimitali* dancers get hired for a wedding, they contribute to the success of the wedding by providing entertainment to the guests thereby making the wedding organization burden lighter.
- f. Community pride: *chimitali* is also used as a political tool in which *bomas* get recognition from other villages and this advances the good image of their villages.
- g. Economical: dancers are hired for a fee and are also given monetary rewards in the process of dancing. This contributes positively to their economic well-being.

Chapter Eight

Chewa Drumming Influence on Modern Malawian Music

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses various contributions of Chewa drumming idioms to Malawi's contemporary music. Having studied the various music styles of the Chewa people as discussed in the preceding chapters, I developed a strong view that music of most modern Malawian artists displayed characteristics of several Chewa rhythms. While this may sound as a normal practice, my interest was to determine what areas or elements of the Chewa music idioms motivated the modern composers or dance practitioners. Apparently, it is the Chewa art of drumming that most conspicuously defines Chewa music, and so any attempt to adopt Chewa music styles will entail the process of understanding or utilising Chewa drumming idioms as the basis for such music.

Most modern music practitioners who adopt or utilize Chewa music idioms do it consciously. It seems their consciousness stems from genuine interest or curiosity in what the traditional Chewa music offers. The question remains: what does it offer them? As will be seen in this chapter, most musicians interviewed consciously embark on learning and acquiring elements of Chewa music practices, and yet disregard the foundational and motivational factors contained in the musics that they wish to learn: they usually extract whatever musical element touches them in isolation, whether it is the lyrics, the dance idioms, or the rhythm. One would need to investigate closer what in the lyrics, or the dance or the rhythm fascinates modern, urban musicians. On the face of it, the answer lies in the strong and compelling drum rhythms contained in all Chewa musics, which seem to capture contemporary audiences easily by their own virtue, without any of the traditionally contextual deeper connotations.

In this chapter, the term 'Malawi contemporary music' is used to refer to music performed in post-colonial Malawi, that is, from 1964 to present. The chapter gives general examples of Malawi's current music practices representing a variety of

emerging modern music genres. The chapter further touches on reports by some well-known Malawi music artists on the origins and understanding of their own music in order to establish the reasons for their music engagement. Attempts are thus made to demonstrate how the Chewa drumming idioms have contributed to the various modern Malawi musics that this research targeted.

8.1.1 Cultural Influence on Modern Music

In the article, 'Cultural authenticity or cultural contamination: American musical influences on South African hip-hop culture,' Khan (2007:3) observes:

To say that one form of music is influenced by another is a statement that makes us rethink relations between cultural discourses.

Khan (2007:3) further acknowledges that this notion has a positive implication when viewed as meaning that cultures are porous and as such amenable to external influences that dynamise them in unpredictable dimensions. On the other hand, the notion of 'influence' carries a negative connotation if it suggests that the culture being influenced is static, inferior and less developed.

As discussed in this thesis, the Chewa art of drumming is applied in specific music and dance contexts and not in isolation. Therefore drum rhythms are easily identified as of Chewa origin and are related to their respective dance styles. It thus becomes easy to notice elements of Chewa drumming in some of Malawi's contemporary music. The question remains, whether they - in this new environment – still are representative of their original contexts.

It is understandably common for Malawian contemporary musicians to consider the 'borrowed' Chewa music concepts to merely belong to the dance and nothing more. However, it must be repeated that Chewa dances are better identified and distinguished through the drumming than any other element. For example, while it is common that a song composed for a particular Chewa dance, say *gulewamkulu*, is adopted for another dance, for example *mganda*, it is the drumming and not the song that helps distinguish the dance (refer to '*kadzulo*' in 6.7.3ii). Therefore this chapter

argues that the modern music artists essentially borrow from the Chewa music styles their drumming idioms, more than anything else.

8.1.2 The question of influence

Irele (1981:174) states that artists who recuperate appropriate themes from outside their culture do so in order to elaborate a conscious stream of the collective, from the traditional to the modern. However, Bendix (1997:47) observes that artists are not mere slaves to tradition; they introduce new themes to old melodies; they abandon certain tunes and invent new means of rendering music in ways that are clearly new.

The notion that musical authenticity is located in the anonymous community's creations underestimates individual genius and creativity... (Bendix, 1997:47)

Although musicians reorder borrowed music by introducing new themes, forms, and tunes, the origin of such music is nevertheless reflected in their 'new' creations, thereby rendering the musical source more credible, more authentic, and vital. Using the Chewa drumming idioms as an example, I agree with Gilroy (1993:101) who encourages us to talk more of cultural *interfaces* rather than *influences* in reference to this kind of borrowing. Gilroy posits that transmission of musical knowledge through borrowing of idioms such as Chewa drum rhythms is not a fixed essence, and so should not trigger the perception of absolute authority by the originating culture.

Interface or influence, it remains true that there is no culture that is impervious to outside influence, and also that changes in the disseminating cultures enrich rather than contaminate the receiving culture. This chapter attempts to prove and report that *gulewamkulu*, *mganda*, and *chimitali* drumming idioms exist in various Malawi's contemporary pop music compositions. This proof is provided by the researcher's own assessment as well as the evidence from the contemporary musicians interviewed. As will be noted, some of the local musicians subtly incorporate these elements and yet disguise them as belonging to some Western music genres. Only after this researcher's discussions with such musicians did they acknowledge the existence of the Chewa

drumming elements in their compositions.

8.2 Scope of the Affected Malawian Contemporary Music

This discussion is limited to two categories of Malawi's modern music practice: political dance music and 'entertainment' music.

- a. Political dance music refers to the contemporary women's dances performed at political rallies in praise of political leaders and their parties.
- b. 'Entertainment' music refers to studio music, recorded music, commercial music, band music, or pop music. Performers of this kind of music are herein referred to as 'music artists.'

The Chewa drumming idioms have influenced modern Malawian political dance and art music in the areas of style (approach), presentation (delivery), and rhythm (combination of sound durations). The influences manifest in the contemporary dancers' and artists' music compositions and arrangements.

Three major factors are identified for the influence that Chewa drum (music) idioms have on modern Malawian music practices. Constant contact between peoples of different ethnic backgrounds at national political assemblies is one major factor that promotes exchange of cultural attributes among such peoples, and music is no exception. Secondly, some Chewa dances and/or rhythms are easy to imitate (simplicity factor) and perform. A good example of such dances is the *chintali*. The third factor that we identified is that the comic, satirical and dramatic elements of the Chewa dances of *mganda* and *gulewamkulu* are an attractive force that stimulates interest and enthusiasm in modern music artists who later adopt the dances' exciting rhythms.

8.2.1 Chewa Drumming Traits in Modern Music

Even before the introduction of multiparty democracy in Malawi, the *chimitali* dance was already performed by a group of young female political dancers known as ‘born-free’ and the *mbumba* women from a number of the Southern Region and Northern Region cities and towns. The major characteristic of this kind of *chimitali* would be its presentation as a concoction of different dances such as *chioda*, *chitelela* and *chimitali*. This is what the traditional Chewa dancers refer to as ‘*chimtala chamakono*’ (modern *chimitali*) or ‘*chimtala chaboma*’ (government *chimitali*). On the other hand, music artists’ rebranding of their borrowed music styles result into such genres as traditional ragtime, Malawian hip-hop, afro-mbuza, Malawian dancehall raga, and others.

