

Transgressions of a musical kind

**Festschrift for Regine Allgayer-Kaufmann
on the occasion of her 65th birthday**

Edited by

**Anja Brunner, Cornelia Gruber,
and August Schmidhofer**

Shaker Verlag
Aachen 2015

Elena and Sisiliya Kachepa, musicians. Playing *nkangala* in a Malawian village

GIORGIO ADAMO

Elena and Sisiliya Kachepa are two sisters living in Chiota Village, T. A. Kunthembwe, Blantyre District. Their first language is Chichewa, the most important language of Malawi. Sisiliya is currently (2014) 48 years old, while Elena is over 60. The *nkangala*, classified within the general category of musical bows, might be better described as a mouth-resonated musical stick. The two sisters are experienced *nkangala* players who were discovered years ago by the Malawian musician and cultural anthropologist, Moya A. Malamusi. Together with Malamusi I visited, recorded and filmed the sisters in June 2013 and again in June 2014.¹

Elena and Sisiliya learned to build and play *nkangala* during their childhood/adolescence from an elder sister, who passed away many years ago. The two sisters are a wonderful example of the interplay between individual creativity and community and/or family traditions. In the following pages some significant aspects of this interplay are to be shown, highlighting the individual features of these two sister musicians, especially concerning the repertoire, and playing technique and style.

The instrument

The instrument and related musical practice are described and documented in several publications by Gerhard Kubik and Moya A. Malamusi. In *Malawian Music – A framework for analysis* (1987, 7-8) these authors write the following:

¹ Since 2008 I have been carrying out an extensive campaign of audiovisual documentation of music and dance practices in several areas of Malawi in collaboration with the Oral Literature Research Programme, Chileka, Blantyre, and its director Dr. Moya A. Malamusi, whom I wish to thank for the invaluable scientific, logistic and friendly support.

The *nkangala* is made from *bango* (bot. *Phragmites mauritanus*, Kunth (Gram.)), a tall, noded reed grass with spiny leaf tips (*minga*) and heads of white or buff flowers. [...] The string of this instrument is traditionally made from *khonje* (sisal). [...] [The string] is tightened to the stave at both ends by a specific tension method that passes the string through a notch carved into each end of the stave. [...]

The instrument is usually played by girls or young women in periods of solitude. The plectrum they use has to be very soft, thus avoiding what may produce a harsh, percussive sound, and providing a completely internal effect, one not meant for the audience.

Because of the absence of any sign of an iron technology, one could, perhaps, think that the *nkangala* is an instrument known in Malawi since pre-history. Such an impression would be deceptive, however. In fact, the *nkangala* is a mid-nineteenth century introduction which came to Malawi with the invasion of Angoni warriors from South Africa.

In the case of the Kachepa sisters, the instrument appears to correspond to the above description but differs in that the string is made of nylon and purchased in shops. This type of replacement of material is found frequently amongst several cultures as a way to maintain the use of handmade instruments while also introducing new technologies or products into the construction. A similar trend can be seen in Southern Italy over the last decades amongst *zampogna* (bagpipe) musicians who have started to use plastic reeds instead of traditional materials. While this change has disappointed those folklorists always in search of the “pure” and “archaic”, such a change resulted in good and efficient instruments that require less maintenance.

Playing experience, composition process and repertoire

Nkangala playing has been defined by Kubik and others (1987, 5) as “a contemplative tradition of individual young women”. In fact, “it is the inner experience that is most important to the performer” (1987, 9) while the harmonics reinforced using the mouth as a variable resonator are hardly perceived by the audience. “Playing the *nkangala* has a psycho-cathartic, or even psycho-therapeutic effect on the performer that is generated by the amplification experience inside the skull.” (*ibid.*) Kubik and his collaborators have emphasized and well explained these psychological aspects:

To achieve a self-imposed, psychological effect is probably precisely what motivates the performer to take up her mouth-bow in the first place. In general term, it helps to remedy the distress and sadness brought about by solitude. The girl is expected to compose the song herself. It was a fashionable way for a girl to find a mode of self-expression and externalize her feeling of loneliness by composing songs for the bow (*kupeka nyimbo za nkangala*). (*ibid.*)

Fieldwork with Elena and Sisiliya has confirmed how *nkangala* playing is based on songs and connected to specific text, and how these songs are deeply rooted in the gendered experience of the performers. In fact, several songs come from the *chinamwali* – that is, from the girls initiation practices and ceremonies, where the elder women of the village instruct the young girls by making large use of singing and figurative dancing.² In these cases the composition process is based on a kind of “translation” of the singing into playing of the *nkangala* fulfilled by the individual performer. In a similar way, various other songs are coming from *nthano*, which is story telling that includes story-songs.

