GOSPEL MUSIC VIDEOS IN THE COUNTER-MEMORY OF POST-NATION IDENTITY IN KENYA

by

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Most countries in Africa are distinguished by the various culture groups enclosed within their geographical borders, and in how their governments have sought to establish cohesion and unity in that diversity. Further distinctions are achieved in the ways populations have been integrated into the wider region and global world while still maintaining a unique local character. The arts (music, fine art, sculpture, architecture, drama, verbal arts), religion, language, and the mass media have been the principal fields where ideologies of unity and integration of plural cultural worlds, and localism in the global market or globalism in the local market are played out. Music videos, one of the fastest growing entertainment and industrial products in Africa, are a principal contemporary terrain for the negotiation of distinctive identity. In these videos, one encounters music, drama, verbal arts, and other backdrop visuals from natural landscapes to manufactured sets and facades that distinguish individual and 'patriotic' artistry.

At the end of the 20th century the web became a desired space to post audio samples; YouTube was and still is a favored second stop after an audio single has received airplay on the numerous FM stations that proliferated on the continent from the 1990s. In many cases, videos have become a signature artistic and commercial outlet for music. I believe music videos provide an appropriate intersection of the arts, religion, language and mass media and offer sites of information, documentation, storage, control, dissension, and creativity in contemporary Africa as elsewhere in the world. Music, in both audio and video formats, presents ways for examining the historical strata African nations have navigated in the quest for a hegemonic representation of a unitary whole, and forms part of the narrative of citizenship and nationhood that distinguishes one country from the other.

Gospel music videos have since the late 1980s enjoyed unprecedented airtime and popularity in Africa generally. In fact, 'gospel', as a mediated musical genre, is an uncontested national identity marker. However, it has traditionally been studied as a Christian religious and commercial product. It is little analyzed for its musical and cultural characteristics. My studies of 'gospel' in eastern Africa and particularly in Kenya led me to examine gospel music in all four areas – religious, commercial, musical and cultural; but more so, in its agency in the production of national, generational, and

post-national identity.

Gospel music has its beginnings as a distinctive music genre in Christianity. Historically, it was intended for the purpose of Christianizing the masses (see Goff 2002; Boyer 2000). In its text, gospel music bears a message of hope but is also a harbinger of doom. Gospel music was distinguished from other religious song by its propensity to adopt popular music tunes, styles, poetic formats, and the language of the day to appeal to 'youth' of its time. It has also typically undergone mass dissemination in print, on radio and television, and through other contemporary formats. Thus 'gospel' is associated with a deliberate syncretism of secular with sacral (sometimes profane) musicking, and with a predisposition for currency/use in musical and other communication media.

This essay explores gospel music videos as representations of hegemony and counter-memory in post independent Kenya, eventually reading gospel as a post-national identity construct. In conceptualizing hegemony, I contend that Kenyan 'gospel' is a synthesized anthology of the historical and contemporary musical heritage of artists, their cultural memory, and their constituencies. That legacy can be read as representative of a unitary Kenya. The musical result is often indexed as a homogeneous generic African product. On the other hand I argue that music video creators assert authority and control of the content and its dissemination by imaging a counter-memory of Kenyan nationhood. The products war against Kenyan national cultural convention was located in a particular geographical space and initially consolidated in politically expedient forms that marginalized indigenous and individual religious beliefs, social values, and musical styles. Music videos demonstrate that artists, in addition to their immediate and historical environment, draw from alternative and limitless global resources. In heteronomy and counter-memory, artists aim for universal singularity in their works, often creatively sifting through and amalgamating local, national, and global elements.

The gospel music video may therefore develop as a unique form, or else, it is a variant or a contradiction of nationalist emblems in its search for a distinctive account that speaks to the global unity and local diversity of present-day reality. Thus, the creators both reify and dismantle, through art/music, religion, language and mass media, the "myth of a unitary nation"; and use the same avenues to "persuade the public to deconstruct the unified narrative of nationhood by focusing on the diverse elements that … form it" (Servaes 1997: 83). The gospel music video reveals unexpected use, unusual application, and unexpected results and directions of the musico-religious product. The primary architects have been a disenfranchised population of young adults, displaced from rural cultural roots, and further deculturated by the social politics of the nation-state.

To situate the videos and my argument, I will first describe *Kiriro,* one of the most popular gospel music videos in Kenya in 2009. I will then provide a suitable backdrop, in an account of the historical context and development of 'gospel' in Kenya. Finally, I will

revisit the concepts of hegemony and counter-memory/heteronomy in conceptualizing post-national identity by comparing *Kiriro* with *Mwami Ndagucyeneye*, a video that was popular in Kenya at the same time period.

Music video: *Kiriro*

Kiriro was one of the most popular gospel music videos in Kenya in 2009. The video was shot and produced by TeCaPicha (owned by Chris Rohio). At the May 2010 local national gospel Groove Awards ceremony,[1] the selection won 'Video of the Year', 'Song of the Year', 'Central Song of the Year'[2] and 'Collabo of the Year'. Groove Awards were inaugurated in 2004 to promote and give gospel music performers a vehicle to network in Kenya and the larger east African region. The founders aimed at improving musicianship and music production. That *Kiriro* won top awards in different categories at the national and regional level, as well as in different audio and visual formats demonstrates the significant cultural, musical, and creative agency of the work.

