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The Changing Social Roles of Gogo Sound Culture in Central Tanzania
With Special Reference to the Development of “Cultural Troupes”

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The traditional sound culture of the Gogo, formerly associated with specific rituals and other social events, has declined considerably since the 1970s. Some genres have completely disappeared, while others are still performed, adapting themselves to changing socio-economic climates. “Cultural troupes,” which emerged in the socialist era, still preserve some distinctive characteristics of traditional Gogo music, although there have been considerable changes in the social contexts and styles of performance. As musical specialists, they are invited or hired to perform on various occasions, including weddings, memorial services, political campaigns, and church congregations. This paper attempts to examine the multiple social roles played in a rural community by these musical experts through the analysis of their song texts and performance contexts.

Key words: Gogo sound culture, Central Tanzania, cultural troupes, professionalization of music

Introduction

The Gogo are a Bantu ethnic group living in a semi-arid zone of Central Tanzania. Gogo people are famous for their highly distinctive sound culture, especially its melodic and harmonic structure, unique musical instruments, and women’s drumming ensembles. Their unique musical style is not only well-known across Tanzania, but also attracted scholarly attention from early ethnomusicologists (Nkeita 1967, 1974; Kubik 1982). Since these classical musicological studies were conducted more than forty years ago, the traditional musical performances of the Gogo have undergone considerable change, in parallel with the dramatic transformation in post-colonial politics and economy. Despite the overall decline in communal musical activities, specialized performance groups known as “cultural troupes” (vikundi vya utamaduni) have played a critical role in preserving and...
recreating Gogo sound culture up to the present day. Originally, cultural troupes were patriotic performance groups promoted nationwide by the post-independence socialist government in an attempt to revitalize indigenous culture as well as to disseminate nationalist and socialist ideas. Ngoma, a Swahili language cover term for traditional song-and-dance performance, was in particular promoted as a national symbol, though these troupes often held various other performances including skits, acrobatics, and popular music.

Most studies of the changing social roles of musical genres in post-colonial Tanzania have focused on urban areas, where various kinds of rural ngoma were intermingled with each other, shaping a sort of “detribalized” popular culture. Siri Lange (1995), Kelly Askew (2002), and Laura Edmondson (2007) are among those who pay much attention to the changing socio-political functions of urban cultural troupes in the socialist and post-socialist eras. These studies revealed how professional artists in urban areas adapted rural ngoma for either nationalist or commercial purposes, to be presented at nightclubs or in national ngoma contests. These full-time musical experts detached rural ngoma from its original communal context and modified their language and dance styles to be more appealing to a multi-ethnic urban audience. Thus, the original “participatory” ngoma in rural communities was transformed into a “presentational” performance staged by professionals, based on clear artist/audience distinctions.¹ This process may also be briefly summarized as “professionalization,” both in terms of occupation and musical expertise.

Although the above studies apparently assume that the grassroots ngoma performances in villages have largely been unchanged, similar professionalization of ngoma may also be observed in rural settings, albeit to a lesser extent. As vaguely suggested by Gregory Barz’s (2004) broad survey of local musical genres across East Africa, professionalization in village music is likely to be fostered under the patronage of political or religious authorities. In the case of the Gogo, Kedomon Mapana (2007) analyzes how the musical genre miheme, which was originally played at female initiation ceremonies, was later adopted by village cultural troupes and female choirs to be performed in formalized political and religious contexts. Frown Paul Nyoni (2007) gives a brief sketch of the cultural troupes’ activities in Majeleko village, which I also closely studied, with special reference to the artists’ involvement in national and local politics. While these studies reveal some aspects of the changing social roles of particular genres of Gogo music, it is still unclear how these phenomena are related to overall changes in musical performance, as well as to long-term social transformations, in rural areas.