The political *chimitali* uses three or more drums, which play the typical Chewa rhythms of the *mjidiko*, *kamkumbe*, and *mbalule* drums with minor variations. When additional drums are used, the *gunda* and *ndewere* rhythms are also noticed (DVD:27). The three common drum rhythms for this modern *chimitali* dance are transcribed below:

Chimtala Chamakono Drumming

♩. = 140

The musical notation is presented in two systems, each containing three measures. The first system is as follows:

- Mjidiko:** A continuous eighth-note pattern: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩.
- Kamkumbe:** Eighth notes with occasional rests: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩.
- Mbalule:** Eighth notes with occasional rests: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩.

The second system is as follows:

- Mjidiko:** A continuous eighth-note pattern: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩.
- Kamkumbe:** Eighth notes with occasional rests: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩.
- Mbalule:** Eighth notes with occasional rests: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩.

Apart from the three factors or opportunities mentioned above, a number of music artists incorporate Chewa and other cultural music idioms in their compositions for

reasons of remaining competitive in the music industry or to win locally organized competitions (Mankhamba, 21 July 2008). Some reported that they adopt Chewa rhythms because they want to ‘promote’ their own ethnic music, or because they are naturally influenced by their own Chewa backgrounds. This last reason makes it easy for them to express themselves, access new Chewa music concepts, and improvise in their compositions. This helps to explain the processes and methods of acquiring their music.

8.2.2 The Acquisition Process

This research established that our targeted music artists have strategic ways of acquiring traditional music idioms from Malawi’s rural communities. The following are some of the methods that the artists reportedly use:

a. Observation of people’s ways of life both in rural and urban areas.

“We regard urban people and rural people as being the same because these town-dwellers came from their villages to live in towns. The idea is to promote rural life, which we consider as real life; not this borrowed urban life.” (Kamlaka, 23 July 2008)

In our interview, Kamlaka (23 July 2008) reported that he observes the daily activities and behaviours of the urban people where he lives and composes words to describe or narrate such behaviours. Indeed some of his lyrics do criticise people’s behaviour. He then “looks for the beat” that is suitable with the words.

“Whatever the case, I look for the music that will be representative of rural life in order to remind my town fans where they came from. Unfortunately, I am also traditionally attached to my village in Lilongwe where the rural life is expressed through the Chewa dances. That is what comes to mind first in my quest to interpret through music what I see daily in towns.” (Kamlaka, 23 July 2008)

The artist reported as an example that one of his compositions was a protest against the ruthless behaviour of a neighbourhood vendor who advertised his merchandise with a loud voice early every morning (around half past four) before the artist got out of bed.

- b. Field trips to rural areas to listen to or to record traditional music and dance performances.

“That way we are assured of the genuineness of the music that we wish to imitate.”
(Mankhamba, 18 July 2008)

In our interview, Mankhamba (18 July 2008) admitted that he had been unaware of the influence of both his background and these field trips on his music. This came in the light of his confusion of the different traditional styles in which he placed his music. This researcher’s analysis of a selection of his songs helped the artist to recall how he had decided to ‘urbanize’ some of his apparently obvious *mganda* and *gulewamkulu* rhythms.

“There could be two reasons why I was trying to run away from the truth. I have never been initiated into the *gulewamkulu* cult and so I have always been scared to openly say that I play *gulewamkulu* music in case I offend my village elders and get punished. Secondly, I first came to live in town from my rural Chewa village when I was doing my secondary education. At that time my friends used to laugh at my rural Chichewa accent, and so I resorted to behaving and acting like one of them even in my music.” (Mankhamba, 18 July 2008)

This artist’s report may be representative of other artists who copy from traditional music and brand ‘new’ names to their genres. It was interesting to note that Mankhamba preferred to brand his music style using names of dances from the Northern Region even though he lives in the Southern Region city of Blantyre. This could be one way of denying his Chewa identity as a result of succumbing to social pressure.

- c. Interviewing the practitioners of the traditional music for clarity, descriptions and explanations of critical musical elements in their performances.

“We are willing to spend huge sums of money just to learn how the owners of the music go about performing it so that we can incorporate such knowledge in our music compositions.” (Mankhamba, 18 July 2008)

Three artists shared a similar method of gathering traditional music knowledge for their compositions. The musicians regard this method as a valuable project whose gains are often long-lasting. Although the artists spend a lot on food, transport and

accommodation during such field trips, it is unlikely that they pay the traditional music custodians.

- d. Meditating on available music resources and sources as a foundation for the application of the traditional music idioms.

“I get inspiration from the spirit in me; the conversation I have with the environment; listening; and seeing. I listen to any type of music, any genre (traditional or Western), from any period, vocal or instrumental. That is my motivation...” (Kwilimbe, 2 July 2008)

Kwilimbe reports that he uses information from these sources to create his own unique music styles, which have traditional elements. The rhythm of the traditional music is the basis of this artist’s compositions.

“To me rhythm is African. My music borrows heavily from the traditional rhythms from Nkhotakota (a predominantly Chewa district).” (Kwilimbe, 4 July 2008)

- e. Arranging existing traditional songs.

“In our effort to learn traditional rhythms, we sometimes come across beautiful pieces and we fail to resist the temptation of playing them just as they are. Of course we have to do some studio tricks to polish them up and make them relevant for our different consumers. We have a number of songs that we recorded this way.” (Kamlaka, 23 July 2008)

According to the artist, songs that he arranged in this way were performed for the Chewa traditional dances of *chitelela* and *sisiliya*. The 'studio tricks' include changing the tempo and dynamics while maintaining the rhythm.

- f. Narrating life experiences using preconceived traditional music idioms.

“I grew up in the village; therefore, I cannot throw away traditional ways of dealing with issues. To me, whatever I come across or hear a rumour about is worth my music. Of course, I only use Chewa music and dance idioms although I intend to embark on a project to diversify my music.” (Mbenjere, 11 July 2008)

In his music, Mbenjere discusses cross-cutting issues of national interest. According to him, the musician is the mouth-piece of society and must always represent the

common man's voice. Traditional music becomes the appropriate idiom to communicate important modern issues in that it often contains the wisdom of the elders. On the other hand, musicians such as Kamlaka prefer narrating experiences that affect them personally as a way of keeping record of their life experiences.

8.2.3 The Artists' Profile

This research specifically targeted five music artists on the following criteria:

- The artists' perceived success and popularity in the music industry
- The artists' consistency in incorporating traditional music elements in their compositions
- The artists' iconic representation of Malawian young people, the middle-aged, and the relatively older.

Several other artists would also have qualified for our study but they were either inaccessible or we viewed their music as mere 'duplications' of the music styles of those that we interviewed.

The following table summarises the project's choice of artists and their general profile.