The video setting has a day and a night scene superimposition. The sandy/desert foreground with a blue sky and clouds is obvious in the day and more obscure in the night scene. The background savannah countryside suggests the shoot was located in the wildlife park environs. It was it fact shot around Lake Elementaita in the Rift Valley province of Kenya (Nyaga 2010). There are three principal male performers with a mixed male/female backup group. The ensemble is introduced in opening frames that foreground the trio up close with the backup, then in a wide shot of the group, then much closer up without the backup crew. In the fourth frame, Daddy Owen, the leader, fronts the whole group and he is named in the skyline. That the trio has a message is evident in the prominence of the radio/recording microphone to which each lead musician gravitates when delivering his lines. The primary dress/costume is associated with the Akurino (also spelt Akorino) movement.[3] For the main singers, occasionally the dress

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[1]   For additional information about the categories for competition, see http://www.grooveawards.co.ke

[2]   Central refers to central province, an administrative unit in Kenya. It became acceptable to sectionalize competitive categories to reflect regional and ethnic difference in music genres. This ethnic differential led to the creation of national products distinguished from those of other African countries. For an online historical outline of popular music in Kenya, see Patterson (2010). 'Collabo' is the abbreviation for collaboration, when individual performers partner together on the particular project.

[3]   Akurino, an Afrogenic Christian movement, crystallized as a group in 1927. According to Elijah Kinyanjui (1973), the members, mostly of Kikuyu ethnicity, initially known as *Aroti* (Dreamers) were called *Akurino* by the public. They were seen as prophets and interpreters of the Word of God. They were also considered dissidents against colonial rule and Christianity (Kinyanjui 1973: 124-127). They expressed their ideas in songs with lyrics that "… celebrated the political and cultural realities of Kikuyu people" (Wilson 2006: 373). Although Akurino was outlawed by colonists it continued to grow and is often associated with religious and political dissidence. (For more on early analysis of Aroti and Akurino see Murray 1973.) In adopting Akurino type dress, the musicians in *Kiriro* align themselves with the prophetic, with the call to pray; as is their collaboration a symbolic call for Kenyan unity in the period following some of the worst ethnic based political violence in 2007.

is overlaid with knitted rough sisal cloth known in Kenya as *gunia*. *Gunia* is a sack for storing or carrying large quantities of food and other products popularized in shops (*duka*) initially primarily owned by south and west Asian merchants and middlemen. Given the text's call to repentance, the wearing of *gunia* may also allude to the biblical idea of wearing "sackcloth and ashes" as a demonstration of grief, deep remorse, contrition, and humility. Occasionally some drama is played out corresponding to the text, such as a scene with a young lady who is bound onto a tree and eventually freed at the end.

The song "*Kiriro*" is attributed to Daddy Owen (Owen Mwatia) and features Allan Aaron (Harun Mwangi) and Kera (George Kirangi).[4] Each artist is well known in his own right in different musical circles. Daddy Owen has been mostly associated with gospel reggae/raga fusion. Aaron, who is of Akurino background began his career in hip-hop, bongo, rap, and R&B before experimenting with setting Akurino style music in contemporary popular forms (Mwafrika.com "Allan Aaron"). Kera on the other hand began his career with the group 'Gospel Fathers'. The group was forced to leave their church because of involvement in hard-core gospel rap and its accouterments in dress and language (Mwafrika.com "Gospel Fathers"). The *Kiriro* project brought together these three artists of diverse religious and musical backgrounds.

Kiriro's music begins with a piano/keyboard riff, which is soon overlaid with strings. A singer invites the audience to listen – in a pseudo seductive/persuasive spoken whisper. Synthesized bass and drum set are added to situate the styling into reggae. Kera hums before the first singer (Aaron) enters with the refrain – sung twice in the Kikuyu language. So begins the song in stanza-refrain form. The text of the song is a call to prayer and a call for repentance (see appendix for entire text). The refrain is derived from a hymn while the stanzas are composed and delivered in different vocal stylistic and timbral forms. Between the verses, the refrain is sung twice.

The first stanza is performed in English by Daddy Owen. It is sectioned into three verses all sung as a unit. They are unified by repetitions of certain phrases. The second stanza is in Kiswahili and performed by Kera. It is also sectioned into three parts, two of which have the same melody while the third contrasts in melody but retains a four-line verse structure. The lyrics of each successive verse build on the previous one. Each artist performs in his associated signature linguistic and stylistic idiom, with backup overdubs by each artist for their individual section. The piece is occasionally colored by brass overlays. After the first repeated iteration of the final refrain (made up of several stanzas in the melody of the refrain) the orchestration is emptied of percussion. New

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4   Owen Mwatia (Daddy Owen) to whom the project is credited also promotes his own musical brand called Kapungala, an Afro-fusion of Kapuka (an R&B/raga/Kenyan pop fusion) and Lingala (classic and contemporary Congolese rumba). He also became "the first ever Gospel singer to perform at the MAMA Awards" held in Lagos, 11 December 2010 (MTV 2010). The most popular numbers of Kera and the Gospel Fathers are those that integrate soft rap-R&B type vocalisms against rumba-Congolese style orchestration, rather than their signature hard rap fusions.

text is introduced to the refrain melody. Percussion is subsequently built in with each successive refrain melody sung to this new text, with the last verse made up of the same phrase – the last line of the original refrain– repeated four times. By the end of the refrain, Allan reverts to an indigenous Kikuyu approximation of certain pitches. Those with pre-knowledge of Kikuyu scale types are more appreciative than those who imagine that he is out of tune relative to just intonation. Kera signals the end of the song by singing "Amen". Contrary to regular practice, Daddy Owen makes a toast identifying the artists at the end of the piece rather than at its beginning.

