FROM PLACE TO PLACELESSNESS:
MALAWIAN MUSICIANS, COMMERCIAL MUSIC, AND SOCIAL WORLDS IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how social belonging and community ties among Malawians and other individuals in southern Africa articulate with multiple geographic and social scales. As an ethnographic study focusing on musicians, this work demonstrates how musical sounds and practices are integrated into the construction of individual and group subjectivities. Using musical practices as tangible references to various social worlds among specific individuals, this study illustrates the complex multiplicity of Malawian subjectivities and identities. In conjunction with a substantial literature, this study is also intended as a corrective to social analyses that are overly binary in scope: global-local, African-Western, Cosmopolitan-non-Cosmopolitan, modern-traditional.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2013, early on during my stay in Malawi, I became aware of the drafting of a national cultural policy initiated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. I witnessed several discussions among musicians I worked with, came across opinion pieces by journalists in the print media, and attended informational meetings initiated by government representatives about the proposed policy. Many of my musician friends were optimistic that it would help them in their individual music careers as well as being good for the state of the music industry in Malawi more broadly. Others I met were more skeptical; some viewed it as a complete waste of time. Regardless of opinion, one issue that repeatedly arose in conversations relating to the national cultural policy was that Malawi lacked a musical identity. Malawi, musicians told me, lacks a distinctly Malawian music when compared to countries like Zimbabwe, DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), or South Africa. I found the frequency of this matter-of-fact assertion troubling, especially because it was not the first time I had heard it. The very same issue arose just over twenty years earlier while I was a study abroad student at the University of Malawi. Again, musicians stated explicitly that Malawi had no musical identity, and would compare the situation in Malawi negatively to that of Zimbabwe and other nearby countries (Interviews 1992: Phwandaphwanda, Dulanya, Zondetsa).

As problematic as I find this opinion, I have come to better understand the reasoning behind it and the conditions that generated it. The Malawian musicians I met wanted to achieve financial success with their music, ultimately on an international level. In general, I have noticed that many African musicians who live outside dominant commercial centers like the U.S. or U.K. have had to confront the idea of nationality more directly—either as a marker of difference to

leverage in a competitive marketplace or as something to downplay in order to secure equal participation. The musicians I worked with in Malawi, it seemed, were actually lamenting the lack of a competitive international *brand* of Malawian music.[1]

At the same time, I could not help but think that the idea of Malawi lacking a musical identity was odd. During many years of listening to and working with musicians from Malawi, I have come to associate small audible details and musical nuances (i.e. a guitar strumming pattern, a drum machine production technique) with these musicians and musical practices, in this sense understanding them to be recognizably Malawian. It is also true, however, that when asked what music Malawi is known for, I have found myself at a loss for words and consequently searching for comparisons to other more commonly recognized African musical genres like *soukous*, *mbaqanga*, *benga*, or Afrobeat.

The discourse associated with the development of an official cultural policy in Malawi encompasses a sentiment I heard repeatedly during my stays in both Malawi and South Africa, which was that too many musicians copied foreign influences and that there was a need for contemporary music representative of these countries on the international market. This was significant to me because I found it necessary to re-examine my original hypothesis. Initially, my research findings suggested an emerging southern African pan-regional subjectivity as opposed to a national one. That is, various individuals and groups were identifying or behaving as members of a southern African cultural formation or social world. This large-scale community included characteristics and practices from multiple countries in southern Africa, such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, rather than a single state. It does turn out that there are a few

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[1] Though no one ever articulated it in quite this way during my stay, after watching the 2011 documentary *Deep Roots Malawi*, I noticed there is an unnamed MBC Radio 2 presenter (around minute 42:55) who does describe the need for Malawian musicians specifically to come up with a "brand" of music.

musicians who either explicitly or implicitly assert a perspective that embraces southern Africa

as a marker of identity and social belonging. Countries in this region are interconnected

historically and continue to be through the interchange of people for job opportunities or through

access to mass media. The legacy of this is evident in part by the formation of the Southern

African Development Community (SADC)[2], which is an economic partnership comprised of

fifteen member states in the southern portion of the African continent. Geographically, the region

begins with South Africa as the southernmost country, and includes those countries just to the

north (e.g. Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia), and continuing onward to include the Democratic

Republic of Congo and Tanzania as the northernmost countries. Given this broad group of

interconnected countries making up southern African, part of the challenge of forging a state-

level national identity is rooted in the ongoing translocal interchange among these countries.