In other cases the song is specifically composed by the performer *before* being translated into the *nkangala*. For example, it is the case for *Mulima njala* (“The country of cultivating hunger”), a song performed on the *nkangala* by Elena in 2013. We discovered this song to be an original composition during a feedback interview in June 2014.³ When I asked if the song came from the playing of the

² In 2008 I had an exceptional opportunity to film a *chinamwali* ceremony with instructive songs and dances: the ladies of the Singano Village, where Moya A. Malamusi has his home, invited me to film this ceremony, as they liked the idea of preserving in an audiovisual document a somewhat disappearing tradition. It was exceptional to admit a man to attend the ceremony; probably I was accepted because I was a foreigner, extraneous to the community. Dr. Malamusi did not attend the ceremony and only some years later was I able in part to evaluate and understand the recorded material with the help of a young lady, Mrs. Memory Mlendo, the niece of Malamusi. She had participated in the ceremony as the tutor of the initiate (of course she did not explain all the hidden meanings of songs and dances). The songs, based mainly on two-parts singing with accompanying hand-clapping, were in fact musically similar to the ones sung by Elena and Sisiliya.

³ The term *feedback interview* is used following Ruth and Verlon Stone (1981), referring to the use of playing back audiovisual material while interviewing the participants in a music event.

nkangala or was first composed with its words and then transferred to the *nkangala*, the answer was clear: first comes the song.

However, it seems there are no rigid rules. In one case, for example, when Sisiliya was asked about the origin of the song she played, *Ndintani ameneyi* (“What should I do with this man?”), the answer to the question was that this musical item was only for the *nkangala*, but she added that in the future perhaps she would compose a song.⁴ Actually the relation between songs and *nkangala* playing can be varied: *Kuitandita* (“Please spread the mat”), played by Sisiliya, was a song the sisters’ grandparents had sung in Chiyao, a language the two sisters do not understand. Thus, the performer was not able in this case to sing the song: apparently she had been able to transfer the “sound” of the song to the instrument by memory.

One very clear and interesting demonstration of a possible relation between singing and playing is the comparison between four video recordings I had the opportunity to make (proposed here in chronological order of recording): i) the song *Ine mwandiombola* performed on *nkangala* by Sisiliya in 2013; ii) the same song performed in 2014, where she sings some phrases *while* playing the *nkangala*; iii) singing while listening to the 2013 recording during the feedback interview; and iv) the vocal performance of the song by the two sisters upon request (video 1, text of the song in the Appendix).

The repertoire is individual and shared at the same time. During the two recording sessions neither of the performers played a song the other had already performed. Each one had their own repertoire on the instrument. But the songs are shared. This has been particularly ascertained during the feedback interview recorded in June 2014 after the new recording session: on this occasion I played back on my laptop the previous year’s video recordings while filming reactions and comments. It was interesting for me to check whether the sisters could recognize the songs, and if so, how easy the songs were to identify. I was also able, in case of a mistake in the field notes, to correct a wrong title. After each song, thanks to the help of Moya A. Malamusi, a native Chichewa speaker, I was able to ask about the song’s origin and meaning, and try to have the sisters sing the song. In most cases the songs were recognized quite easily, sometimes after just a few notes, sometimes after a while. Sisiliya, the younger sister, was particularly reactive during this kind

⁴ Is it by chance that this *only instrumental* item was played as the first item of the first recording session in June 2013? The idea is appealing that this could work as a kind of presentation of the instrument.

of test, and often she was the first to recognize a song played by Elena. It was also mainly Sisiliya who started to sing the songs upon my request, but Elena would easily join her, adding a second voice and clapping her hands. All this demonstrates how the knowledge of the songs was shared. However, to identify certain songs while listening to the *nkangala* was sometimes difficult: in one case, *Kukhala wamasiye* (“To be an orphan”), as played by Sisiliya, was not recognizable for the sisters while listening, but when I pronounced the title I had in the field notes, Sisiliya exclaimed “Ohhh! Ehhh!” and started to explain how this was a song composed by her and was about an orphan, alone, with no mother and no father; in the text she invites people to take care of him. Another song, *Ine mwandiombola*, which is already examined in the above comparison, was at first confused for another song and only when I asked, looking at the field notes, “Isn’t it *Mwandiombola?*”, did they agree and start to immediately sing some words of the song in synchrony with the recorded sound (as seen in the third video example in the comparison). These difficulties which emerged sometimes in tracing back to the songs while listening to the *nkangala* can be explained in part by the intrinsic ambiguity of the relation between *nkangala* sounds and words, and in part by the different perception while listening to a recording compared to the perception of the performer while playing. In any case, thanks to the feedback interview, we were also able to correct a couple of mistakes in the titles reported in the 2013 field notes.