It is significant to note that each singer responds to the basic duple reggae meter in different ways. Aaron's refrain tends towards compound meter feeling – close to 6/8. Daddy Owen actually borrows from his Luyia ethnicity in his English arrangement, where he often juxtaposes triple with quadruple feel from one measure to the next. His ethnicity also has a hand in the vocal timbre. While some may associate it with raga-rap artistry, the dense, gruff aesthetic is considered appropriate for deep emotion in his culture group. Kera stays much more in a duple feel, perhaps testament to his preference for the ubiquitous duple emphasis in North American hard-core rap. However, he extends his phrases in line with behaviour associated with translated hymns that used a double knock technique, partly to accommodate the text, and partly to ensure linguistic intonation as close to the spoken language as possible.

In this piece, the plural ethnic, political, social, and religious worlds that inform the Kenyan nation are evident. Singing in the Kikuyu language is an index of ethnicity, independence, control, and nationhood. The Kikuyu are well famed for being the main ethnic group behind the Mau Mau movement associated with civil and guerilla rebellion against the British. Using Kikuyu language foregrounds how ethnicity is elemental to national identity. Setting the hymn in Akurino style and dress brings to bear not just the religious group's historical appropriation and localization of Christianity, but its associated political dissidence and social segregation. The invocation of the hymn or hymn-like melody, style, and lyrics posit a religious, political, and social conglomerate. In this mold, the producers provide a presentation of 'gospel' as an ethnic/national product relayed in global musical forms to represent a unique artistic collaboration. Thus, setting a hymn in reggae form signifies solidarity with an imagined religious, musical, and 'African' community.

Daddy Owen's verse in English identifies the musicians with the global English-speaking world. However the intonation, enunciation, and other inflection of the text places the singers within the Kenyan nation. Kera's lyrics in Kiswahili broaden the national symbolism, situating the particular dialect among contemporary urban or urbanized youth in the dialect and poetic structure used. Kiswahili also lends the song a regional and diasporic identity since the language is widely spoken in eastern and central Africa, and is actually taught and spoken on other continents. In employing English and Kiswahili, the performers expand their listening terrain. In terms of music, the Reggae and R&B styling and intonation further broaden the consumer

constituency.[5] Thus, *Kiriro* in its distinctive Kenyan modern national base invokes the turbulent ethnic-centered rural past, affirms a contemporary desire for national cohesion, and alludes to a disenfranchised global identity.

National identity formation in independent Africa

In the early 1960s, the first presidents of newly independent African nations were tasked with homogenizing disparate people groups in the boundaries drawn by colonial powers at the Berlin conference in 1885. Each country's citizens had distinct cultural organizations that inherently predisposed diverse political and social systems. Overlaying these systems were those institutions and classes inherited from colonizers and their acolytes. Lasting colonial vestiges were evident in governing and religious structures, underwritten by social classes developed and solidified by modern education systems implanted from Europe.[6] Without exception, the mass media was used to create national consciousness and cohesion, and to induct the public into the new social, political, and economic world order. A rural and non-literate population made up most of Africa's population in the first twenty years after independence. The minority literate and urbanized leaders became the authority figures, using the media to 'exhort' and 'command' the new citizens to conform to new ways of identifying, socializing, and politicizing. Thus the media as well as the new education and political systems were tools, emblems, and representations of government hegemony, used to homogenize disparate ethnic and social groups making up a nation state.[7]

Many leading figures of African independence had recognized the power of the press, broadcasting, and electronic media in mobilizing the public in the counter colonial movement. They were equally aware of the functions and roles of music in indigenous societies to educate, inform, and revolutionize the public. Presses, broadcasting houses such as the radio/TV, and music media such as long play records or cassettes were therefore controlled by the government who invariably censored the content. The censorship included singers and even music styles associated with dissidence and rebellion. One interesting exception to censorship was religious Christian music. The music styles and lyrical content (except those that were particularly proselytic) were considered neutral works of art that could be harnessed to mobilize and moralize the new nations. These works modeled how life and living could be approached in the new political dispensation.

Many decades later, *Kiriro* was produced in Kenya by Kenyans. A former British

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[5]   *Kiriro* was widely circulated amongst Kenyans and other eastern Africans in the North American Diaspora in early 2010. They expressed pride in it as a good music product, and a decent video.

[6]   For some biographic information on some of these leaders, see Murray-Brown (1972), Hatch (1976) and Birmingham (1998).