The twin paradoxes of nationalism become relevant here. While constructing a national

consciousness is at once dependent upon and jeopardized by embracing widely shared

cosmopolitan ideals (Turino 2000, 15-16), the other paradox arises out of the fact that local

distinctions are needed to mark difference within a cosmopolitan field of production, but come

with the risk of undermining a countrywide or national unity (ibid.). In my mind, the reformist

strategies used to overcome this, which Thomas Turino discusses in the context of mid to late

20th-century Zimbabwe, describe only a portion of the nationalist-cosmopolitan interchange. This

approach also risks favoring a binary framework which hinders an understanding of processes

that intersect multiple geographic and social scales. Cosmopolitanism is inclusive of multiple

sites of influence and thus is not binary, however, strategies to change local expressive practices

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[2] The Internet homepage for SADC can be accessed at: http://www.sadc.int/

to conform to cosmopolitan values tend to be framed in terms of "improving" local traditions with foreign modernity. This is particularly a problem in southern Africa.

It is important to bear in mind that to describe something as "Malawian" is to employ a descriptor that is a result of arbitrary political borders inherited from the colonial era. The idea of ascertaining just what Malawian is rises issues crucial to this study. First, the people and customs contained within the borders of contemporary Malawi are diverse and sedimented across centuries of migrations to that area from nearby and distant lands. Second, Malawian cultural practices share a great deal with those of its neighbors because the political boundaries were not based on the geographic territory of the existing cultural groups. Additionally, continued migration and itinerancy spurred by commercial, educational, political, and other factors has yielded a dynamic and emergent aspect of how "Malawian" is understood. Still, the presence of the political state remains strong as a result of international and domestic laws and local economics, not to mention the recurring public rhetoric that continues to shape domestic perceptions of Malawi in terms of national development projects, political concerns, and local entertainment as these sectors are compared and contrasted with nearby and distant countries.[3]

Arjun Appadurai and others have noted that expressive practices such as music making are especially useful empirical markers of trans-state processes and worldwide cultural production (Appadurai 2001). The diffusion of international or cosmopolitan genres like hip hop and jazz plus the subsequent localization of these genres is deeply rooted in power relations

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[3] I had two experiences demonstrating the tenacity of country borders circumscribing domestic behavior that I was not able to follow-up on, yet found to be notable. The first occurred along the border of Malawi and Tanzania where on the Tanzanian side was a thriving motorcycle taxi economy and none on the Malawian side only meters away. The second was on the opposite side of the country along the southernmost border between Malawi and Mozambique. Residents on the Malawian side reported a thriving *ulimba* xylophone tradition emanating from Mozambique and audible from within Malawi along the banks of the Shire river. This same tradition exists in Malawi, but has been reportedly in the decline for the last 10 to 20 years.

driven in large part by access to money and media infrastructure (i.e. recording, distribution, and broadcast facilities). Musical genres and styles are entwined in a field of social, political, and ethnic leveraging on international and domestic scales (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Music in southern Africa has been used by its political leaders and activists to generate national sentiment and group solidarity in both colonial and post-colonial contexts (Nurse 1964; Chimombo and Chimombo 1996; Turino 2000). The ability of music to reference place and produce emotional sentiment remains salient and is important in the reinforcement of community ties of varying sizes across different expanses of space.

Power centers driving cultural production in North America, Europe, and Asia play a major role within modernist-capitalist cosmopolitan social formations. Through face-to-face and mass mediated interchange people in power centers like the US, England, and Japan construct and perpetuate unreflective ideas of social norms and values (sometimes overshadowing and erasing those shared by cohorts within the larger formation). One of the central principles of this study is that these interchanges of ideas, material goods, people, and money occur within in a multi-layered network rather than simply a local-translocal binary. Yet, it is a common occurrence to use a binary model as a descriptor of music in Malawi as in, "blending Malawian traditional music with modern instruments,"[4] and other such uses of the traditional-modern binary, or variants drawn from terms like "local" and "Western."

This rhetoric has a long history in this region and continues to perpetuate essentialist binaries that are often boiled down to ideas of progress and stagnation framed as an opposition between world citizen versus "cultural hold-out" (Appadurai 2001). Discourses of this nature not only serve to potentially marginalize individuals and social groups that lie outside of these binary

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[4] See http://www.myriadartists.com/petermawanga/ for a version of this sentiment.

models, but may equally malign mainstream practices such as hip hop and reggae as simply monoliths of the West. Such a binary perspective overlooks a process of localization that involves relationships between multiple sites of varying influence and proximity. This is the case with Malawi in relation to neighboring countries like Zambia, nearby ones like South Africa, and overseas countries like the U.S. and Britain.