This paper, therefore, adopts a more integrated approach that focuses on the changing social context of musical performance as reflected in the musical styles, song texts and, particularly, roles of musical specialists as guardians of an artistic heritage. By focusing on a prominent cultural troupe and its predecessors in colonial times, the paper offers a

¹ I draw this distinction between participatory and presentational music/performance from Thomas Turino (2000:47-50), who analyzed the development process of popular music in Zimbabwe.
diachronic analysis of the role played by these musical associations from the colonial period through the socialist era and up to the present day of political and economic liberalization. At the same time, this paper also aims to examine the difference between urban and rural musical changes, with particular reference to ngoma performances.

This paper is based on 70-days of fieldwork in the Majeleko village of the Dodoma Region, carried out at irregular intervals between 2012 and 2014. The bulk of the information in this paper comes from formal and informal interviews with more than 30 local artists, in particular those from Nyota, the most longstanding and successful cultural troupe in the village. Except where otherwise noted, my analysis of historical materials is based on oral histories given by village elders (mostly ex-members of musical associations). Along with collecting oral material, data were gathered via participant-observation of various events and ceremonies — political rallies, church congregations, music festivals, and weddings and other communal rituals accompanied by musical performance. Eighty songs (of which around 45 were composed by cultural troupes and their predecessors) were collected and transcribed by the author with the help of a local assistant. Words and song texts in the vernacular Gogo language are presented in italics, while those in the national language, Swahili, are printed in non-italics.

**Overview of Gogo Sound Culture**

The Gogo are agro-pastoralists living in a marginal area for cultivation where the annual rainfall rarely exceeds 600 millimeters. The Gogo area is also known to be prone to chronic drought and famine. Though it is often pointed out that the Gogo lack an ethnic identity as a cohesive group (Rigby 1969), they share close similarities in their sound culture, ranging over a wide area. Formerly, there were a variety of occasions on which musical performances took place, which probably varied slightly from area to area within the Gogo region. Table 1 shows the major musical genres of the Gogo in Majeleko village and its vicinity. This reveals that in former days music was mostly performed during specific social events or ceremonies.

It is natural that some of the Gogo's musical genres or rituals were closely associated with their agro-pastoral livelihood in a harsh environment. One important genre was *musunyunho*, which was formerly played at rainmaking ceremonies as well as for recreational purposes. The following is a *musunyunho* song that was sung to ask a local ritual leader, Cilamba, to help make rain so that they could survive the prolonged dry period.

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2 Major oral sources include the following people: Lamali Muhila (1930s-2013, a former leader of the predecessor group of Nyota, interviewed by the author on March 13, 2013), William Ndulazi (1940-, a former member of a musical association, August 23, 2014), Mika Lumambo (1937-, a former member of Nyota, March 3, 2013), Rubeni Muhila (1952, a former leader of Nyota, August 19, 2014), Joseph Malima (1962-, the present "bandmaster" of Nyota, interviewed on several occasions in March 2013, March and August 2014), and Daudi Muhila (1975-, the present chairman of Nyota, interviewed in several occasions in March 2013).
spell. Interestingly, this song attributes the cause of the drought to some witches in the village who were believed to have blocked the rain for one reason or another.

*Cilamba cikuza mvula ili hai gwe*  
*Cilamba, we ask you, where is rain?*

*Ikaliyangamiyewakutya mulelece itonye*  
*There still is no rain, so let it rain.*

*Hono ilece tonya mukungwe*  
*If the rain stops, we do not have a peaceful life.*

*Cokikala nhaule gwe*  
*How can we live (without rain)?*

*Ai wakomile ihembe ha Munyangwe*  
*Some (witches) buried a horn at Lake Munyangwe (to stop the rain).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musical genre</th>
<th>Traditional context</th>
<th>Performance in communal context as of today</th>
<th>Performance of &quot;Cultural Troupes&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>masunyaho</em></td>
<td>Rainmaking/entertainment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nindo</em></td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>muheme</em></td>
<td>Female entertainment that accompanies various ceremonial occasions</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cikuza</em></td>
<td>Played solo as self-accompaniment</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Frequently performed as an ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>msaiga</em></td>
<td>Rainmaking/entertainment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cahola</em></td>
<td>Healing cattle disease</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cipande</em></td>
<td>Ceremonial occasions esp. circumcision</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Work song</em></td>
<td>Collective farm work such as weeding and threshing</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Initiation song</em></td>
<td>Circumcision of both sexes and female puberty rites</td>
<td>Only in male circumcision ceremonies</td>
<td>Interspersed in songs of other genres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Major Musical Genres among the Gogo

Source: Interviews with Lamali Muhila, William Ndulazi, Mika Lumambo, and other oral sources (see footnote 2).