[7]   For readings about the media and its authoritarian employ by African governments, see for example Head (1974), Wilcox (1975), Wedell (1986), Bourgault (1995) and Fardon and Furniss (2000).

colony, Kenya gained independence in 1962 and became a republic in 1963. By independence, linguists had documented over 40 different and distinct languages, some of them with several dialects. Cultural pluralism was therefore inherent in the nation's make up. Kenya's new leaders took on the magnanimous task of creating unity out of these diverse linguistic and political systems upon which the British had imposed their brand of colonialism. Colonial emblems such as the English language, the British education system, and European and American Christianity initially unified the various ethnic groups. These symbols also affiliated Kenyans with a larger commonwealth of former British colonies. Thus Kenyans were bonded to a global world. For example, Kenyans could relate to India and Jamaica – former English colonies. They participated in a similar education curriculum administered by England until the countries developed nationalist curricula. In this way, they still participated in the British Commonwealth, a worldwide political and economic enterprise.

Kenyans were, however, isolated from neighboring east African countries politically and ideologically. The isolation was in part a function of colonialism. For example Rwanda was initiated into Belgian imperialism when the Germans left after WWI, becoming part of the larger French-speaking world. Neighboring Tanzania was initially colonized by Germans, then annexed by the British, and embraced an African socialism at independence that led the country on a particular political and cultural route. As such, close kin separated by colonially incepted borders spoke different European languages, participated in separate European cultural and education systems, and were politically socialized in disparate ways at the demise of colonial rule.

In the case of Christian affiliation, diverse religious organizations were active in any one African country. This was true in Kenya as it was elsewhere. According to Barrett et al., by 1973 there were at least 224 registered Christian denominations in Kenya of diverse foreign and local inception, practicing various liturgies (1973: 229-251). Members of neighboring ethnic groups were more often than not affiliated to different Christian denominations. For example, a group proselytized by Roman Catholics and affiliated with the global Catholic Church, had little fellowship with a neighboring group evangelized by Swedish Lutherans. Such a situation ultimately led to plural Christian religious associations in local and global worlds that were a bane to any leader seeking to create a unified African nation, while at the same time invoking ethnic and other sites as idiomatic representations of the said nation.

Similar to happenings in other African nations, the first president of independent Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, was quick to ban ethnic and secular musics in Kenyan languages on the airwaves while allowing the airing of Christian religious music in English or Kiswahili, or popular musics from Europe, the Americas, South Africa and Congo.[8]

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[8]   Most of the essays in Drewett and Cloonan's edited volume *Popular Music Censorship in Africa*
      (2006) are drawn from Anglophone Africa. Mwangi's discussion of censorship of music in Kenya,
      "Silencing musical expression in colonial and post-colonial Kenya", examines activity from the
      colonial period until the regime of the second presidency in independent Kenya.

It is thus important to recognize the veneration of religious music of foreign and local origin, and in global or trade languages to service political expediency and national assembly. In order to situate gospel and other videos in the progression of national integration, perhaps one needs to understand the tenuous endeavor of building an African nation using colonial emblems through modern technology.

Before videos in different formats became the media of choice, Kenyans were proselytized, nationalized, and socially 'musicked' in several other ways. Radio was established in Kenya in 1929. Although initially intended as a tool for communication amongst colonists, radio always had religious programming.[9] Religious programming aimed at the widest possible population beyond the intention of the colonial government. Broadcasters looked for a lingua franca for the broadest possible dissemination. English was the prime choice. But as the African listening constituency expanded, vernacular language programs were included.[10] Over time, Kiswahili became the preferred language on state controlled radio stations, and assumed a perceived homogenizing role. A perusal of popular radio songs and their lyrics in the early years of independence demonstrates the desire for unity, fostered through the use of a lingua franca – Kiswahili. One only needs to analyze this early repertoire by famed Kenyan popular icons such as Daudi Kabaka, Fundi Konde, or Fadhili Williams to identify that their main themes in Kiswahili music have a nationalistic bent, as much as they discuss ways to survive in pluralized cultural spaces typical of the emerging modern African urban center.[11]

Beyond the secular arena, Kiswahili was the language of choice for religious song. Short, medium, and long wave programming was extended to neighboring countries and islands where Kiswahili was spoken or understood for maximum coverage. The agglutinative musical style was the missionary hymn or gospel song for many protestant groups. The dominant texture was four-part harmony *a cappella* renditions. While most groups initially sung translated hymns, compositions in hymn style with an

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[9]   For discussions on radio in Kenya and Christian Radio broadcasting, see for example Heath (1986) and Wesonga and Ward (1973).

[10]   Some early 78 rpm vinyl records of songs and sermons in local languages such as Kikuyu, Kamba, Kisii or Maasai date as early as 1929. The songs are translated hymns and gospel songs such as "My faith looks up to thee", "Blessed Quietness" or "Guide me oh Thou Great Jehovah". Missionaries brought recording equipment to Kenya from as early as 1905. As soon as radio airtime was available, it was these recordings that were initially used until local recording venues and personnel were set up (archival work by the author at Kijabe AIC studios (2006), Kenya National Archives (2003), and Pentecostal Assemblies of God Archives (2004)).

[11]   Examples include Kabaka's song "*Harambee Harambee, tuimbe pamoja*" – a patriotic call for citizens to work together to build the nation. Fundi Konde's "*Mwanamali wa Maridadi*" calls people to pay the city tax. He also wrote about the modern impact on the dynamics of relationships in "Mama Zohera." The most famous love song is "*Malaika*" whose performance is credited to Fadhili Williams. Williams' other famous song "Taxi Driver" is an account of a failed romantic trip to visit a girl in Nakuru, a town in central Kenya (See lyrics and translation in the appendix).