In the case of commercial music making in Malawi, it is important to consider the presence of a strong South African influence in the region of southern Africa, both historically and contemporaneously. The access to wealth and media presence emanating from South Africa, particularly Johannesburg, acts as another power center shaping a cosmopolitan ethos across geographically separated places. While many individuals in southern Africa may operate within a modernist-capitalist formation, the processes of socialization and enculturation should not be understood as an interchange between a particular national and a broader transcontinental setting driven in large part by North America and western Europe. It has been suggested that the processes of globalization and localization occur simultaneously (Condry 2006) or that cosmopolitanism is at once translocal and local (Turino 2000). I posit that the process behind this simultaneity occurs across multiple geographic scales and is a result of various interactions with neighboring, nearby, and distant locations, thus rendering theoretical frameworks that embrace or suggest binary oppositions as being precarious at best. It is this underlying premise that forms the basis for this project as it relates to the idea of "place to placelessness."

Unpacking the Title

The idea of placelessness comes from Thomas Turino's writings on cosmopolitanism, in which he explains that the discourse associated with cosmopolitanism emphasizes "individuality,

placelessness, universalism and a pan-historicism that results in ahistoricity" (2003, 61). The larger notion of place to placelessness as a continuum came out of several conversations I had with Dr. Turino concerning a context that I described as demonstrating a regional cosmopolitanism, an idea inspired by the recordings and videos of Malawian hip hop artist Tay Grin. In addition to working with local Malawian talent, Grin collaborated with other African artists from Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Nigeria within a media network driven by South Africa. This yielded works that included sonic and visual cues referencing a constellation of geographic points circulating within southern Africa. This was not a clear case in which the recreation of a cosmopolitan practice (hip hop) was guided by a single set of local conditions (a particular town or country). The binary of place and placelessness is akin to that of particular and universal, but if it is understood as a continuum, it allows one to describe expressive practices as relatively marked and relatively unmarked rather than absolutely one or the other. What is defined or understood as universal is dependent in large part on which power centers resonate within people's lives and to what degree. Creative practices in which the sense of place is receded, obfuscated, or removed is at the core of this idea. I argue that placelessness, in relation to musical practices, is often the result of an effort to demonstrate competence as an insider. That is to say, there is an emphasis on musical genre, or perhaps individual style, rather than place of production. For instance, I noticed this sentiment expressed by several musicians I have encountered over the years who explained that they wanted to be seen as great musicians, rather than great African musicians. One such person was my guitar teacher, who was from Nigeria. He expressed to me that he would prefer to be admired as a jazz guitarist like George Benson rather than the guy that plays African guitar. He wanted to be known for his musical talent independent of his national origin. Even though the term "jazz" and the name "George Benson" may call to

mind a place, North America, I interpreted his sentiment as wanting to enjoy the same privilege many Westerners have in which place is not necessarily invisible, but simply a non-issue.

I have defined the musical focus of this study in terms of "commercial" music referring to music making with the understanding that it is an endeavor capable of generating revenue through recording, performance, licensing, and other means. Whether or not musicians actually derive revenue from their musical practices is not the point of interest; rather, it is that the way they approach music making is shaped by fundamental assumptions and social structures driven by the recording and other music industries (*see* Cottrell 2010 on the use of music industries in the plural form). In lieu of framing my research around a specific genre, I am placing emphasis on the discursive practices that generate several related genres. This is in order to examine a constellation of styles produced within the modernist-capitalist cultural formation (Turino 2000, 2003, 2008). By opening the field of inquiry to include multiple styles and genres, I place the analytical emphasis on the interaction and decisions of the musicians themselves. For instance, many recordings produced by musicians in Malawi and South Africa have a potpourri of styles from jazz, *mbaqanga*, American gospel, and local-district dance styles. David Coplan (2008) refers to musicians in South Africa as being cultural brokers fluent in multiple styles as a means to react to and succeed in a heterogeneous marketplace. This is also the case with many Malawian musicians who have worked in or have been influenced by musical contexts in different places, both in southern Africa and outside the continent. I find it useful to veer away from the unreflective use of the term 'popular' music in favor of highlighting its function – participatory, presentational, devotional, or cathartic. My experiences in Malawi and South Africa in particular have shown me that, for so many of individuals with whom I worked, making music has become so interlinked with financial gain that they rarely consider other

factors (i.e. emotional drive, personal catharsis) that inform musical creation, and that the moniker of commercial music seems to be more apt. Music making that occurs outside the commercial music paradigm, for instance the semi-religious dance *sikiri* among Muslim Yao speakers or lullabies sung by mothers, is still present. The presence of individuals' various conceptions of music making points to the differing social worlds that emerge within larger cultural formations.