Playing technique and rhythmic-melodic patterns

It is in the playing technique, in particular the sophisticated use of the left hand and coordination between the two hands – quite different between the two performers – that individual creativity emerges in an unexpected and astonishing way, with decisive consequences in the construction of rhythmic-melodic patterns and phrases.

Let us first examine the basic handling of the instrument. Moya A. Malamusi provided us with a clear description of how the *nkangala* is played:⁵

Playing it, one hand of the stick is pressed against the right corner of the player’s mouth serving as a variable resonator. There are two fundamentals to form the tonal system. For sounding the lower one, the string is left open.

⁵ Similar descriptions were already available in Kubik and others 1987, 9.

The higher fundamental, usually about a whole-tone higher, is obtained by stopping the string with the second finger of the left hand, while the first finger presses against the stick's end and the thumb presses against the opposite side of the stick. For sounding the string, a small plectrum held in the right hand is used. By changing the size of the mouth's cavity – as if pronouncing different vowels – the performer reinforces certain partials over the continuous pulsation of the alternating two fundamentals, thereby creating melodies that suggest words to her. (Malamusi 2011, 14)

Basically the above description can be applied to the playing technique used by both Elena and Sisiliya, but video analysis reveals interesting details and significant differences. The embouchure is similar between the two sisters (Fig. 1a-b), even if the angle formed by the stick with the frontal plane and the displacement of the jaw (wider in Sisiliya) show small differences.



Fig. 1a-b. Embouchure: on the left, Sisiliya; on the right, Elena.

The movement of the right hand, perpendicular to the string, takes place regularly in most of the songs (especially in the case of Sisiliya, though not so much in Elena's playing, as we will see), producing a continuous plucking where the inward pluck (ending with the hand on the breast) and the outward pluck are mostly distributed along the grid of elementary pulses in the following way (i = inward pluck; o = outward pluck):

x x . x x . x x . x x .
i o i o i o i o

If we compare the forearm/hand movement in the videos (Figs 2-3 show the frames corresponding to the ending points of the plucking movement in the two performers), we notice slight differences: the range of forearm movement – and consequently of the plectrum's movement – is wider in Sisiliya, while Elena

achieves plucking mainly through the movement of the wrist; also the posture and the position of the head show slightly individual features.

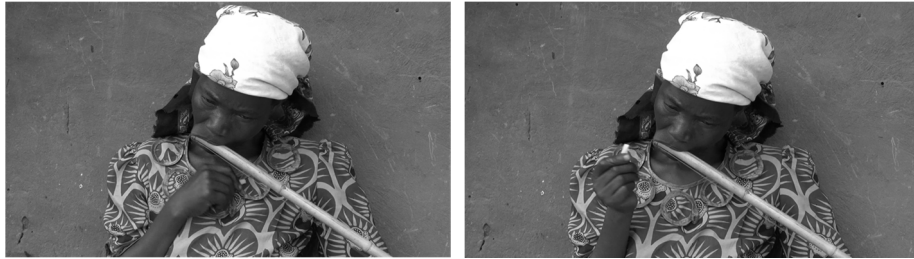


Fig. 2a-b. Sisiliya's plucking: on the left, end of the inward movement; on the right, end of the outward one.



Fig. 3a-b. Elena's plucking: as in Fig. 2a-b.

One interesting difference between the two sisters, on a general level, is that the sound produced on the *nkangala* by Elena is somewhat louder than that produced by Sisiliya. In 2013 both women were using the same *nkangala*, which almost certainly belonged to Sisiliya,⁶ therefore the intensity difference cannot be ascribed to the instrument. In my opinion the difference could depend on two aspects: (i) nearness to the mouth of the point of the string that is plucked by the plectrum – i.e., to the far end of the string – as can be seen in Elena's technique and (ii) a different more or less rigid way of holding the plectrum which can influence the vibrating pattern of the string. In 2014 the two sisters were using different instruments, and Elena's was tuned much higher (211 Hz = G#₃ +28c) than the one used

⁶ It was Sisiliya who started to play, and at first it seemed that Elena did not want to play as she had been a bit sick with a cold and cough; only after a while did she take the *nkangala* and the plectrum from the hands of her sister and start to play.

by Sisiliya (130 Hz = C₃ -11c);⁷ the length of the two sticks was similar, therefore the different tuning was mainly due to a higher tension of the string in Elena's *nkangala*. The result was an even greater intensity of the produced sound.