African musical and Christian religious hermeneutic soon became extremely popular alongside the translated hymn.[12] Choirs in Kenya and Tanzania were recorded first on 45 rpm and later on cassette for dissemination over the airwaves. Some of the most famous choirs included the Mwanza Town Choir from Tanzania and the Machakos Town Choir from Kenya. While some choirs recorded in Kenyan vernaculars, the most popular choirs with the widest coverage sang in Kiswahili. Ultimately, the Kenyan government appropriated Kiswahili as a supranational African/Africanizing language clothed in hymn or gospel style (international musicking format) as a neutral non-ethnic forum for propagating its ideology and establishing relations with its neighbors.

Hegemonic memory
The government valorized Kiswahili and the poetic form of the hymn as neutral frameworks for hegemonic representation. The practice of adopting a lingua franca, albeit an African one, and using a Christian emblem to create the myth of unity, was adopted from colonists. Music was an aural form, a disembodied field, a dream/vision, from which an imagined community could be solidified. It was not so much the religious text, but the style and the language that, in my reading, symbolized government hegemony aimed at promoting national integration. The choir was the initial preferred ensemble type for a variety of reasons that stretch back to pre-colonial musicking. It was easily adopted as a unifying metaphor in religious and educational institutions in rural, urban and national arenas. People of different ethnic groups congregating in urban areas assumed a vocal stylistic that was not necessarily associated with a particular ethnic group, set a song in middle-of-the road lyrics, and were often accompanied by modern popular instruments. Choral music had been the mainstay of educational institutions (initially begun by Christian churches), since the inception of colonial rule.

In the 1920s, the Kenya music festival was set up as a vehicle to nurture non-African musicians in the colony. The festival soon expanded to include indigenous Kenyans. Most African groups only participated in choral music. By the 1970s, choral singing was well established in urban areas as a social activity. Even organizations such as banks housed a choir with repertoire ranging from spirituals and secular canonic works by European choral composers, to settings of African folk and popular melodies, and compositions in all these styles.[13] These musics received prime airtime on government owned Radio and Television stations from the 1960s well into the mid-1980s.

While the government overtly and subtly promoted the idea of choral ensembles and religious music in particular, the general public reworked the format, maintaining the state languages, but changing the content, and ultimately reworking the definition of music, of good music, and of acceptable performances. Perhaps the best example

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[12] See for example the text "Raeli" in the appendix on how the Biblical Old Testament story of Jacob and Rachel was presented by Machakos Town choir, leading to any number of applications in religious and cultural space.

[13] For some insights in the dynamics of the Kenya music festival, see Kidula 1996.

of the public ownership of the mediated product is in the televised religious program "Sing and shine" aired on the government owned media station Kenya Broadcasting Corporation from 1984.[14] The government legitimized the program, but the public appropriated it, moved it beyond government intention of nationalizing the people, to people owning the nation. In essence, the music moved from the shadow of colonial racial appropriation to embrace local and national aesthetic preferences.[15] The music was perceived as more than Kenyan. It was African regardless of song source, for it was musicked in ways that resonated with the general contemporary Kenyan public.

Apart from Kenyans, "Sing and Shine" featured iconic musicians and styles from other African countries. Music extended beyond aural and stationary performers of earlier religious programming to a product incorporating body movement intrinsic to a particular style in articulating rhythm, motor response and interpretation in dance. Lyrics addressed issues, concerns, and hermeneutical understandings of Christianity resonant with Kenyan life. Eventually even video accouterments embraced and came to enhance the lyrics and musical stylings. The program and its musicians motivated a revisit of definitions of African music as a performing art with sound, movement, drama, costume, verbal arts, etc. The vision of a unitary performance medium was presented, but the various differentials that posited an 'African' unique began to be explored.

It is from programs like "Sing and Shine" that a local video industry emerged for both the secular and religious market. Beyond imaging a static African past or a constructed national ideal, musicians were contemporary in their musical expression, adopting the styles of their collective lived experiences: from local folk and popular genres to pan African sources such as the ubiquitous Congolese and the diverse South African forms, to international styles such as country music, reggae or rap. Thus each successive decade has seen an expansion of the musical palate deliberately invoking the African heritage while embracing contemporary developments in the global sphere. The resultant products on the hegemonic front therefore promote the myth of African unity in the music, at the national, continental, and global level.

Counter-memory

Contemporary videos like *Kiriro* move beyond what is uniquely African to what makes the work Kenyan, different from products emanating from other African nations.

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[14]   For information on "Sing and Shine", see Kidula 1998.

[15]   For an example of a text that made it to national secular popularity, see Munishi in the appendix. Munishi, a Tanzanian, relocated to Kenya when he found a ready market. His songs were very popular on the "Sing and Shine" program in the late 1980s. In the example given in the appendix ("*Yesu anitosha*"), the genius of Munishi lay in lyrics that addressed the realities of the day, problematizing familiar yet diversely represented situations and presenting the 'Christian' antidote. Such lyrics were different from the biblical stories in songs like "*Raeli*" that were novel texts seeking to address daily realities. Beyond church gatherings, "*Yesu Anitosha*" was played in pubs and on public transport systems.