Table 8.1 Music Artists' Profile

Artist	Age	Name of Group	Music Genre	Profile	Owner's Remarks
Symon Kamlaka	29	Symon and Kendall	Traditional Ragga	Timber businessman and estate agent while colleague is accounts assistant at Lands and Valuation Department; singer, composer and stage dancer of Chewa folk music with ragga fusion; plays guitars and keyboards	Folk music is foundational to all forms of contemporary Malawian music; we normally arrange traditional songs; ours is disguised Chewa music because we easily understand it

Lawrence Mbenjere	30	Lawrence Mbenjere	Traditional	Composer, singer and stage dancer of unique traditional music genre; businessman dealing in every business that becomes “fashionable”	My music is unique because of the harmonica sound, it is of Chewa origin; I use figurative language to reflect this; I also create my own Chewa words to spice it up
Honorato Pandakwawo	36	Unknown	Traditional	Serious imitator of Lawrence Mbenjere’s music; secondary school teacher	I was raised up in a village and can only speak for villagers; folk music is the backbone of all the music; I enjoy folk music
Ben Michael Mankhamba	41	Zig-zaggers	Fusion of Traditional and Western	Founder of the Zig-zaggers Band; composes, sings and dances “stage” music with emphasis on folk elements; plays guitar and keyboards; six times award winner of the national music competitions	I stick to traditional idioms in order to fill up the consumer gap; I do not hold many concerts but I am often hired more than any other artist for campaigns and promotions; two-fifth of my music has Chewa dance idioms
Bernard Kwilimbe	60	Rain Seekers	Afro-mbuza	Arts and Crafts Department Deputy Director; sings, dances and writes folk and contemporary music; plays the African drum and the acoustic guitar	I’m a social-cultural animator coming from the fire-place – a storytelling family; Afro-mbuza is a fusion of <i>mashawe</i> , <i>makhanya</i> , and <i>chisamba</i> dances

8.3 Summary Findings of Chewa Drumming Influence on the Artists

One of the purposes for the interviews with the music artists was to establish whether Chewa music and dance idioms, with special reference to the art of drumming, have any bearing on their compositions, studio recordings, stage performances and eventual popularity in Malawi. This inquiry helped to substantiate this research's claim that these targeted artists 'borrow' from Chewa drumming idioms. The following is a summary report of what the artists said about sources of inspiration for their music production in addition to the previously quoted remarks. The report includes the composition/arrangement process and the artists' conceptions about what constitutes art music production.

8.3.1 The Composition/Arrangement Process

A number of Chewa dances were mentioned as being the source of the artists' music productions. These dances inspire the artists in order for them to fulfil their mission of incorporating traditional elements in their music. The Chewa dances mentioned by all the interviewed artists are *mganda*, *chimtali*, *chitelela* and *gulewamkulu*. Additionally, one artist mentioned *sisiliya*, a Chewa wedding preparation dance.⁴¹ Other Chewa dances that one artist mentioned are *mashawe* or *malombo* (spirit-possession dance), *makhanya* (boys and girls entertainment dance), *chisamba* (female initiation dance), and *gwanyasa* (boys and girls 'acrobatic' dance).

Drumming for *mganda* and *chimtali* is unique among the mentioned dances because of the use of the double-headed drums. *Chitelela* and *sisiliya* do not use drumming but only hand clapping and foot-shuffling respectively. However, their perceived drum rhythms are similar to those of either *chimtali* or *mganda*. The rest of the dances mentioned by the artists have a lot in common with *gulewamkulu* drumming since they use the three basic *gulewamkulu* drums of *mjidiko*, *kamkumbe*, and *mbalule*.

⁴¹ *Sisiliya* is a wedding herald dance which takes place every evening of the week leading to the wedding. Since the dance aims at 'announcing' the forthcoming wedding, men only or women only or boys and girls team up and move door-by-door singing and dancing and money and other gifts from house owners, who are usually closely related to the bride or the groom.

Responding to the question of what comes first to their mind when they are trying to compose or arrange their music, the artists narrated the following processes:

Process One

- a. Rhythm or drum sound
- b. Tune
- c. Instruments

Process Two

- | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------------|
| 1. Tune | | 1. Lyrics |
| 2. Drum (rhythm) | OR | 2. Tune |
| 3. Instruments | | 3. Rhythm (drum sound) |
| | | 4. Instruments |

In the above processes, the term 'tune' stands for a melody which the artist hums or sings to him/herself. The term 'lyrics' stands for the music text that is composed as a poem before a melody is created. Process Two is sub-divided just to demonstrate that the tune may be created either without any text or from words of a poem.

When reporting on the music creation processes above, almost all the musicians confused the term 'beat' for 'rhythm.' They also sometimes referred to their music styles as 'beats.' This was clearly so due to their lack of music literacy. However, they all agreed that their 'beat' was determined by the drums or bongos and was an interpretation of the traditional dance rhythms. It can also be observed that the drum rhythm almost always comes first to their mind except when the composer starts with a poem or a tune. The rest of the instruments such as guitars, keyboards and wind instruments are arranged following the drumming patterns. The drumming pattern forms the foundation of the instrumentation for their music.

8.3.2 Artists' Motivation of the Music Creation Process

When the artists were asked about their general motivation about music creation they responded as follows:

- a. “We tend to mix different music genres (folk music idioms) so that we may catch a wider market.” (Kamlaka, 23 July 2008)

Apparently, this artist’s philosophy is to combine as many traditional dance rhythms in his music as possible. This helps him to appeal to many consumers who may find at least one of the rhythms fascinating.

- b. “ We disguise our music to sound Western and give it Western names (though we know it has Chewa roots) in order to play it politically safe in order to avoid giving the impression that we stand for one ethnic group.” (Kamlaka, 23 July 2008)

The artist’s music appeals to the youth because of the satirical way that he presents it. He claims that his music is educative but the youth can only respond to music that is exciting through use of modern proverbial expressions. The other way of attracting the youth is to brand the music well.

- c. “We prefer promoting the African-ness of our music rather than emphasizing on the ethnic group whose music provides most of our resources for composition; because doing so can be viewed as being tribalistic.” (Kamlaka, 23 July 2008)

In a society where matters of tribal origins are sometimes sensitive especially among professionals, behaviours that seem to promote one tribe are not tolerated. The artist feels that even an open acknowledgement of a traditional music style within his music may be a sensitive issue.

- d. “African music is about the rhythm. The African rhythm comes from the drumming; no question about it.” (Kamlaka, 23 July 2008)

This seems to be an acknowledgement that the rhythm is the key factor in their compositions and that traditionally, this rhythm is determined by the drumming. Once one understands the drumming for a particular dance tradition, then one is able to create his or her own music based on that understanding.

“Most often we start with instruments because we need the ‘beat’ (the rhythm) of the drum. We usually deal with *chitelela*, *gulewamkulu*, *chimitali* and *mganda* because we consider these as major Chewa dances.” (Kamlaka, 23 July 2008)

- e. “Music is spiritual just as dance is spiritual. It involves story lines whose support pillar is the drum sound. This process involves the meeting of the ‘traditional’ and the

‘contemporary’ – traditional breeds contemporary. That is why my music maintains traditional themes.” (Kwilimbe, 2 July 2008)

According to this artist, the story line is irrelevant unless it is supported by the drum in order to make the music meaningful. The spirit of his music is embedded in the traditional music and dance where this drum is played.