Note: Genres related to Christianity are excluded here.

There were also songs to heal cattle diseases, especially during the rainy season when cattle tend to have a malady in their hooves. *Cahola*, as this musical (or ritual) category was called, was played exclusively by women. During farm work, work songs were performed while hoeing collectively in fields or threshing at home, especially on occasions of labor exchange. These musical genres associated with the Gogo's agro-pastoral livelihood are, however, rarely performed nowadays.

Song and dance have also been an integral part of initiation ceremonies for both males and females. One of the most important genres was the women's song-and-dance performance (with drumming) called *muheme* (or *ngogo*), which was played at various social events, including weddings and other initiation ceremonies. In girls' puberty rites (*igubi*), for example, women sang and danced all day and through the night. Their reward was food (especially meat) and beer offered by the host, and a good meal would attract the best drummers (Rigby 1967:438). Women's drumming was also integral to the female
circumcision ceremony (*ikumbi*). Whereas *igubi* and female *ikumbi* had mostly disappeared by the 1990s, *muheme* continues to be played at wedding ceremonies and on other festive occasions. In boys’ circumcision ceremonies, songs still play an important role in instructing novices.

Musical genres such as *musunynho*, *nindo*, and *msaigwa* also served recreational purposes. For self-entertainment, Gogo people played musical instruments such as the lamellophone (*ilimba*) and the bowed lute (*izeze*), often as an accompaniment for singing. The lyrics for secular songs, including those of *muheme*, would deal with matters of local concern, often commenting on recent scandals in the neighborhood. The following *msaigwa* song refers to a man who had formed a liaison with a married woman.

*Nyambuya nhembelo ya ka Macite ukali uendelee*  
*Na mwekazo walipa ng’ombe ndama ye kejete mhene ye ditambi*  

Nyambuya, you are still carrying on affairs with Macite’s wife.  
Last year, you have paid a calf, and then a goat, as a fine for the adultery.

As shown in Table 1, most of the traditional musical genres associated with rituals are outdated today and are no longer performed in the communal context. Some genres are, however, still actively performed by cultural troupes, mostly outside their original contexts, at public concerts and other social events, as will be examined below.

**Development of Cultural Troupes**

**Historical Background of Musical Groups in Majeleko Village**

Before the 1960s, residents in the present Majeleko village were widely scattered and divided into several localities such as Nghuluhi, Nghinyila, and Manzilanzi. The relatively sparse population was under the politico-religious authority of a traditional ritual leader who carried out various ceremonies, including rainmaking (Rigby 1969:75, 97-9). Each neighborhood had local musical groups, which would mainly perform *musunynho* and *msaigwa*, both for entertainment and for rainmaking ceremonies. Most of local youths (both male and female) joined the groups, dancing and singing every night at a certain meeting place. When a severe drought hit the region, they visited the ritual leader who presided over an area including the present Majeleko and neighboring Nzali villages. Songs and dances were performed outside his house all night long, while the rainmaking ritual was underway indoors. Musical groups were also invited to perform at initiation ceremonies such as female puberty rites and male circumcisions. These groups had no official names, and were simply designated as “the group of so-and-so,” referring to the name of either the *legwenani* (leader or patron) or *mwimbizi* (lead singer) of the group.