To present my argument, I will compare *Kiriro* with *Mwami Ndagucyeneye*, sung by Rehoboth Ministries of Rwanda led by Douglas Kigabo and produced by Mbanza Alexis of Myma Production. *Mwami Ndagucyeneye* was popular in Kenya in the same period as *Kiriro*. That may be an appropriate moment to invoke counter-memory as it is expressed in different African countries in the post-nation. Although the song was in Kinyarwanda, the national language of Rwanda, which is not understood/spoken in Kenya, the piece received airtime on both radio and television on Kenyan secular and religious stations.[16]

To create a counter hegemonic memory, the Kenyan and the Rwandese musicians and their producers invoke their ethnic as well as their 'Christian' heritage. The best analogy I can use is that of different plants growing in the same field. The field, imagined as nationhood, was consolidated in various ways; each plant in the field (nation) however drew on different properties to generate its unique qualities. Once the myth of a national collective had been constructed, the post-nation artists assembled a new narrative reflective of life for the culturally disenfranchised and educated urbanite that may have been the model modern African national. The media, the arts, and religion became spaces to create and articulate a distinctive citizenship in the post-nation.

For both videos, the music is based on a hymn or hymn-like form, with obvious appropriation of modern popular instrumentation and harmony. Perhaps the most glaring distinction between the two videos is in the language used and in the stylization of song and movement. Kinyarwanda was adopted as a nationalizing language of Rwanda since independence, similar to the case for Kiswahili in Kenya. In any case, both countries still officially employ the colonial languages of French and English respectively, although Rwanda has recently moved to use English as the medium for instruction. In *Mwami Ndagucyeneye* the musicians invoke dance gestures borne out of their ethnic and other persuasions. However, they are accompanied not by indigenous instruments, but by modern and studio popular instrumentation. I believe the piece is based on the stylings of the graceful *amaraba* dance rhythms with the characteristic seisquialtera hemiola-like meter, emphasized on synthesized percussion and drum. In the video, the featured dancers and female congregants perform *amaraba* movements and gestures. However later in the work, the duple emphasis by the female dancers and the congregation is contrasted with the triple movements associated with the famous warrior *intore* dance superimposed in the few appearances of male dancers.[17]

For both songs/videos, the singers and dancers further identify in dress with

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[16] Rehoboth Ministries was a chamber constituent of the Rehoboth choir of Eglise ya Restauration church in Kigali. However, by the end of 2010, the group was under the umbrella of Well Salvation church also in Kigali (Isage.com). While they compose new songs, they also modernize translated hymns. According to Eli Rop (2010), the manager of Sauti ya Rehema, an independent Television Station in Kenya, Rehoboth Ministries musical styling and its visual presentation was considered by his station as Afrogenic.

[17] For some basic information on Rwandese dance and culture, see Adenkule 2007.

stylings associated with their particular religious or ethnic groups. In the case of *Kiriro*, the invoked Akurino are well known in Kenya for their distinctive dress and headgear. In *Mwami Ndagucyeneye*, the videographers insert dancers dressed in *intore* stylistics, and further use dance gestures associated with *amaraba*. These are well known cultural markers in Rwanda. The backdrops also work well with the lyrics of their songs. Both songs are prayers. *Mwami Ndagucyeneye* is a plea for God's help and direction – in a venue of prayer (a church), a hallowed space. The location suggests that the people are in right standing with God. *Kiriro*, a prayer of repentance, a plea to lead people back into right standing is situated in a desert-like/savannah space, a barren place of desperation, despondency, and solitude. The venue suggests that the people have either lost their way, or they need to get away from distractions in order to commune with the divine.

Post-independent Rwanda had experienced its share of political turmoil and craved for stability. A sizeable number of Rwandese relocated to Kenya in the 1990s during the period of unprecedented genocide. While there was a geographical distancing from cultural abode, I believe a nostalgic memory and great pride in indigenous styles was enhanced in migration and displacement. That memory is not only evident in the accompanying movement on the video; it is present in the meter of the piece, and in the lyrical choice. But the harmonies and other settings speak to the influence of American and European protestant Pentecostalism. While emblems of cultural heritage are displayed, they are layered on a post-national backdrop lyrically, visually, and even in musical setting. Borrowing Susanne Langer's famous title, I describe the piece as a form of music-culture in a new key, where this music is an 'iconic symbol' or expressive form of a transformed heritage, laden with nationalist sentiment.

Kenya has a history of relative stability. An exception, as happened in the 2007 post-election violence, called for a different type of prayer from the Rwandese one, a call to repentance rather than a plea for help. *Kiriro* also receives a different characterization of the ideal heritage. Instead of founding the song on Kenyan indigenous stylings, it is rooted in borrowed forms such as the hymn, reggae beat, and raga rap. In my opinion, given Kenya's modern history with song in media, it becomes iconic of the government's decision to create the myth of national unity using 'neutral' symbols. The video can be read as the idealization of unity and integration. However the video interrogates the myth of unity and cohesion even from the way three languages are used. In employing Kikuyu language, most Kenyans are marginalized since Kikuyu is spoken and understood by only a small segment of the country's population. In setting the song in reggae style, members of the religious fraternity at odds with the adoption of secular forms for religious use (mistakenly, in ignorance, or with good reason) are left out. The use of a Nairobi dialect of Kiswahili, excludes rural youth and those from other Kenyan cities. However, the performers and the videographers in *Kiriro* recover a certain Kenyan past and imbue it with a new synthetic authority in their incorporation of Akurino stylings, and in dressing in *gunia* fabric – material considered coarse and

more suited to the servitude that Kenya's colonial masters imagined for the 'black' race. In the process, the musicians reify what was discarded or denigrated, and reconstruct it in a new attitude.