In his 1980 article, David Unruh proposes the notion of "social worlds" as a means to approach sociological inquiry into urban environments typically characterized as heterogeneous and influenced by "transboundary" phenomena (i.e. transnational, transstate, translocal) (Kassimer 2007). Several aspects of the concept of social worlds, as Unruh describes them, are useful. In developing this notion, he does not privilege geographic proximity, kinship, or other formal ties as traditional social group constructs. He also considers the importance of different geographic scales in social analysis yet does not dismiss the role of particular places and geographic centers, explaining that they are all influential in how participants act. Having avoided traditional social formation boundaries, he focuses on communication and interaction as cohesive factors. Unruh cites Goode and Katz, stating that "universes of discourse" act as that social glue. I appreciate the focus on interaction as a cohesive factor because it calls to mind a dynamic process and allows for emergence and agency, thus articulating with William Hanks' work on communicative practices situated within practice theory (Hanks 1996).

Lastly, during my fieldwork I found it useful to conceptualize my focus in terms of communities of interaction and their shared repertoires of expressive devices. I wanted to see what contributes to social cohesion with the goal of determining how pan-regional political

subjectivities and flexible notions of citizenship are experienced as daily practice rather than legal constructs.

Malawi and South Africa: Why These Sites?

I conducted a great deal of my field research in Malawi, but included two extended stays in South Africa (primarily Johannesburg) because of its apparent significance in the experiences of so many musicians I met. The music industries and music economies in southern Africa continue to be driven in large part by what occurs in Johannesburg's commercial music scene. Over the past two decades the expansion of broadcast media and access to recording and distribution technologies has created a vibrant regional industry with strong markets in countries neighboring and in proximity to South Africa. Many musicians regularly tour internationally within the southern part of the continent and demonstrate a keen understanding of stylistic interplay that traverses state borders. This is not simply a reflection of market networks and strategies, but is reified in their everyday practice as musicians engaging the communities in which they work, be they spectators or fellow musicians. Face-to-face interaction within the cohort of professional musicians creates a dynamic repertoire of social and expressive devices, in this case, a repertoire associated with southern Africa, that includes the use of musical sounds and practices to make sense of the world around them. I suggest that the accumulated mastery of subtleties in musical styles and musical interaction is tied to a flexibility in socio-political subjectivity. This subjective positioning often includes the intermediate geographic scale of southern Africa. That is, individuals in this region regularly adapt and contribute to influences from South Africa, as the region's strongest economy and broadcast media industry, in

conjunction with influences from their immediate local environment, and those from neighboring countries.

South Africa and Malawi share historical ties as well. These ties occur largely in relation to labor migration connected to the mining industry beginning from late in the nineteenth century and continuing into the present. After 1994, however, both countries experienced major political and economic changes that heightened interchanges between them. Historically, Johannesburg has been a source of regional influence for much of southern Africa notably through its role as major site for the entertainment industries and destination for itinerant and immigrant workers. It is a source of cultural influence within the intermediate geographic scale represented by southern Africa. It is also situated among a constellation of cultural influences circulating between neighboring countries, distant countries within the continent, and countries outside Africa (*see* Muller 2008, Chapter 1).