The combination of the above-mentioned differences, together with personal features of the playing technique examined below, generate a perceivable difference in the overall quality of the produced sounds.

Also the tuning of the second – higher – tone (obtained by pressing the string with the left hand's fingers) shows interesting differences. Elena's higher tone is very stable in all songs, always around 110-115 cents over the lower one, i.e., about more than a half tone, while Sisiliya's interval varies by song between 90 and 138 cents in the 2013 recordings and between 153 and 165 cents in the 2014 recordings:

Tuning (approximate values)⁸

	Low tone (open string)	Higher tone (stopped string)
2013: Sisiliya's instrument played by Sisiliya	145-150 Hz = D ₃ -21/+37	+ 90-138 cents
2013: Sisiliya's instrument played by Elena	145 Hz = D ₃ -21	+ 111 cents
2014: Sisiliya's instrument	130 Hz = C ₃ -11	+ 153-165 cents
2014: Elena's instrument	211 Hz = G# ₃ -28	+ 115 cents

The technique of stopping the string with the left hand's fingers is quite different in the two sisters, as it is shown in Figs 4-5: Sisiliya stops the string with both the middle and fourth finger, with the three last fingers parallel to the string. Elena conversely stops the string only with the middle finger (actually with the edge of the nail), keeping the three last fingers on an axis perpendicular to the string.⁹ The opening-closing movement as a whole appears much wider in Sisiliya. As we will

⁷ The fundamental frequencies have been measured in different points of the recording through a sophisticated graphic tool provided by the S_TOOLS-ST^x signal processing application (developed by the Acoustic Research Institute of the Austrian Academy of Sciences) which allows for identification of the fundamental frequencies through the correlation of the harmonics. The figures must be considered as being the well approximated average (about ± 1 Hz).

⁸ The variation of frequency of the open string in Siliya's 2013 recordings must be due to the instability of the string's tension: in fact in the first two items the frequency is around 150 Hz, in the others it goes down to around 145 Hz.

⁹ The position of the fingers of Elena visible in Fig. 5b is rather similar (just more perpendicular to the string) to the positioning shown in the photos of *nkangala* players published by Kubik and others (1987, 12-13), and Malamusi (2006; 2008, 167-170).

see in the next paragraph, all this is connected to different sophisticated and perhaps innovative playing techniques used by the two sisters.



Fig. 4a-b. Sisiliya's left hand: on the left open string, on the right stopped string.

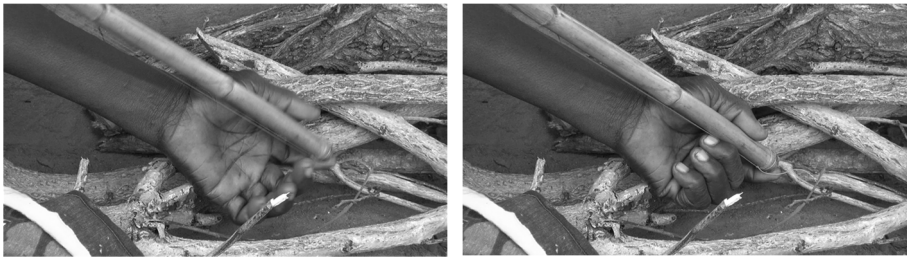


Fig. 5a-b Elena's left hand: as in Fig 6a-b.

In fact, great and even more significant differences emerge when we move analysis from the basic handling of the instrument to the actual way of using it to produce rhythmic-melodic patterns. It seems worthwhile to separately consider the two sisters as musicians.

Sisiliya Kachepa's technique and style

Sisiliya's way of playing is in general based on the continuous plucking described above, with the single sounds distributed regularly along the grid of elementary pulses according to the inward/outward movement (x x .). What at first sight (and listening) could appear quite simple is revealed through the analysis – especially through slow motion and frame by frame analysis – as a very refined and peculiar technique. Actually Sisiliya performs a kind of *hammer-on* (a term borrowed from guitar terminology), often pressing the string with the nails of the left hand in correspondence with the elementary pulse where no plucking occurs. The result in these cases is a succession of three sounds that we can transcribe in the following way: x x □, where □ is the sound produced through the hammering (**h**) which is actually a particular sound that combines the tuned vibration of the string (fundamental frequency), the reinforced partial (through the mouth resonator) and the percussive effect of the nails on the stick.