Beyond that, given the musical stylings, *Kiriro* questions present-day boundaries of contemporary music-culture ownership that have become increasingly fluid with the availability of sounds outside the gatekeeping of governments and other commercial machinery. One can further provide a gendered reading of the video where the main artists are all male, but the representation of 'backsliding' and the need for repentance and eventual freedom is dramatized by a woman. On one end it speaks to the patronizing agency of British colonialism and male chauvinism in ethnic and national politics in Kenya. On another front, it may suggest that since men seem only to delight in rhetoric but have little accompanying action, there may be better governance with women at the helm, with actions as loud as their words.

Theoretical readings

In responding to questions about his various musical collaborations, Daddy Owen stated that his videos "represent unity even as we have diverse cultures" (Kenya Gospel 2010). He continued, in reference to *Kiriro*, that it "cuts across both young and older generation [sic] regardless of ethnicity" (Nyaga 2010). Owen's statements problematize the work of cultural pluralism in its multifarious manifestations, the dynamics of national/social integration, and the province of artistic creative license. Two driving theoretical positions that inform the ideologies of cultural pluralism, integration, and creative license with those of counter-memory, are rooted in the concepts of hegemony and heteronomy. Hegemony in this case refers to the how these videos showcase the historical route towards indigenous authority and control of cultural products within a nation. I could generalize these positions to the construction of nationalist sentiment in Africa this way: Politicians, religious/social leaders and industrialists aspire(d) towards definitive products to distinguish one African nation from another, a type of homogenous work. Power, authority, and dominion were vested in the media, religion, language and cultural arts. Here, as ideologies about homogeneity were presented and enforced, individuals and groups were re-organized to dress/address the novel identity constructs. In the need for unity, consensus, and community as modern African countries, national or nationalist musical works were invented.

Heteronomy on the other hand arose from the need to be distinctive from other African countries or other artists working in a similar mold globally. To differentiate themselves, nations drew on those local constructs, the identity of which had been subjugated and blurred in the quest for national idealism. The move invoked a need to re-member the cultural particularities of the nation and how those distinctions had been retained or developed in the course of sudden and brutal contact. The diversity of cultures in any given African nation evinced many variations, contradictions, and much fluidity manifested in unexpected uses and applications of media, religion,

music, and language, leading to surprising and unusual results, directions, fusions. Even in cases where the same ethnic group found itself in two countries (courtesy of the Berlin conference where Europeans divided up Africa according to European rules), the new national identity sometimes led to different actions and reactions in the reproduction of culture. These re-assembled manifestations/products have become characteristic attributes/features in post-nation identity. It is however the youth in any given country that became catalysts for change or innovation in the field of music regardless of political authority or social class.

Deborah Durham in analyzing the concept of youth in Africa and their role in society stated "youth enter the political stage as saboteurs. Their potential for political sabotage comes from their incomplete subjugation to contexts and co-opters, and to their own power for action, response and subversion in contexts of [political] definition. … Youth as a historically constructed social category … and youth as a group of actors, form an especially sharp lens through which social forces are focused. Through this lens, relations and constructions of power are refracted, recombined, and reproduced" (Durham 2000: 113, 114). Durham's analysis could be applied to how music and its representations in videos symbolize and showcase not just African youth but youth globally. The music and video producers/performers summon a national cultural identity by drawing on indigenous expressions or finding new expressions to reflect modern and contemporary political, social, economic and artistic realities. In intersecting with global media and affairs, they also bring to the table a collage of the transnational elements that have become overtly ubiquitous in much of the world's music available in these first decades of the 21st century.

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Appendix: Song Lyrics and Translations
All translations from Kiswahili to English by author.

Daddy Owen, Allan Aaron, Kera: "Kiriro"
Lyrics source: http://www.kenyanlyrics.com/d/daddy-owen-lyrics/kiriro (accessed October 7, 2010)
Chorus (Allan Aaron)
Giki kiriro twi nakio, Ngai ni gigukinyire, Eruhia matuku maitu, Matuike ta kiambiriria.
(This is the cry we have, Lord Let it come to you, Turn our days, To the days of the first love – let us return to the days of our first love.)

Verse 1 (Daddy Owen)
Oh Lord now make me see. I repent and I sing now on bended knees. Oh Lord now hear me cry. No matter what them do and no matter what them try.
Oh Lord (Lord) make me see (see) I repent (pent) on my knees (knees). Oh Lord now hear me cry. No matter what them do and no matter what them try.
You are Holy (Holy) You are Holy (Holy) You are Holy, Holy, Holy, Holy (Holy) oh Lord now hear me cry. No matter what they do and no matter what they try.

Refrain (Aaron)

Verse 2 (Kera)
Unyo kwa unyo wakanyaga tu, mnasonga mbali na yeye. Hamjali matendo yenu yamuudhi. Hamjali Mungu wenu.
(Step by step you keep moving far from him. You don't care that your behaviour pains him. You don't care for your God.)