One such group was a company led by Lamali Muhila in Nghuluhi neighborhood. In other locations such as Nghinyila and Manzilanzi, there were other groups which performed *musunynho* and *msaigwa* during rainy seasons, and *nindo* during dry seasons.
These groups, along with groups from other adjacent areas such as the Nzali and Mlimwa villages, encountered each other on various occasions including collective rainmaking ceremonies. At other times, they played together at musical events sponsored by the local chief appointed by the colonial administration, where these artists were utilized as an attraction to draw many villagers, especially when an important public announcement was to be made. The groups sometimes built friendships, inviting each other to their respective home villages where they would have a feast with cow or goat meat offered by their patron. As observed by Kwabena Nketia (1967:84), inter-group rivalry was also fostered, vying for the patronage of villagers. Groups sometimes held a competition to demonstrate their skills of singing and dancing to each other.

In the early 1970s, the newly-independent Tanzanian government led by a charismatic leader named Julius K. Nyerere pushed forward with a villagization program which aimed to create nucleated “Ujamaa” villages based on the ideal of Ujamaa or African socialism. The following musunyunho song describes the penetration of national politics into villages, displaying a curious admixture of the vernacular Gogo language and Swahili (underlined), the national language loudly promoted at that time.

*Anye nyowawaha muhulika cijenge cijiji cetu*  
*co Ujamaa wote*  
*Nyerere gwe manghe gwe mbeka utaze*  
*Tanzania yetu*

Listen, you elders, let us build our ujamaa village together.  
Nyerere, keep going, please help our Tanzania.

Villagization marked an important turning-point for rural communities in the Dodoma Region. In Majeleko village, people formerly scattered in remote mountainous areas were forced to move to a nucleated settlement in the lower part of the area near a mission station by 1973. Since then, the villagers have gradually accepted modern parts of life such as schools and dispensaries, as well as the national language and Christianity. Artists from different musical groups came to live closer to each other. Lamali Muhila’s informal dance society, involving members hailing from other parts of the village, gradually developed into a formal musical troupe with the official Swahili name of Nyota (“Star”) by the late 1970s. Nyota was, in a sense, a continuation of a former dance society, as it was involved in traditional rainmaking ceremony during its early days. However, the authority of the traditional rainmaker had considerably declined in parallel with the penetration of Christianity. The following song was performed somewhere between the late 1970s and mid-1980s, when Nyota visited the local rainmaker Cilamba probably for the last time.

*Natuluka muhinzo nghubita kumlamusa*  
*Cilamba*  
*Muzigula cilamusa cipelaje malenga itonye gwe cilowe*  

I am leaving here to go to greet Cilamba.  
Muzigula (Cilamba’s clan name), give us water, let it rain, so that we are rejoiced.
Nyota's withdrawal from traditional rainmaking rituals coincided with other significant changes in both the contexts and the styles of performance of Gogo musical groups. This change of sound culture was closely related to the national political culture of post-independence Tanzania, to which we now turn our attention.

Development of Cultural Troupes and Their Performance Style

In a highly nationalistic atmosphere, the promotion of "African" or indigenous culture (as against Western culture) was an important part of the cultural policy of the independent Tanzanian government, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. As a primary means of promoting traditional arts, the government encouraged responsible officials to have musical competitions at the village, district, regional and national levels (Askew 2002:172). Traditional musical groups, which came to be called "cultural troupes", were expected to participate in contests to promote indigenous culture and nationalism, as well as to disseminate the socialist ideology of the single ruling party — TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) and its successor CCM (Chama cha Mapinduzi, the Party of the Revolution).