- f. “The poetic, the riddles, the metaphors, the rhythm, the harmony, the melody change, the call-and-response style, and the proverbs are all Chewa symbols of music creation. It is the drum that helps Chewa music creators to articulate these cultural symbols better. That is why I try to incorporate as much of these as possible in my music.” (Kwilimbe, 2 July 2008)

All the artists agreed on the role of figures of speech in their music. Not only do these reflect the Chewa-ness of their music, but they also make consumers of their music to think and so get the message. This artist claims that there is a strong relationship between drumming and the use of figures of speech in the Chewa society.

8.3.2 The Artists’ Famous Songs

The following table is prepared as a reference to some of the artists’ famous songs that this researcher discussed with them. The discussions were aimed at establishing the researcher’s claims about their compositions’ traditional styles.

Table 8.2 Artists’ Famous Songs

Song title	Meaning/English	Artist	Music style
<i>I.</i>			
<i>Nyemba-nyemba</i>	Beans-beans	Symon & Kendall	<i>Mganda</i> (local ragga)
<i>Nzama sindiwo</i>	Ground peas are not relish	Symon & Kendall	<i>Chitelela/Chimtala</i>
<i>Nsima yatherere</i>	Okra meal	Symon & Kendall	<i>Mganda</i>
<i>Gobedegobede</i>	“Rattling sound”	Symon & Kendall	<i>Mganda</i>
<i>Ine n’funa wani tambala</i>	I want One Tambala (one cent)	Symon & Kendall	<i>Sisiliya</i>
<i>Mmemo</i>	Labourers’ lunch	Symon & Kendall	<i>Gulewamkulu</i>
<i>Malawirano</i>	Farewell	Symon & Kendall	<i>Chitelela/Mganda</i>

2.			
<i>Kodi akalowa?</i>	Are they going to make it (to Heaven)?	Bernard Kwilimbe	<i>Mashawe/Malombo</i>
<i>Apatsa mosiyana</i>	He blesses differently	Bernard Kwilimbe	<i>Mashawe</i>
<i>Mbeta-mbeta</i>	Spinster	Bernard Kwilimbe	<i>Mashawe/Nyau</i>
<i>Tiye ukaone Nyanja</i>	Let me take you to the lake	Bernard Kwilimbe	<i>Nyau/Chisamba</i>
3.			
<i>Chiphaso</i>	Passport	Lawrence Mbenjere	<i>Gulewamkulu</i>
<i>Sewere</i>	In-law	Lawrence Mbenjere	<i>Mganda</i>
<i>Umphawi</i>	Poverty	Lawrence Mbenjere	<i>Chitelela</i>
<i>Chikwesa</i>	One who scrapes	Lawrence Mbenjere	<i>Mganda</i>
<i>Kumalikete</i>	At the market (auction)	Lawrence Mbenjere	<i>Mganda/Gulewamkulu</i>
4.			
<i>Kamba anga mwala</i>	Speak like a stone (artist's wrong translation: Tortoise like a stone)	Ben Michael	<i>Mganda/Malombo</i>
<i>Moyo wa m'tauni</i>	Town life	Ben Michael	<i>Mganda</i>
<i>Thawa iwe</i>	Run away	Ben Michael	<i>Mganda/Malombo</i>
<i>Ndiopa kuthenga (Tinkhi)</i>	I fear mistakes (short name for Tinkhawa, artist's son)	Ben Michael	<i>Vimbuza/Malombo</i>

8.4 Conclusion

It is clear from the findings that the five music artists whom we interviewed are largely motivated by the Chewa music and dance. The artists seem to agree that rhythms from Chewa dances play a major role in their song creation process. They also agree that to define Chewa rhythms, one must talk about the drum. In other words, it is this rhythm or drumming of the Chewa people that defines their music, which eventually contributes to the artists' creation of their own.

Our informants obviously understand or appreciate the traditional context of their music but rather superficially. They gain their relevance only through their large following. Whereas they are thus role-players regarding the contemporary scene, they

play no significant role regarding the deep traditions, only acting as underground replicas of what tradition offers. Unless of course we accept this as the route tradition takes: it does not exist outside the current realities and practicalities, it only manifests in actual performances. That its current protagonists do not appreciate its full scope implies that it will (sooner or later) essentially change.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this thesis I have attempted to discuss three important issues on the Chewa art of drumming: what elements constitute the Chewa art of drumming; application of this art through traditional media of music and dance; and adaptation of the art by Malawi's contemporary music performers. The thesis is intended to offer a starting point and guide for readers and music researchers to understand the various theories that the Chewa people attach to drumming. One argument is that the Chewa culture has an effective and efficient system that reinforces and perpetuates the drumming heritage of the Chewa people. According to the available data, the presence of practical rules, nomenclature, and a clear methodology (skill transfer processes) point to the conclusion that Chewa drumming education is formal.

Drumming in Chewa culture is used as a tool for expressing and explaining social experiences, knowledge, beliefs and customs to enable the student to apply valuable cultural phenomena to the drumming. The careful selection of drum construction materials and the construction process helps to instil in the Chewa adult a sense of discipline and patience that often lead to general responsible behaviour. Through the various initiation institutions and the dances in which Chewa children participate at an early age, they are exposed to traditional music experiences and have their talents nurtured as they learn drumming at such an early age. The methods of music and drumming learning are oral with both oral and visual demonstrations used. Important also to the Chewa society is the safeguarding of the drum, the drummers, and the dance through the observance of rituals and the use of magic power. Apart from transferring the drumming skill, the drumming experts gradually disclose to their students these survival skills. This thesis also observes that skill, competence and talent are important traits in the drum learning process.

Finally, the thesis observes that a number of music artists benefit from the traditional elements of Chewa music and dance. Central to these is the drumming which helps the artists to understand and distinguish the different Chewa music styles. One important finding is that there are logical procedures that the music artists follow in acquiring these traditional music elements. The artists are willing to spend sums of money in

their quest to explore various Chewa musical materials and maintain only those that are considered logical and relevant for their compositions. These musicians create their own music after being inspired by the Chewa drumming idioms and adapting them for the recording studio.

As a conclusion, this chapter seeks to forecast the future of Chewa drumming amidst challenges that threaten its continued and sustained practice. The following factors are identified as some of the challenges that the practice faces. There seems to be a general shift of tastes among the Chewa people with most of them preferring the modern ‘ice cream’ music to the rather ‘primitive’ traditional music practices. As a result, there are fewer young people who are interested in learning Chewa dances and the corresponding drumming art.

Another notable challenge to the sustainability of drumming and drum making is the issue of environmental degradation. Farming is the major economic activity of the Chewa people. Due to high population growth, there is pressure for more farming land to sustain the growing populations. In addition, more trees are needed for fuel wood and curing of tobacco. As a result, many trees are felled as new gardens are opened, firewood is fetched, and tobacco barns are constructed. This leads to deforestation and a decrease in the number of indigenous trees that are useful for the construction of drums. Some of the reported reasons why the *mvunguti* and *muwale* trees are used for constructing drums are: drums made from such trees are lighter; these are the only available trees that grow to desired sizes; and the thickness of these trees’ trunks (*mjintchi*) is ideal for the construction of long-lasting drums.