This particular technique and its audible results appear evident in slow motion video and in the sonographic analysis, as we can see when taking into account the song *Kukhala wamasiye*, recorded in 2013 (video 2 and Table 1). In analyzing the performance we notice, as highlighted in the parallel transcriptions and graphs, how the specific occurrence of plucking and hammering, organized in a kind of repeated playing pattern and combined with the reinforcing of certain harmonics, produces a musical phrase repeated more or less identically throughout the performance. When we watch the video example for the first time we probably do not perceive this “third” sound, but if we come back to normal speed after watching the slow motion video, this particular sequence of sounds on the *nkangala* and the consequent rhythmic-melodic patterns become quite evident. The performer, on the other hand, uses this technique with great consistency in all the recordings.

If we turn back to the above considered *Ine mwandiombola* song (video 1) and compare the first two video fragments, we see how Sisiliya, using her own technique, is also able to play variations while performing a song: in 2013 she was using two different playing patterns, each one corresponding to one cycle, alternated in a kind of free sequence (a B B A B B A B A B A A A A A A A A A A B B A B B A B A B A A A A etc.), while in 2014, in the recording where she also sings some lines while playing, she repeats the same pattern (A) throughout the whole performance. The latter being based simply, in a way, on the rhythmic-melodic pattern of the song transferred to the *nkangala*, and the former introducing some variations (see Table IIa).

Also in the song *Uku kuMasala* (“There at Masala”, video 3) we find two main playing patterns performed in sequence, but thanks to her singing of certain phrases while playing we notice how in this case the sequence is determined by the metro-rhythmic structure of the song’s text: the first pattern corresponds to the words “Uku kuMasala, uku kuMasala, nanga apa?” (“There in Masala, there in Masala, how about here?”), the second to the phrase “Apa mpadimba podyela dzabwino” (“Here is a vegetable garden where we can come and have some good food”) (see Table IIb).

Elena Kachepa’s technique and style

While Sisiliya, as we have seen, introduces in the basic inward-outward plucking of the instrument a hammered sound produced by pressing the string with the nails of the left hand, Elena uses in some songs a more evident personal technique: while opening the hand, moving from the position with the middle finger stopping the string (obtaining the higher fundamental) to the position where the string is free to vibrate at its own frequency, Elena actually “plucks” the string with the middle finger of the left hand.

The creativity of Elena, compared to her sister, displays itself in several aspects. While Sisiliya’s playing is mainly based on regular inward-outward plucking and her songs are built almost always on cycles of 12 elementary pulses, Elena uses a specific combination of right and left hands movements in each song, creating various playing patterns combined in cycles of different length. In Table III we can compare the use of the two hands in four different songs. The first song, *Njawanja* (“Mr. Njawanja”), is based on a repeated *in-out-in* plucking pattern, with no use of the left hand’s middle finger to pick the string within a 16-pulse cycle (video 4); the second, *A Miliwadi mtima* (“Miliwadi is in love”), sees regular and constant use of the left hand’s finger within cycles of 9 pulses (video 5); in the third, *Chiselele* (“Sweep the ground”), again within 9-pulse cycles, the use of the left hand’s finger creates a specific patterned sequence, similar in a way to the ones used by her sister. A new and interesting feature appears here sometimes: the use of a kind of *hammered* legato attack of the higher tone (/) obtained through a delay in pressing the string while plucking it (video 6; see also Table IV). Finally, *Kwakwa dzimweta udzu* (“The sickle cuts the grass”) is a song with a very peculiar pattern distributed on 16-pulse cycles (video 7).

Even the use of reinforced harmonics gives rise, compared to Sisiliya, to more free sequences, where it is difficult to identify recurrent musical phrases, although one notices a tendency towards two-cycle phrasing. According to the current findings, the relation between the songs and the *nkangala* playing is less immediate here than in Sisiliya's performances, where often whole phrases are transferred from singing to *nkangala*, as we see clearly in examples like *Ine mwandiombola* and *Uku kuMasala*. In these examples singing can be achieved while at the same time the instrument is being played. Elena instead uses fragments or aspects of the "parent" song to give rise to playing patterns and musical phrases which are developed quite freely on the instrument. For three of the four above considered musical items of Elena, a short vocal performance of the corresponding song was recorded (available at the end of each video example): in the case of *Njawanja*, it is the title word with its three syllables that gives rise to the *in-out-in* playing pattern that characterizes the whole *nkangala* song. In *Chisesele* it is almost impossible to establish, from the point of view of the listener, a clear connection between the singing and the playing (and even the identification of the beat and the cycle's starting point appears uncertain); in *Kwakwa dzimweta udzu* it is the 16-pulse cycle and playing pattern that corresponds in a way to the metro-rhythmic structure of the basic phrase of the "parent" song. Therefore, it could be said that Elena tends to use the songs as input to the *nkangala* composition, maintaining a certain freedom in creating musical patterns and phrases. An example of the ability of Elena to create and vary melodic patterns through the reinforced harmonics is provided in Table IV, where the analysis of just a short fragment of *Chisesele* played in 2014 (video 8) shows a very elaborated melodic movement within an extended range of harmonics (4-8).