From that time onwards, the performance style of Gogo artists was considerably changed, into a stage show with traditionalist costumes and a sophisticated performance style meant for contemporary audiences. In the contest, local musical groups were requested to play every genre (mostly those considered representative of "traditional" Gogo music) listed by the organizer, within ten minutes per genre. Among a number of Gogo musical genres promoted by cultural bureaucrats, the following four genres became popular as the stage repertoire of cultural troupes: musunyunho, nindo, muheme, and muziki wa ala. As mentioned above, musunyunho and nindo were already among the familiar repertoires of former musical groups. Muheme, a female song-and-dance performance with drumming, was included into the repertoires of cultural troupes in the 1980s (in the case of Nyota), and some modifications were made to create an appealing stage-show with sophisticated choreography. Finally, muziki wa ala ("instrumental music") is an ensemble made up of several different musical instruments that accompany singing. Unique instruments such as lamellophones and bowed lutes were formerly played in solo performances to entertain the players themselves. Meanwhile, in muziki wa ala ensemble, these instruments, of various sizes (and timbres), are played together in a large orchestra, along with other percussion instruments. Aside from these four major genres, as shown in Table 1, Nyota and other cultural troupes also play cipande, msaigwa, and cahola, though such genres are only played on rare occasions today.

The above repertoire is clearly based on existing musical traditions, but performance styles and contexts have changed considerably. The stage performance program of cultural troupes is designed to be a showcase of the rich Gogo sound culture: various musical instruments are played together in one ensemble, and songs formerly played at different
occasions are presented in one performance. For example, a female muheme performance begins with a traditional labor song, and then proceeds to the muheme song itself with a critical comment on love affairs in the village, and finally ends with a traditional initiation song. In this case, three different elements, along with exuberant solo drumming, are combined together in one performance.

At the same time, many songs came to be composed in Swahili in order to reach a wider audience, including non-Gogo. In particular, Swahili songs that propagated a socialist policy and praised party leaders were performed at public gatherings and party/government functions, while songs in the Gogo language continued to be performed at rites of passage in the community. By the early 1980s, former informal dance societies performing at either communal ritual occasions or for self-entertainment had gradually turned into groups of practiced stage performers with advanced musical skills, serving both official and communal functions.

**Proliferation of Cultural Troupes and Their Social, Political, and Economic Functions**

Thus, the development of cultural troupes and their musical style was closely linked with the political mobilization of artists by the socialist state under its single ruling party. Such a political environment, however, gradually changed between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, when Tanzania eventually abandoned its socialist agenda and was forced to liberalize its economy and political system, thereby shifting from one-party rule to multi-party democracy.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Nyota enjoyed a monopoly on organized musical activities in Majeleko village, except for church music. By the mid-1990s, however, several other Gogo cultural troupes with Swahili names had emerged within the village, namely, Muungano (“Union”), Simba (“Lion”), Mbuni (“Ostrich”), and Ukombozi (“Liberation”) (Nyoni 2007:256). These groups were, in a sense, offshoots of Nyota. The leaders-founders of Mbuni, Simba, and Ukombozi had formerly played in Nyota, where they had acquired musical knowledge under the tutelage of senior members. Meanwhile, the leading members of Muungano included blood relations (children, brothers, and nephews) of the former leaders of Nyota.

The multiplication of cultural troupes coincided with the collapse of ujamaa socialist policy on both the national and village levels. After the villagization policy was officially abandoned in the mid-1980s, many villagers left overpopulated village centers and resettled in their former territories, such as Manzilanzi and Mbelezungu, to seek greener pastures and larger acreages of arable land. This movement of people gave birth to Mbuni and Muungano in Manzilanzi, and Simba in neighboring Mbelezungu, while Ukombozi was established in the nucleated settlement. According to Nyoni (2007:256-258), the formation of these groups was also related to the first general election under multi-
partyism in 1995. During the run-up to the election, the groups were divided into two factions: while Nyota and most other troupes remained staunch allies of the ruling party CCM, the Ukombozi troupe campaigned for the main opposition party, providing an outlet for some villagers' growing frustration at the one-party regime. From this time onward, the performance of cultural troupes became an integral part of campaigns at the general elections held every five years. As of 2014, while Nyota, Muungano, and Simba are still active, Ukombozi and Mbuni seem to have suspended their activities. These dormant troupes, however, may awaken from slumber and join in the campaigns for the forthcoming election to be held in 2015.