Due to the decline in livestock production, drum construction is a growing challenge in the Chewa society. In addition, due to the depletion of wild animals through deforestation and poaching, the challenge becomes greater as wild animal skins for the construction of *gulewamkulu* drums and cow skins for the double-headed drums are often scarce. Consequently, fewer drums are used in *gulewamkulu* performances as witnessed through our field recordings since less and less drums are constructed.

Our research also established that changes in political systems and social attitudes have affected the performance of major Chewa dances in many ways. The introduction

of multiparty system of government in Malawi created rivalry among people of different political affiliations. These in turn found it difficult to work together as members of the same dance group. Consequently, several groups disintegrated thereby affecting Chewa drumming and dance practices. In addition, it was generally observed that the performance of *chimtala* and *mganda* dances is no longer done for their traditional reasons but for economic survival. Dance groups charge exorbitant fees for their performances and are unwilling to perform where no monetary rewards are promised. This spirit has killed many dance groups and has eventually reduced the number of performers of these dances. Related to this is that drum makers feel inadequately rewarded for their services. Often, drum users are not willing to pay high fees or any fees at all for the drums because they consider drum making as a cheap industry or a mere contribution towards traditional music and dance performances. This leaves most drum makers frustrated thereby affecting the drum construction industry.

As the elders strive to transfer the drumming and dance skills to younger generations they face several impediments imposed by contemporary ways of life. Government educational policy encourages young people to attend school and remain in school. Since the practice of traditional dances may be in conflict with this policy because it takes away students' learning and study time, and encourages the youth to make easy money through dance, civil society messages seem to discourage the youth from participating in such dances. While some NGOs promote the use of the *gulewamkulu* to send children to school,⁴² such promotion excludes involvement of the school-going age groups. The elders have therefore started to embrace the philosophy of education for all and decline to teach the school-going children cultural issues such as dance and drumming to avoid disturbing their studies.

Involvement of the youth in the Chewa music and dance learning process is based on the strength of interest and the curiosity of the youth concerned. Fewer numbers of the youth are interested to learn Chewa dances and drumming. Our *mganda* and *chimtala*

⁴² The Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) is engaged in this programme in Mponela, Dowa where this research was also conducted. By using *gulewamkulu* characters in collaboration with village chiefs, the programme aims at scaring school-going children away from their homes in order to attend school. The *gulewamkulu* comes out in the morning hours at around 9.00 o'clock to 'check' on those children who refused to go to school on a particular day. A reported higher school attendance is a measured success of this programme.

recordings revealed that the ages of the dancers ranged between 35 and 50 years. This was contrary to claims by respondents who informed us that the performers' ages for such dances ranged between 14 and 50 years. There was a wider range for the ages of the *gulewamkulu* participants (dancers, singers and drummers). The ages ranged from 12 to 70 for the dancers, drummers and administrators; and from 10 to 50 for the singing audience. Two reasons could be attributed to this observation: young initiates are manipulated into *nyau* initiation through enticement of a better life; and most young people get initiated in order to move freely without fearing the *gulewamkulu* (*kugula njira*). Otherwise, in the absence of enticement or intimidation many youth would be unwilling to participate in *gulewamkulu* as is the case with *chimtala* and *mganda*, rendering any efforts by elders to transfer dance and drumming skills futile.

As a way forward, several suggestions could be made. While it is difficult to control people's tastes on their preferred kind of music, government may step up efforts of preserving cultural music performances through awareness programmes and support of the traditional performing groups through its various institutions. A directory of moribund dances could be compiled and resources mobilised to preserve them. Annual festivals involving rural music and dance practitioners could serve as both educational and cultural promotion and preservation forums for such performances. Formation of national dance troupes may not be used to replace promotion of cultural dances organised and performed by rural people in their own setting as the case seems to suggest at present. Awareness campaigns and empowerment programmes aimed at growing indigenous trees for the specific purpose of creating resources for drum construction could be one of the effective approaches.

Cultural issues are valuable components of tourism. Dance offers entertainment, research opportunities, and education to curious tourists who could contribute to the national economy. Formulation of sound cultural policies and aggressive implementation of such policies could help improve not only the citizens' social well-being but also bring about infrastructural and economic development. This could only be achieved through deliberate advancement of cultural dances and their effective marketing. Financial resources could be mobilized through partnerships, local and

foreign investors,⁴³ or donor support following favourable national legislation. Through these initiatives, the nation could be assured of economic diversity and the creation of jobs for its citizens.

On the other hand, traditional elders and practitioners must embrace a positive attitude towards dance or cultural performances and their preservation as an invaluable treasure of their cultural perpetuation. They could demonstrate this by using their authoritative voice to encourage the youth to participate in and learn life issues through cultural expression. The resilience that the Chewa people demonstrated against Western interference in the past could be channelled towards the present threats that technological advancement and rapid westernisation pose. Government and other agencies could also play a great role in revolutionizing the minds of the rural communities through advocacy and empowerment, and not exploitation as some traditional practitioners feel. It is our view therefore that with these suggestions in place, a sustainable environment would be created for the continued construction and performance of the drum.

⁴³ The Kungoni Arts and Crafts Centre in Mua, Dedza, is a typical example of direct foreign investment into the area of cultural preservation. Many jobs have been created and significant infrastructural development has occurred in this remote area. Malawi can learn from this individual effort of one Fr. Boucher to create a more conducive investor environment in the areas of culture and dance for more similar projects. The Kungoni has become a tourist centre, a historical centre, an academic institute, and a hub of substantial economic activity.

Definitions of Chichewa Terminologies

<i>badza</i>	Kazoo
<i>bwalo</i>	Dancing arena or any open space
<i>chalo</i>	King or traditional authority (Tumbuka word for country or territory)
<i>chamtunga</i>	A hunting club
<i>chibuliro</i>	A headed or non-headed drum beater
<i>chikoka</i>	Power to attract or persuade someone
<i>chikumu</i>	Unacceptable marriage practice (elopement)
	Communal domestic work
<i>chiliza</i>	A tomb stone
<i>chipanda</i>	A gourd or calabash
<i>chisamba</i>	First born child, or a women's initiation ceremony for one's first birth, or a dance involved in such a ceremony
<i>chipeta</i>	A savannah grassland (or simply a tall grass area)
<i>chitenje</i>	A wrapping cloth worn by women around their waist and extending beyond their knees
<i>chithumwa (njilisi)</i>	A magic charm
<i>chiwoye</i>	A <i>nyau</i> chorus done by men
<i>chizangala</i>	A function or activity attended by many people
<i>chizimba</i>	Precautionary instruction for the effectiveness of magic power
<i>chinzizi</i>	An egg that has failed to hatch after incubation
<i>dambule</i>	A grave yard clearing ceremony
<i>dambwe</i>	A secluded place where the <i>nyau</i> cult is practiced
<i>dilamu</i>	Each of the rows of <i>mganda</i> dancers
<i>dima</i>	Communal farming ceremony or farming piece work
<i>duku</i>	Head scarf or doek
<i>kalambula bwalo</i>	Curtain raise dance
<i>kapelegede</i>	Title given to lead drum or lead drumming for <i>chimtala</i> and <i>mganda</i>
<i>khingi</i>	Title given to the patron of <i>mganda</i> or <i>chimtala</i>
<i>khowe</i>	Fun-fare singing for <i>gulewamkulu</i> done by men only
<i>kugula njira</i>	Elementary initiation exercise into <i>gulewamkulu</i>
<i>kulowa gule</i>	To be initiated into <i>gulewamkulu</i>