In the case of Elena a further demonstration of the weak connection between "vocal" songs and *nkangala* playing, and of her substantial freedom in creating musical variations, is provided by comparison of the 2013 and 2014 performances of *Njawanja*, obtained as we have seen on different instruments: the same playing pattern produces in fact very different melodies on the reinforced harmonics, where the difference is certainly not only dependent on the different tuning of the two *nkangalas* (video 9, Table V). Moreover, it is worth saying that the fragment taken into account here for each performance corresponds to just one of multiple varied melodic phrases occurring and repeating in the performance.

Final remarks

The present study based on audio and video recordings of two sister musicians is intended as a contribution to the knowledge of the *nkangala*, a particular type of mouth-bow played only by women (previous sources can be found in publications by Kubik and Malamusi¹⁰). It is interesting to note how the diffusion of the instrument within a family environment has come into play since the beginning of documentation on this particular instrument: as observed by Kubik and Malamusi (1989, 37) when introducing the recording of Emery made in Singano Village, “at that time [1967] there were three *nkangala* performers in the vicinity of the Kachamba Brothers, Mother Etinala, Sister Nasibeko and girl-friend Emery.” Moreover, in the 80s in Vienna I had the opportunity to record demonstration performances of the late Lidiya Malamusi, sister of Moya, again from Singano Village, who co-authored the section on *nkangala* in the book *Malawian Music – A Framework for Analysis* (Kubik and others 1987, 5-15).

Elena and Sisiliya Kachepa are a further and clear example of how within the same so-called musical “tradition” (*nkangala* playing), the same context – same village, same family – and the same gendered field of experience, individual musical personalities bloom and develop. In borrowing the seminal concept of *individual cultural profiles* from Gerhard Kubik (2000; 2014), we could talk here of individual musical profiles. The overlapping of the two profiles is in this case very large, but nevertheless the margin for individual creativity appears clearly in many decisive musical aspects such as specific repertoire, composition process, playing technique and style.

¹⁰ One item played by Emery, ca. 20, girlfriend of Daniel Kachamba, recorded in 1967 in Singano Village, Blantyre District, is included in Kubik and Malamusi (1989); in Malamusi (2006) there are two recordings of Lute Post, 19, from Chikwawa District (made in 1989) and two recordings of Julida Jakison, 29, from Dowa District (made in 2002); in the same publication we find an example from south-western Tanzania, where the instrument is called *mtyangala*; the CD accompanying the second volume of *Theory of African Music* (Kubik 2010, II) includes one 1967 recording of Etinala B. Gwede, mother of Daniel and Donald Kachamba, then ca. 40, again from Singano Village, while Malamusi (2011) provides a video with two middle-aged women from another Village in the Blantyre District filmed in 2002.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my warmest thanks to Gerhard Kubik and Moya A. Malamusi for the many precious hints and suggestions during the elaboration of the present paper. Clearly all responsibility for the limits and faults of the work submitted lies with me.

Note on methodology

The identification of the playing patterns performed by the two hands has been achieved thanks to video documentation using slow motion and frame by frame analysis wherever necessary (cf. Adamo 2008). The identification of the reinforced harmonics, attempted using both video and independent high quality audio recording, is much more difficult since it involves personal sound perception in a context that can be considered critical for two reasons: (i) the feeble intensity of the reinforced harmonics, not meant for an audience, and (ii) the intrinsic ambiguity due to the poor isolation of the reinforced harmonics within the sound spectrum. As we can see in the sonograms there are often more neighbouring harmonics of similar intensity. In these conditions, the identification of the prevailing reinforced harmonic – based mainly on the awareness of one’s own perception by the side of the analyst and obtained through a speed reduction of the recording to one half or even one quarter – must be considered no more than a hypothesis on what is actually pertinent from the point of view of the performer. For the purpose of this paper, however, the result of this kind of analysis seems reliable enough to establish some general features and differences among the two musicians considered.

The use of the staff notation, modified in a way similar to the one used by Gerhard Kubik in many of his own publications (see for instance Kubik 2010), has been limited to some illustrative examples due to the consideration that in a case like this it is risky to project rigid concepts of “scale” and “interval” on the sound patterns produced by the *nkangala*. I would rather employ here the concept of *melodic pattern*, determined mainly by the contour of the melodic segments (cf. Adamo 1993), as it can be clearly represented through both sonograms and cipher notation.