Another important change observed in the mid-1990s was that cultural troupes began to get performance fees. Formerly, they were only given food and local beer (rather than cash) as a reward for their performance at ceremonial occasions. Today, except for congregations organized by churches, troupes receive some cash payment for their performance in rituals such as weddings, falaga (a ceremony to end the mourning period), and male circumcisions. Especially election campaigns and other political functions provide important opportunities for artists to earn cash income. For example, Nyota, by far the most successful cultural troupe in the village, has been not only hired for CCM political rallies, but has also been invited to national-level public events as well as to the wedding ceremonies of wealthy urban families, owing to its connections with influential politicians. When performing outside the village, Nyota normally earns between US$117 and $292 per performance. Other smaller groups (Muungano and Simba) play mainly in the village and its vicinity, and can be hired for a considerably smaller expense (US$18 to $29). In most cases, the income is shared equally between the 20 to 30 members attending the performance. Given the low frequency of performance occasions (once a month on average), each artist may earn US$1 (in the case of small groups) or US$10 (in the case of Nyota) per month. This is no doubt a small amount of remuneration for professional work, as one may earn US$3 to $5 for one day's work of weeding in the fields.

The cultural troupes also have mutual aid functions, especially when members meet with personal misfortune such as severe sickness or death. For example, Nyota has its own assets, savings and livestock, and certain amounts of money (or a goat) may be given as a donation at a mourning ceremony (falaga) of a deceased member. Members of both Muungano and Simba grow cash crops for their collective funds, from which a gift of money may be disbursed to a member in his/her bereavement. A member suffering from a serious illness will be given a donation collected from each member.

Contemporary Roles of Cultural Troupes as Reflected in Song Texts

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3 This statement by Nyoni, however, must be taken with some reservation. According to my own interviews with founders of Mbuni and Ukombozi, both groups were established in the mid-1980s, long before the multi-party election. Establishment of Muungano (and probably Simba) seems to have been related not to politics but to enthusiasm among youth for mkwaju ngoma, a newly introduced dance from coastal areas.
As indicated earlier, social spaces in which cultural troupes' performance takes place may fall into two distinct categories — communal arenas (weddings, falaga, and other familial ritual occasions in the village) and official arenas (political rallies and church congregations in and outside the village). The song texts used in these two contexts are apparently different in their messages. Here, I divide the songs of cultural troupes into two broad categories which are basically in line with this classification of performing arenas. The songs in the first category are those intended to be used in communal occasions, and are mostly concerned with daily life and personal affairs within the village. This category is considered to be a continuation of the established traditions of Gogo verbal arts as a means of interpersonal communication, and are mostly sung in the vernacular language, Gogo. The other category is associated with the political and religious mobilization of cultural troupes. The song texts here normally have a clear political (or religious) message, and are often composed in the national language, Swahili. Note, however, that these two parallel classifications of lyrics and performing arenas do not always accurately correspond with each other. The songs originally used in communal arenas may be sung at official occasions, and vice versa. This is partly because even official events are often held in the rural environment where the ethnic Gogo predominate. Some events, such as local ngoma contests, may have both communal and official characteristics. Among the 26 songs of Nyota that I have collected, 11 fall into the first category and 12 into the second, the other three are songs used for obsolete rituals that are seldom performed nowadays. All the following songs (except the last) were composed and performed by Nyota artists. For both categories, songs were written by a handful of experts who were familiar with the poetic tradition and the lexicon of the Gogo (or Swahili).

Social Commentary and Interpersonal Communication

Among four major musical genres, muheme seems to have inherited the most of the former social roles and expressive skills of Gogo oral poetry, especially for delivering topical comments on local incidents. The following muheme song criticizes a female talebearer who spread news about the personal affairs of others, describing the woman as having an idodolo (cowbell) for a mouth. This piece was composed by a male Nyota artist in the 1990s, based on his personal experience.