<i>kumadzi</i>	A locative noun for a water-source; also colloquially used to mean <i>dambwe</i> or simply <i>gulewamkulu</i> society. It is generally impressed upon non-initiates that the <i>nyau</i> characters are fished out of a pond
<i>kumasazi</i>	<i>Nyau</i> colloquial for nakedness (genitalia): a locative noun
<i>kupeka nyimbo</i>	To create a song (song creator: <i>wopeka nyimbo</i>)
<i>kupolokozana</i>	To sing or play by echoing another or in an interlocking manner
<i>kusokola</i>	To provoke or to aim (a dance step)
<i>kusupa</i> (n: <i>msupo</i>)	To give money to a dancer as a reward or in appreciation
<i>kutiwisa</i> (n: <i>mtiwiso</i>)	To press with one's fingers usually a soft surface
<i>kutulutsa mkwati</i>	A ceremony of asking the bride (and groom) to get out of their resting place for a present giving ceremony during weddings
<i>kuyeyesa</i>	A <i>nyau</i> practice of crepitating by tickling the throat with one's finger
<i>lende</i>	A swing or a pendulum
<i>madzeradzera</i>	Unexpected and often unwelcome person, character or movement
<i>majenga</i>	<i>Nyau</i> feet rattles
<i>mambedza</i>	White sticky sap from some evergreen leafless trees such as <i>nkhadze</i> often used as glue
<i>mangwiriri</i>	<i>Nyau</i> colloquial expression for <i>dambwe</i>
<i>m'bambe</i>	A piece of cloth worn ceremonially by women on their heads during funerals
<i>mbumba</i>	One's sisters or nieces as his 'property' over whom he exercises power of decision
<i>mavume</i>	A group chorus or response in song. Also a deep sound from a drum or a chorus
<i>mchawa</i>	A ridicule term in reference to the Yao people (plural: <i>achawa</i>)
<i>mdulo</i> (<i>tsempho</i>)	The belief that failure to abstain from sex during a certain period connected to some rituals will cause a misfortune such as sickness The sickness (or thinness) in a child or an initiate caused by a couple who did not abstain from sex during a 'forbidden' period
<i>mpalo</i>	A hair cutting ceremony in honour of the dead as a <i>gulewamkulu</i> memorial tradition A dance competition
<i>mphala</i>	A boy's dormitory
<i>mphanda</i>	A v-shaped pole on which <i>mganda</i> drums are hung

<i>mphira</i>	A rubber strand used to fix <i>badza</i> handles
<i>mtanda wa ng'oma</i>	A beam used to carry or support a drum
<i>mothunzi</i>	A shade provided by a tree or a building
<i>muwale (m'mbale)</i>	A type of spiky brachystegia tree commonly used for making drums
<i>mvunguti</i>	A balm tree whose trunk is used to construct drums
<i>nemba</i>	A kazoo membrane usually made from a spider's web or egg shell
<i>ndiwo</i>	A side dish or relish that is eaten alongside <i>nsima</i>
<i>nduna</i>	A chief's advisor
<i>njiwili</i>	Arm and wrist shakers used in <i>gulewamkulu</i>
<i>nkhadze</i>	Evergreen leafless trees traditionally grown in graveyards and symbolic of burial rites
<i>nkhoswe</i>	A woman's uncle or brother who acts as her marriage advocate or a general custodian
<i>nsatsi</i>	Castor seeds for making lubricating oil
<i>nsima</i>	Staple food (thick porridge) made from maize flour
<i>nsinga(nthambo)</i>	Strings made from animal skin used to tighten drum heads
<i>nthetemya</i>	Magical power of manipulation
<i>nyau</i>	Term used for the <i>gulewamkulu</i> cult or the <i>gulewamkulu</i> animal structures
<i>phula</i>	Tar fixed in the centre of the one-headed cylindrical drum head in order to make it heavy for the production of deeper sound as the tar resonates with the vibrating membrane
<i>phulankhali</i>	Title given to the main double-headed drum because of its power to attract people to dance performances
<i>pilisipolo</i>	Chewanised word for 'principal' referring to the chairperson of the <i>gulewamkulu</i> cult
<i>salamba (silamba)</i>	A rattle that is played to guide a <i>nyau</i> dancer
<i>sitepi</i>	A <i>mganda</i> dance pattern
<i>tinala</i>	A small kazoo that produces a high-pitched sound traditionally referred to as the tenor
<i>tsokwe</i>	A maize pounding exercise or the maize that is prepared for pounding
<i>vikwewo</i>	Straps used to carry the double-headed drum or hold the beam

Glossary of Musical Terms

Accent	A single tone that is louder than those around it
Accompaniment	Musical material which harmonically supports a melodic line
Acoustics	Science that deals with sound
Aesthetics	The study of concepts such as beauty, taste, etc, and the rules and principles of art
Art	Activity which involves creation of things that express serious meanings or ideas of beauty and appreciation
Artistry	Artist's accomplishment, artistic ability, creativity or skill
Beat	A repeated pulse that can be felt in some music
Cadence	A point of rest at the end of a passage, section or complete work that gives music a sense of convincing conclusion
Call-and-Response	A song style found in many African cultures in which phrases sung by a leader alternate with responding phrases sung by a chorus
Chorus	A vocal ensemble consisting of several voices
Contour	The 'shape' of a melody created by upward and downward movement in steps and leaps and by repeated tones
Harmony	The sounding of two or more tones of different pitch simultaneously
Improvisation	The practice of 'making up' music as it is being performed
Meter	The way the beats of music are grouped, often in sets of two or of three

Polyrhythm	Two or more contrasting and independent rhythms used at the same time. They often cause conflicts of meter among them.
Style	Broadly, the manner of expression that distinguishes a particular musical work.
Tempo	The speed of the beat in a piece of music
Timbre	The tone colour or special quality of a sound
Tone	A pitch having a steady, constant frequency
Transcription	An arrangement of a composition for a medium other than that for which it was originally prepared
Unison	The same note.
Variation	Music that is repeated but changed in some important and logical way

Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Questionnaire

Thirty informants provided oral narratives about Chewa people and their drumming artistry during the face-to-face and telephone interviews. The informants represented different categories of people who are involved in Chewa music and dance performances or Chewa cultural research and preservation. The informants were chosen on the basis of their perceived knowledge and interest of Chewa performances.