The identification of the beat, represented by a vertical arrow in the musical transcriptions, has been achieved by taking into account, whenever possible, the body movement of the performers and their handclapping while singing. The proposed notation must be considered as a hypothesis on the perception of the musicians while playing.

Appendix 1 – TablesLegenda:

(12) = cycle number, i.e., number of elementary pulses contained in the cycle (Kubik 2010, II, 41ff.)

↓ = beat

x = plucked sound

. = no sound

□ = hammered sound

i = inward pluck

o = outward pluck

h = left hand hammer-on (obtained by pressing the string before plucking it)

f = left hand finger plucking

- = higher fundamental frequency (string pressed by the middle finger)

_ = lower fundamental frequency (string free to vibrate)

┌───┐ = cycle

5, 6 etc. = number of partial in the harmonic series

Table III

Comparison of some of the playing patterns used by Elena Kachepa in different songs.

Njawanja (16)

```

┌-----┐
↓         ↓         ↓         ↓         ↓         ↓         ↓         ↓
x x x . x x x . x x x . x x x . x x x . x x x . x x x . x x x .
i o i   i o i   i o i   i o i   i o i   i o i   i o i   i o i
- - -   - - -   - - -   - - -   - - -   - - -   - - -   - - -
    
```

A Miliwadi mtima (9):

```

┌-----┐
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x
i o f i o f i o f i o f i o f i o f i o f i o f i o f i o f i o f
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
    
```

Chisele (9):

```

┌-----┐
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
x x x x x x . x x x x x x x x . x x x x x x x x . x x x x x x x x . x x
f i o f i o   i o f i o f i o   i o f i o f i o   i o f i o f i o   i o
- - - - - / - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - / - -
    
```

Kwakwa dzimweta udzu (16):

```

┌-----┐
↓         ↓         ↓         ↓         ↓         ↓         ↓         ↓
x . . x x . x . x . x . x . . . x . . x x . x . x . x . x . . .
i     f i   o   i   o   i         i     f i   o   i   o   i
-     - -   -   -   -         -     - -   -   -   -
    
```

Table IV

Elena: *Chiselele* (9), 2014 recording:

The image displays a musical score and its corresponding sonogram. The score is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: 8, 6, 6, 5, 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 6, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 6, 8, 6, 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 4. The notes are grouped into measures by vertical bar lines. Above the notes, there are various markings: a sequence of downbeats (↓), a sequence of slurs (⌒), and a sequence of slurs with a hook (⌒⌒). Below the notes, there are fingerings: 'f i o f i o' (finger 1, index, middle, ring, middle, index) and '4 4 6 8 6 6 5 4 4 4 4 5 4 4 4 5 4 4 4 5 4 4 4'. The sonogram below the score shows frequency in kHz on the vertical axis (0.5, 1.0, 1.5) and time on the horizontal axis. The sonogram displays the harmonic structure of the notes, with a circle highlighting a specific region of the sonogram, indicating a delayed hammered legato attack.

The circle in the sonogram highlights the delayed *hammered legato* attack (⌒).

Appendix 2 – Text of the songs in the videos (transcribed and translated by Moya A. Malamusi)

Ine mwandiombola

Ine mwandiombola ine
Mwandiombola
Kumadzi mwandiombola ine
Kunkhuni mwambiombola ine
Kuchigayo mwandiombola ine
Mphwanga wandiombola ine

Kukhala wamasiye

Kukhala wamasiye ndiumphawi
Kupanda amako ndiumphawi umeneu
Kupanda abambo ndiumphawi umeneu
Umeneu ndiumphawi umeneu
Umeneu ndiumphawi umeneu

Njawanja

Njawanja iyale njawanja
Galu nzanga kutsatila mbuyake
Abwela anyengeza ine Njawanja
Ayiyale Njawanja

Chisele

Chisele inde inde
Palowa kanamwali aka
Kaipila tukwana ine
Kamaipila kupempha inde
Aye inde inde aye inde inde

Kwakwa dzimweta udzu

Kwakwa dzimweta udzu kwakwa
Dzimweta udzu kwakwa
Pano dzimweta udzu pano
Kwakwa dzimweta udzu
Kwakwaaa

Uku kuMasala

Uku kuMasala, uku kuMasala
Nanga apa?
Apa mpadimba podyela dzabwino

Nanga apa?