\textit{Nghulonjele za munhumbula yangu za mulume wako uzimanyile?}  
\textit{Siku yo mnadi yagula kanga doti nyejete yampela Salina yavalile}  

\textit{...Nye mulume wako yalimwazi nha nghata Kanyhi yena meso matali sikomsuma baba umleka ye yolokwambuza}  

I have a story to tell you about your husband.  
On a market day, he bought two kanga (loincloths for women) and gave them to Salina to wear.  
Indeed your husband is a lecherous man.  
He is lustful and uncontrollable, and may bring you further problems.
They say that you are foolish as well as patient like those who are churning butter. Mbeleje replied "watch out, dust storm is approaching behind you." Look back where you came from and correct your own behavior, otherwise you will face problems. You have a cowbell at your mouth, even if you marry well (with a lot of cattle as bride-price). You have a cowbell at your mouth, even if you live far away, it will bring you problems.

Songs in the Gogo language, in general, often contain allusions to old proverbs and idioms, which may not easily be understood by younger generations. The underlined phrases in the above text are old Gogo expressions rarely used in modern daily conversation. Thus, songs also play a role in conserving the rich Gogo oral literature as a part of sound culture. The following muheme song, composed by the same artist, criticizes the moral laxity of some aged women who have affairs with younger men.

Women of today corrupt the morals by having affairs with younger guys. Elders, look at your fellows, they are concerned only with money. These drunkards agree to have an affair, with only one cup of beer equivalent to 30 shillings.

Other than interpersonal matters, social issues of general concern are also a theme for lyrics. The following nindo song from the mid-1990s describes the serious hunger experienced by Majeleko villagers at that time. This song was performed not only on ritual occasions but also in political rallies in order to complain to politicians about the hardships in village livelihood as well as to raise awareness among the villagers, urging them not to abandon their families by reason of hunger.

Marriages tend to be broken in the period of hunger. Let us bring back the love which we nurtured over the past years. Do not separate yourself from your spouse because of hunger.
In familial ceremonies, composers may prepare special songs for specific occasions, referring to the individual names of those concerned. The following text is an excerpt from a dirge to mourn the deceased in a falaga ceremony held in the early 2000s. In this piece, a song used in initiation ceremonies is cited to remind those left behind of their moral responsibility after their father’s death.

Ifwa lya Isaya sogo yetu koko yetu monayauka kononze mhola lusungu
...Sicolonge zininji langa cina nghani fupi ya kusaka longa kwa wanawalekwa
...Mwicemaje mwilomjele, mulece kihundika
Kanyhi mukumbucile na wimbo wono cikakwimba makumbi cikutya nhavi
Hono wina cimwefe kodima nani?

The death of our father Isaya who has just passed away makes you very sad.
We are not going to speak for long, but we have a small thing to tell the bereaved children.
Visit and tell everything to each other, and do not keep secrets from each other.
And recall a song that we once sang at circumcision ceremonies.
Which says “If you have malice, whom are you going to care for?”

Rivalry between local groups is also expressed through songs. The following Nyota song from the late 2000s was composed to ridicule a longtime rival in the neighboring Nzali village.

Nye cili wadodo imazika ninga lugalo cili wawaha
Kanyhi cikangaye nhe iyungu lya mu mugunda lya mbeyu
...Mucilecelaje nzila cikole aino Nyota yawa ufagio wa chuma

We are younger in age, but we are superior in performance.
And we are mature like a pumpkin left in the field to take its seeds.
Let Nyota pass the road, we are an iron broom (that cleans up all the wastes).

Songs are thus used as a means of interpersonal (or inter-group) communication. They sometimes deal with highly private matters, as seen in a piece written by a singer to criticize his own wife who separated from him and then immediately married another man from outside the village. At the opposite extreme are songs with a highly public character and clear-cut political and religious messages, as we shall see below.

