
MALAWIAN MUSIC: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS, Gerhard Kubik, assisted by Moya Aliya Malamusi, Lidiya Malamusi and Donald Kachamba, Centre for Social Research and Department for Fine and Performing Arts, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Zomba, 1987.

One need not expect to find here any comprehensive overview of the music of Malawi. This short, packed book does no more nor less than provide what its subtitle promises: a framework for analysis; a framework which is not specifically Malawian but which is capable of being extrapolated to a great many African musical systems, especially those of the Bantu-speaking people of the centre of the continent. The musical genres discussed, the examples given of how the framework can be applied, derive from what might be called the Maravi heartland, among speakers of ciCewa and its closely related languages and dialects; but sufficient attention is paid to ciYao, and eLomwe in its manifold forms, and to the peoples of the north, to make this a truly national book.

A short introduction outlines the author's aims in describing five genres of contemporary music in Malawi; not in order to claim any permanence for the stages of local musical evolution which they exemplify but to show how each goes to make up part of a larger pattern, and to suggest ways in which future studies might be approached. The examples are complementary, but they are also contrasting: the intensely feminine solipsism of the *nkangala*, introduced a little over a century ago, is set off by the exuberant team enterprise which marked the short-lived but fruitful *kwela* fashion, and the music underpinning and emotional accentuation of the narration of *nthano* is shown as entirely different from the didactic techniques of the *cinamwali* schools.

The *ngolong'ondo* xylophone, here indicated as characterising a friendly association of youths, stands perhaps a little apart from the other genres; in other regions it has attained a status and professionalism which have not yet reached Malawi but very well may in the future.

The analysis of each genre is carried out with all of Kubik's usual thoroughness. The construction of the instruments, the comportment of performers, the appropriate scales and the characteristics, where necessary, of harmonisation, are all related to the functions which the genre serves in the musical life of the community.

The book represents a significant contribution to African musical studies, and will doubtless furnish many other workers with a basis and pattern for their own approaches. It is well designed, with relatively few printer's errors; unfortunately the glue used in the binding is defective, and the cover fell off in this reviewer's hands.

G.T.Nurse, London

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