Mbona kumsahau maishani mwenu, upendo ul'okuwa wa kwanza, na kiapo mlichokula nyinyi na kiapo mlichokula nyinyi?
(Why have you forgotten him in your life, the first love and the vow that you made?)
Maovu yenu, mawazo yenu, nawaasi myageuze sasa. Nawaasi kwake Mungu Baba muombe awasamehe sasa.
(I beg you to turn away from your evil and your thoughts. I beg you to pray for father God's forgiveness now.)

Refrain (Aaron)

Daudi Kabaka: "Harambee" (released 1963)
Lyrics source: http://www.kenyanlyrics.com/d/daudi-kabaka-lyrics/harambee-harambee (accessed February 15, 2011)

Harambee, Harambee tuimbe pamoja	*Harambee,* let us sing together
Tujenge serikali	Let us build the government/nation.
Wengi walisema Kenya itakuwa matata	Many said that Kenya would have problems.
Watu wote wastaarabu	The people would be civilized.
Wananchi Harambee, tuvute pamoja	Citizens, *Harambee*, let us pull together.
Muongoze na usalama	Lead with/in peace.
Watu wa Kenya hatuna ubaguzi	Kenyans do not discriminate.
Kila rangi tunaipenda	We love every color/race.

Fadhili Williams: "Taxi driver" (famous release 1966)
Source of lyrics: http://www.kenyanlyrics.com/f/fadhili-williams-lyrics/taxi-driver (accessed February 15, 2011)

Taxi driver *nikomboleshe gari*	Taxi driver, lend me your car (services)
niende Nakuru nikamwone Hannah	I need to go to Nakuru to see Hannah
aliniandikia nifike Jumamosi	She wrote and told me to go to Saturday.
nami sitaki kuvunja promisi	And I don't want to break a promise.
Niliondoka na yule dereva	I left with that driver.
Tulipofika kule Naivasha	But when we reached Naivasha
gari letu lilipata pankchari	our car got a flat tire (puncture).
Ikawa lazima tutachelewa	It was obvious we would be late.
Nilipofika kule Naikuru	When I reached Nakuru
nilimkuta my baby *amekasirika*	I found my baby was upset.
Nilimwambia siyo makosa yangu baby	I told her it was not my fault baby.
gari letu lilipata pankchari	Our car had a flat tire.

Hiyo promisi ya gari si nzuri	That promise by a car is not good
kwa sababu gari hai aminiki	because cars can't be trusted.
Kusema kweli gari si kama mtu	In truth, cars are not like people
anayekwenda kwa nguvu za damu	who travel in the strength of blood.

Machakos town Choir: "Raeli" (1973?)
Source: Archival recordings owned by author from Kijabe AIC Studio.

Jakobo alienda kwa mjomba	Jacob went to visit his uncle.
Akampenda Raeli	He fell in love with Rachel.
Siku ya arusi ilipofika	When the wedding day arrived
Akapewa Lea	he was given Leah.

Refrain

Eh Raeli	Poor Rachel
Mapinduzi ya baba na mama	The manipulation her parents
Walimjua (kweli) ni Lea	who knew it was really Leah.
Mm. Yangu na yawe yako eh Mungu	Oh may my (plans) be Yours oh Lord

Jakobo alienda kwa Labani	Jacob then went to Laban.
Akamwambia Labani	He told Laban,
Mimi nampenda Raeli	I love Rachel
Lakini si Lea	Not Leah

Labani alimwambia Yakobo	Laban told Jacob,
Ukimpenda Raeli	If you love Rachel
Unitumie miaka saba	serve me for seven years.
Nitakupa Raeli	I will give you Rachel

Tena akafanya miaka saba	So he served seven more years.
Akapewa Raeli	He was awarded Rachel.
Kusudi lake likatimia	His desire was fulfilled.
Ndivyo akamtupa Lea mbali	He then totally ignored Leah.

Munishi: "*Yesu Anatosha*" (Jesus is enough)
Source of Lyrics: Cassette Recording *Munishi Vol. 1* (1987)

Niko mbali ugenini mama simuoni.
I am far in a foreign country, I don't see my mother.
Ndugu zangu baba yangu wote siwaoni.
I neither see my siblings nor my father.

Kulala kwa shida chakula cha shida. Jamaa nateseka.
It is difficult to find a place to sleep and eat. People, I am suffering.

Ukininyima ugali sito kufa njaa.
If you deny (refuse to give/share with) me *ugali*, I won't die from hunger.
Ukininyima samaki sito kufa njaa.
If you deny me fish, I won't die of hunger.
Ninyime ugali ninyime samaki uniachie Yesu
Deny me *ugali* and fish, but leave me with Jesus.

Ukininyima githeri sito kufa njaa.
If you deny me corn/bean mix, I won't die of hunger.
Ukininyima mutura sito kufa njaa.
If you deny me sausages, I won't die of hunger.
Ninyime githeri ninyime mutura uniachie Yesu.
Deny me the corn/beans and the sausages but leave me with Jesus.

Ukininyima imondo sito kufa njaa.
If you deny me the gizzard, I won't die of hunger.
Ukininyima halua sito kufa njaa.
If you deny me sweet confections, I won't die of hunger.
Ninyime imondo ninyime halua uniachie Yesu.
Deny me the gizzard and the confections but leave me with Jesus.
Namwamini Yesu. Ameniokoa. Yeye anitosha
I believe in Jesus. He has saved me. He is enough for me.