Political and Religious Mobilization of Cultural Troupes

Political and religious mobilization forms a striking feature of contemporary Gogo sound culture. There are three important authorities which mobilize cultural troupes and other musical groups — political parties, the government, and Christian churches. As mentioned earlier, political parties provide frequent occasions for musical performance, especially in general election years. The following song, first composed for the election campaign of the ruling CCM party in 1995, was used even in subsequent elections.
Eh supaligi ya kandanda la siasa limeshafika
Timu mbili zitaingia uwanjani kucheka mpira
Timu hizo ni timu gani ni CCM nambari wani
Timu ya pili ni timu gani ni timu ya wale wapinzani
...Mchagwe wote mgombea wa chama cha CCM
Kwa sababu CCM ni yenye upendo na amani

“Super league” of politics has now started.
Two teams will enter into the field to play football.
Which team is the first one? It’s CCM, No. 1.
The second one is the team of those opposition parties.
Let us elect the CCM candidate.
Because CCM is the party with love and peace.

When government agencies hold a public event, they often invite cultural troupes to
play in order to draw a large number of people. The groups are given advanced notice of
the gathering’s purpose so that songs may be prepared to give a specific message to the
audience. The following nindo song by Nyota was composed in the mid-1990s to urge
villagers to follow modern farming methods.

Tutilie mkazo kuzingatia kanuni bora za kilimo
...Kama vile uchaguzi wa mbegu bora,
kama vile upandaji bora kwa mistari mashambani

Let us make more efforts to follow better
methods of agriculture.
Such as selection of good seeds and
drilling crops in rows.

When an epidemic breaks out, the local government may hold a public gathering where
musical groups join to deliver warning messages. The following song was performed by
Nyota when trachoma became prevalent in the Dodoma Region in the late 1990s.

Ehtrakoma husababishwa na vidudu vimelea
Ambavyo husambazwa kiurahisi kwa njia hasa ya kugusa macho ya yule mgonjwa
Ushauri wetu wasanii tuziweke nyuso zetu ziwe safi
Kila siku kila wakati kwa kuziosha na maji

Trachoma is caused by a parasitic germ,
Which can be easily spread by way of
touching eyes of the patient.
We advise you to keep your face clean,
every day, every time, by washing your
face with water.

Cultural troupes are sometimes invited to events organized by churches, including fund-
raising events, Christmas or Easter festivities, and rainmaking ceremonies. The verses
used in these events are heavily influenced by Christian discourse, often containing
passages from the Bible. The following nindo song was performed in 2014 by Muungano at
a fund-raising event for building a new church in Manzilanzi.
Waumini wote wa hapa kwanza tunamshukuru Mwenyezi Mungu baba wa mbinguni
...Sasa tufunue kitabu Warumi 12 mstari ule wa kwanza hadi ule wa piri
Nao unasema basi ndugu zangu napenda kuwasihi kwa huruma zake Mungu itoeni miili yenu iwe dhabihu kwenu iliy hai

All the faithful, firstly we thank God, Our Father, Who art in Heaven.
Now open the Bible to read Romans 12, from the first to second lines,
Which reads, “I appeal to you, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.”

Conclusion

As described above, a common pattern of change in traditional musical performance in Tanzania – from participatory to presentational ngoma – was evident in the case of the Gogo. As is the case with urban cultural troupes, musical activities formerly embedded in communal rituals transformed into sophisticated performances staged by musical specialists, in accordance with the increasing role played by cultural troupes especially in the “official arenas” of national politics and Christianity. At the same time, cultural troupes continue to perform in the “communal arena” of familial ceremonies, fulfilling the needs of the rural community. As a result, musical performance still provides a unique avenue for interpersonal communication among villagers and at the same time conserves time-honored Gogo poetic traditions.

After all, village artists and their audiences are mostly ethnic Gogo, living in the same village and vicinity. This is in contrast to the cosmopolitan urban environment where there is a clear division between artist and audience, as well as between multi-ethnic spectators. Furthermore, unlike urban troupes, village cultural troupes are made up of part-time artists who only earn a modest income from performance fees, seemingly functioning as a mutual aid society rather than a commercial enterprise. In this sense, the professionalization process of musical performance in villages has not been as straightforward as it has in urban areas. Rural musical groups are still firmly rooted in close-knit village communities, thereby serving multiple social roles by moving back and forth between the official and communal domains of society.

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