Information from the different respondents was obtained using the general questionnaire that appears below. The questionnaire was designed for Chewa dancers of *Chimitali*, *Gulewamkulu* and *Mganda*, drummers, drum makers, custodians of Chewa culture, music artists, Chewa music researchers, and directors of cultural music institutions. The questions are presented in no specific order of both category and questions asked.

Section A: The Modern Music Artist

1.
 - a) Would you tell me your name?
 - b) What kind of work do you do?
 - c) Do you sing, dance, play an instrument, or compose music?
 - d) What kind of music/dance do you perform or compose?
 - e) When did you start performing or composing this music?
 - f) How did you learn to perform or compose this kind of music?
2.
 - a) Where do you get your inspiration for performing or composing the music?
 - b) In what ways is your kind of music effective to the consumers? How do you judge your success compared to other music artists?
 - c) What considerations do you make in terms of sound or rhythm for you to successfully create or perform your kind of music? What is your perception on the relationship between traditional music and contemporary music? Do you consciously incorporate traditional elements into your contemporary music?
 - d) Which other artists perform your kind of music, and what do you look for in order to determine that they play your kind of music?

- e) What do you do in your free time?
- f) Would you tell me about your musical background, family background or ethnic background?

Section B: The Dance Performer

1.
 - a) How old are you?
 - b) What dance do you perform?
 - c) When did you start performing this dance?
 - d) Explain how you learned this dance.
 - e) What role do you play in the dance?
 - f) Why did you choose this role in the dance?
2.
 - a) Mention other genres of the same dance that you know.
 - b) How do you differentiate the different genres of this dance?
 - c) How do you ensure success of your performances in terms of preparations?
 - d) What is involved in the rehearsals for the performance?
 - e) What administrative structures and rules do you follow in your group?
 - f) In your view, what makes good dancing?

Section C: The Drum Maker

1.
 - a) How old are you?
 - b) When did you start making drums?
 - c) How did you learn to make drums?
 - d) What type(s) of drums do you make? What are the different names given to the type(s) of drums that you make according to their function?
 - e) How do you describe the drum type(s) that you make in terms of technology and function?
 - f) How long does it take to make one drum?
2.
 - a) Would you explain to me the drum making process step by step and the different parts of each drum type?
 - b) What choice of drum making materials do you make and why?

- c) What tools do you use for making the drums and what purpose does each serve?
- d) What makes a good drum?
- e) What do you do to ensure the drum's long life?
- f) What considerations do you make in order to produce the specific kinds of drums?

Section D: The Custodian of Chewa Culture

1.
 - a) How old are you?
 - b) What role(s) do you play in the community in relation to other community leaders' roles?
 - c) What are the most performed dances in this area?
 - d) During what functions are these dances performed?
 - e) What other dances or music forms are/were performed in this area?
What makes/made them less popular?
 - f) Would you explain to me the meaning, origin and function of *chimtali*, *mganda* and *gulewamkulu*? Please, explain also *kazukuta*, *mnjedza*, *chisamba*, *mkangali*, *gwanyasa*, and *malombo*.
2.
 - a) What age or sex of people performs the different dances in this area and why?
 - b) How does the community organise and administer the different dance performances, especially the above three?
 - c) How are the different players recognized, e.g., drummers, dancers, in terms of status?
 - d) What taboos or restrictions do you know about dance performances in general, and drumming in particular?
 - e) Where did this community come from before settling here?
 - f) How do you identify people of similar culture, and what do you consider foreign to your culture?

Section E: The Drumming Expert

1.
 - a) How old are you?

- b) For what dance do you play the drum?
 - c) What type of drum do you play and what name is given to the drum(s) that you play?
 - d) What other drums or drummers play together with you, and how do you relate with them during performances?
 - e) How did you learn to play your particular type(s) of drum?
 - f) Why did you choose to play this particular type(s) of drum?
- 2.
- a) What things do you observe to ensure successful drumming?
 - b) When and where do you rehearse your drumming?
 - c) Demonstrate how you play the drum for different songs, different dance steps/movements, etc? What makes good drumming?
 - d) How do you store or preserve the drum(s) that you play?
 - e) Who chooses the songs for which you drum?
 - f) What other dances use similar drum(s) and what is the dances general relationship?

Section F: The Music Researcher/Centre Director

- 1.
- a) Would you tell me your name?
 - b) What work are you involved in?
 - c) What was your general motivation for the work that you do?
 - d) What is your general research experience of Chewa culture in general, and Chewa music practices in particular?
 - e) What do you consider as major Chewa dances or musical performances?
 - f) To what extent have the Chewa people contributed to the music and dance performances of both other cultural groups and the modern Malawian society over the years, and what factors have supported these contributions?
- 2.
- a) What features distinguish Chewa dance drumming from other cultures'?
 - b) What relationships (independent and interdependent) are there between Chewa dance performances and their drumming?
 - c) What specific examples are available to determine excelling of modern music through use of Chewa music and dance idioms?

- d) What specifically motivated your research into or preservation of Chewa dance practice(s)?
- e) What general challenges did/do you encounter when collecting data within Chewa communities?
- f) What other related fields among Chewa people or other groups do you recommend for future researchers?

Appendix 2: List of Informants

Name	Place	Age
Foreman Moloko	Chikoteka Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	70
Jeremiah Nthala	Chikoteka Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	34
Tchowa Manyusa	Chaazaminga Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	37
Charles Fulansi	Chaazaminga Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	50
John Manyusa	Chaazaminga Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	63
Ben Michael Mankhamba	Nyambadwe Suburb, Blantyre	38
Honorato Pandakwawo	Mawwere area, Mchinji	37
Lawrence Mbenjere	Biwi Township, Lilongwe	28
Symon Kamlaka	Area 25, Lilongwe	25
Davie Josophat	Chancellor College, Zomba	35
Sadwick Mtonakutha	Gaborone, Botswana	43
Mr. Banda	Maseru, Lesotho	52
Professor Chris Kamlongera	Chancellor College, Zomba	62
Joe Chimwenje	Chancellor College, Zomba	43
Bernard Kwilimbe	Area 3, Lilongwe	62
Fr. Claude Boucher	Kungoni Arts and Crafts Centre, Mua	63
Isaac Chiphwanya	Nyalavu Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	52
Namuwawa Boma	Cholwe Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	Group Interview
Pumani Maseko	Kayaza Village, T.A. Dzoole, Dowa	45
Dr. Mathias Joshua	Mulunguzi, Zomba	45
Gertrude Kalinde	Mawira, Liwonde	54
Chitete Boma	Chitete Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	Group Interview
Sonia Kaunda	Chancellor College, Zomba	54
Mr. J Ngoma	Khuwi Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	65
Dr. Jimmy Namangale	Chancellor College, Zomba	47
Mr. Fariya	Cobbe Barracks, Zomba	47
Richard Nthala	Area 47, Lilongwe	39
Gulewamkulu Participants	Chimbaka Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi	35
Emmanuel Ngoma	Universitas, Bloemfontein	25

Appendix 3: DVD of Selected Field Recordings

Gulewamkulu, Mganda and Chimtali Field Recordings, Malawi 2008

This Dissertation Resource Reference Material appears on the DVD as follows:

Chapter 1: Gulewamkulu	Chapter 2: Mganda	Chapter 3: Chimtali
<i>Menu 1/8</i>	<i>Menu 6/8</i>	<i>Menu 8/8</i>
1. Kalulu	21. Kayalika	26. Chimtala
2. Mnjedza	22. Jasoni	27. Chimtala Chamakono
3. Chadzunda	23. Kalewa	
4. Simoni Nyolonyo	24. Boba	
<i>Menu 2/8</i>	<i>Menu 7/8</i>	
5. Nyolonyo Kamphulitso	25. Manyanda	
6. Nyolonyo		
7. Nyolonyo Mbunde		
8. Kapoli		
<i>Menu 3/8</i>		
9. Maliya		
10. Kasinja Nyolonyo		
11. Nyolonyo Maliya		
12. Jakobo Kamphulitso		
<i>Menu 4/8</i>		
13. Simoni Mbunde		
14. Chaudza Zina Alaula		
15. Simoni Kamphulitso		
16. Khowe la Madoda		
<i>Menu 5/8</i>		
17. Chilembwe		
18. Kasiyamaliro		
19. Ng'ombe		
20. Njovu		

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Abstract

Traditionally appropriate Chewa dance performances require specialized performers: singers, hand-clappers, organizers, dancers and drummers. As performers of Chewa dances grow into the necessity of surviving rival challenges and presumably malicious mysterious attacks Chewa music and dance is strongly associated with ritual, mystery, and enigmatic expression. While various dances often share common features – for example, songs are sometimes transferred from one dance to another with only slight changes in tempo; dance movements may be similar in a related family of dances; and the basic Chewa hand-clapping pattern is a general characteristic – it is the accompanying drumming rhythms that determine each dance's unique identity.

Since the drumming is thus the key distinguishing factor it is regarded as the essence of the dance in Chewa communities. It helps articulate the purpose for which dance music is made; it contributes to the expression of cultural values through its performance; and it contains intrinsic dogmatic information on Chewa social structures, time and again bringing them home to both the performers and the audience. The drum mobilizes the people to a dancing event, unites the communities through the place that it takes, and symbolically represents the people's sovereignty.

The drum is the centre of every performance and it is jealously preserved to remain such. Mystic forces and beliefs are involved in its construction, preservation and performance. According to the indigenous Chewa people this ensures success and protection of both the drumming or the drum and the dancers.

Adopting the approach of musicology and ethnomusicology, this dissertation discusses the role played by indigenous music in Chewa societies with focus on drumming as an important element in the making of such music. The discussion describes the process of drum making and its application to the main Chewa dances. From personal background, experience, and a close compassionate vantage point I attempt to describe in detail and contextually the intricacies of three important Chewa dance forms – Gulewamkulu, Chimtali and Mganda – as media for the drumming expression. The study furthermore narrates the history of the Chewa ethnic group—as well as its social structure, and how the drumming art is transferred both within and outside the indigenous Chewa communities.

The study attempts to open up a previously rather obscure field of research and inspire and facilitate further investigation into the material. It relies on published and unpublished books and theses, field research aimed at obtaining information not covered in the publications, audio-visual recordings, and discussions with other researchers who have interest in Chewa culture and music.

Key words

Malawian Traditional Music

African Aesthetics

Traditional African Dance

African Drumming

Gulewamkulu

Chimitali

Mganda

Performance Contexts

Opsomming

Tradisioneel korrekte dansuitvoerings in die Chewa kultuur veronderstel deelname van 'n aantal gespesialiseerde uitvoerders, naamlik dansers, tromspelers, sangers, en organiseerders, asook deelnemers wat ritmies hande klap. Chewa musici en dansers glo dat hulle blootgestel is aan mededingende uitdagings en selfs aan misterieuse kwaadwillige aanvalle. Gevolglik speel geheime rituele en kriptiese uitdrukking 'n groot rol in beide Chewa musiek en dans. Terwyl algemene eienskappe in baie van die danse voorkom – spesifieke liederes word soms slegs met klein tempoveranderinge van een dans na 'n ander oorgedra; ooreenkomste bestaan tussen verwante danspassies; handklap-ritmes volg gebruiklike patrone, ensovoorts – word spesifieke danse telkens deur 'n unieke tromritme begelei, en word hierdie aspek van 'n dansuitvoering as die mees bepalende faktor beskou.

Die styl van tromspel (*drumming*) word in Chewa kringe gevolglik as die essensie van Chewa dans beskou. Tromspel artikuleer die doelstellings van die spesifieke danse, en dra daartoe by om kulturele waardes tydens uitvoering tot uitdrukking te bring; ook bevat dit intrinsieke dogmatiese inligting oor sosiale strukture van die tradisionele Chewa gemeenskap wat gedurende die danse telkens opnuut by dansers sowel as gehore tuisgebring word. Die tromspel mobiliseer die gemeenskap om aan die dans deel te neem, en simboliseer hierdeur die gemeenskap se outonomie.

Omdat tromme 'n sentrale rol by alle dans uitvoerings speel, word daar streng oor die instrumente gewaak. By die konstruksie en instandhouding van die instrumente, asook by hul gebruik in uitvoerings, speel die geloof aan mistieke kragte 'n rol. Volgens die inheemse Chewa bevolking word die sukses van uitvoerings hierdeur verseker, en word nie slegs die instrumente nie, maar ook die uitvoering en uitvoerders hierdeur beskerm.

Hierdie dissertasie bespreek die rol van inheemse musiek in Chewa gemeenskappe vanuit 'n musikologiese en musiekteknologiese standpunt waarby die fokus veral op tromspel as belangrike element van musiekmaak val. Die studie beskryf vervaardigingsprosesse van tromme en die toepassing daarvan op die belangrikste Chewa danse. Die navorser se Chewa agtergrond en hegte persoonlike verbintenis met die tradisies wat hier bespreek word, plaas hom in die posisie om die onderwerp deernisvol waar te neem en te beskryf, en die intrikate

aard van drie belangrike Chewa dansvorme – Gulewamkulu, Chimtali and Mganda – gedetailleerd en kontekstueel as media vir tromuitdrukking te belig. Verderverhaal die studie kortliks die geskiedenis van die Chewagemeenskap as etniese groep, asook die sosiale struktuur daarvan, en gaan dit in op om dan op wyses waarop die kuns van tradisionele tromspel binne en buite inheemse Chewa gemeenskappe oorgedra word.

Die ondersoek poog om ‘n voorheen ontoeganklike navorsingsveld te ontsluit en sodoende verdere studies te inspireer en te fasiliteer. Dit berus op gepubliseerde en ongepubliseerde boeke en dissertasies, veldwerk wat leemtes in die beskikbare gepubliseerde materiaal moes opvul, oudio-visuele opnames, en gesprekke met ander navorsers wat belang het by Chewa kultuur en musiek.

Trefwoorde

Tradisionele Malawiese musiek

Afrika estetika

Tradisionele Afrika dans

Afrika tromspel (African drumming)

Gulewamkulu

Chimtali

Mganda

Uitvoeringskontekste