Apa mpadimba podyela dzabwino

You have helped me

You have helped me a lot
 You have helped me
 When I go to get water you are there to help me
 When I go to look for firewood you are there to help me
 When I go to the mill you are there to help
 My sister you have helped me

To be an orphan

To be an orphan is a poverty
 Having no mother is a big poverty
 Having no father is a great poverty too
 That is a big poverty
 That is a big poverty

Mr. Njawanja

You Mr. Njawanja
 My friend dog you follow your master everywhere
 When he comes back he tells me lies
 Not that Mr. Njawanja

Sweep the ground

Sweep the ground indeed
 When the initiate enters the dancing ground
 It is bad to insulting me
 She is a beggar which is bad
 Aye sure aye sure sure

The sickle cuts the grass (with sexual allusions)

The sickle cut the grass
 The sickle cut the grass
 Here the sickle cut the grass here
 The sickle cut the grass
 The sickle

There at Masala

There at Masala, there at Masala
 How about here?
 Here is a vegetable garden where we can come
 and have some good food
 How about here?
 Here is a vegetable garden where we can come
 and have some good food

References

- Adamo, Giorgio. 1993. "Mode *vs.* melodic pattern. Analysis of a female repertoire of Southern Italy." In *Ethnomusicologica II. Atti del VI European Seminar in Ethnomusicology. Siena 17-21 agosto 1989*, ed. by Giovanni Giuriati, 127-133. Siena: Accademia Musicale Chigiana.
- . 2008. "Music – Body – Movement. An 'African' perspective applied to the analysis of South Italian dances." In *African Perspectives: Pre-Colonial History, Anthropology, and Ethnomusicology*, ed. by Regine Allgayer-Kaufmann and Michael Weber, 49-70. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Kubik, Gerhard, and others. 1987. *Malawian Music: a Framework for Analysis*. Zomba: University of Malawi.
- Kubik, Gerhard. 2000. "Interconnectedness in Ethnomusicological Research." *Ethnomusicology* 44(1): 1-14.
- . 2010. *Theory of African Music*, vol. 1 and 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . In press. "Culture Dynamics and Individual Creativity in Africa. A 50-year report." In *Music traditions, change and creativity in Africa. Past and present*, Proceedings of the International Seminar, Rome 27-28 February 2014.
- Kubik, Gerhard, and Moya A. Malamusi. 1989. *Opeka Nyimbo. Musicians Composers from Southern Malawi*. Double Album, MC 15, Museum Collection. Berlin: Museum für Völkerkunde, Abteilung Musikethnologie.
- Malamusi, Moya A. 2006. *The African Mouthbow*. 1 CD, DMR 003, Dan Moi Records.
- . 2008. "Musical bows in south-east Africa." In *African Perspectives: Pre-Colonial History, Anthropology, and Ethnomusicology*, ed. by Regine Allgayer-Kaufmann and Michael Weber, 163-177. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- . 2011. Introduction to *Endangered traditions – Endangered creativity*. 1 CD + 1 DVD, PAMCWM 801, 1-35. Popular African Music.
- Stone, Ruth M., and Verlon L. Stone. 1981. "Event, Feedback, and Analysis. Research Media in the Study of Music Events." *Ethnomusicology* 25(2): 215-225.

Video examples

Video 1. Sisiliya Kachepa, *Ine mwandiombola* [3'17"]

i) 2013 performance [1'24"]; ii) 2014 performance [51"]; iii) 2014 feedback interview [23"]; iv) 2014 voice only [23"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398715>

Video 2. Sisiliya Kachepa, *Kukhala wamasiye* [1'53"]

i) 2013 performance [49"]; ii) slow motion [37"]; iii) 2014 voice only [19"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398714>

Video 3. Sisiliya Kachepa, *Uku kuMasala* [1'38"]

i) 2014 performance [43"]; ii) slow motion [35"]; iii) 2014 voice only [9"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398713>

Video 4. Elena Kachepa, *Njawanja* [1'18"]

i) 2013 performance [34"]; ii) slow motion [17"]; iii) 2014 voice only [17"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398712>

Video 5. Elena Kachepa, *A Miliwadi mtima* [42"]

i) 2014 performance [23"]; ii) slow motion [10"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398711>

Video 6. Elena Kachepa, *Chisesele* [2'26"]

i) 2013 performance [1'11"]; ii) slow motion [16"]; iii) 2014 voice only [47"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398710>

Video 7. Elena Kachepa, *Kwakwa dzimweta udzu* [1'47"]

i) 2013 performance [1'07"]; ii) slow motion [13"]; iii) 2014 voice only [17"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398709>

Video 8. Elena Kachepa, *Chisesele* [59"]

i) 2014 performance [34"]; ii) slow motion [19"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398708>

Video 9. Elena Kachepa, *Njawanja* (comparison 2013-2014) [1']

i) 2013 performance [34"]; ii) 2014 performance [21"]

<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:398707>