Three important themes characterize the recent histories of both Malawi and South Africa: a shift to democratization in the mid-1990s, reinvigorated efforts to engage in world markets, and continued similar trends of nationalist cultural strategies to reflect these new developments. Prior to democratization, both countries' governments severely regulated domestic and imported media content. Political expression was silenced with rigorous censorship and often harsh consequences (Chirambo 2005; Drewett 2006). Although the apartheid government of South Africa strained its relationships with other countries, exchange between Malawi and South Africa remained relatively open; consequently, South Africa had notable cultural influence in Malawi (Kalinga and Crosby 2001; Banda 2014). Since the transition to democratic governments and liberalized economies beginning in the mid-1990s, interchange between South Africa and Malawi elevated even as both countries' government and citizens

increasingly looked beyond the continent for cultural exchange. This was propelled by the information technology boom of the 1990s, the returning of political exiles from the U.S. and U.K., expanded tourism, and increased international profiles of both countries. In the face of strong globalization narratives, nationalist strategies and sentiment continued to operate at varying levels of efficacy. In 2010, under the presidency of Bingu Mutharika, the Malawian government passed legislation to redesign the national flag in order to reflect a "modern" rather than "emerging" country. (This was later repealed.) In South Africa, the concepts of the "rainbow nation" and *ubuntu* (respect for humanity and humanitarian values) were used to define an inclusive nation, unifying diverse constituents in the presence of recurring xenophobia.

Regional translocal networks within greater southern Africa have concurrently emerged within a general push for international markets in Africa. This is especially evident in the entertainment industries. Expanded media outlets, the proliferation of recording studios, international music festivals, entertainment awards events, and local reality television (featuring contestants and musical performances from several African countries) have all contributed to an increased distribution of music and music videos among residents of southern African countries. These developments provide a context where musicians discursively create a musical style complex that is influential in commercial music practices in many African urban centers. Countries that host large economies and have international media presence, like South Africa, play a significant role in shaping expressive practices in nearby smaller countries like Malawi. As a result, there is another center of power among the typical European and American ones driving socialization and value formation in southern Africa.

The Genesis of This Project

Prelude

      This dissertation grew out of my long-standing professional work and life experience with Malawian musicians over the last two decades. My introduction to this region began during my undergraduate studies as a saxophonist at Indiana University (1989-93). While pursuing an individualized major in jazz studies and ethnomusicology I was introduced to a Malawian graduate student, singer and guitarist Wongani Katundu, with whom I continue to perform. During the 1991-1992 academic year I spent ten months at the University of Malawi where in addition to taking African-centered classes for a certificate in African Studies, I conducted field research on popular music practices in the cities of Blantyre and Lilongwe. I also engaged in participant observation, performing with several music groups and interviewing dozens of musicians, radio personnel, music promoters, and members of the then Ministry of Arts and Culture. Upon graduating, I moved to the San Francisco Bay area of California where for three years I performed with various Afropop bands and began studying guitar with Nigerian guitarist Adesoji Odukogbe. I returned to Malawi in April 1997, staying until March 1998, and again from November to December 1999, during which I worked as an audio engineer, producer, and musician. As a foreign professional working in local creative fields, I utilized ethnographic research methods and language study to inform my work with local recording artists and advertising agencies in order to remain culturally relevant. After my return from Malawi in 1999 I was based in the American Midwest, specifically, southwest Michigan, northern Indiana, and Chicago. There is a large Malawian diaspora community in this region which allowed me to work and record with several Malawian musicians up to and including the point at which I began my doctoral studies in ethnomusicology at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

2008 and the Basis for a Hypothesis

In 2008, during the initial stages of my doctoral work at the University of Illinois, I began conducting more formal correspondence and research with Malawian musicians and industry professionals living in other US regions, South Africa, and Malawi. I was soon drawn to the careers and music of Tay Grin (Limbani Kalilani) and Erik Paliani. My original objective was to look at how Malawian music was being represented outside Malawi, primarily in media channels accessible through the Internet. Tay Grin had established a strong Internet presence, which I examined closely. What became a point of interest was the international media interchange within Africa through multi-national satellite television networks, especially in relation to pan-African music and entertainment awards. This seemed to influence the content and style of Grin's music and videos, which represented a constellation of influences aimed at a pan-regional audience.

Beginning in December 2010, and continuing into the following spring semester, I conducted interviews and had extended conversations with Erik Paliani, the Malawian musician and record producer in South Africa with whom I had worked in Malawi just over ten years prior. These interchanges were preceded by my visit to South Africa during summer 2009, when I spent two months in Pietermaritzburg and Durban on a Fulbright-Hays group project abroad fellowship learning IsiZulu. I extended this trip in order to further explore the music scenes in Durban, Cape Town, and finally Johannesburg, where I reconnected with Paliani and considered the logistics of a multi-sited dissertation project. Erik had elevated his career in South Africa through his work with South African singer Zamajobe, trumpet legend Hugh Masekela, and American jazz guitarist Lee Ritenour. In so doing, he created a strong foundation from which to launch his solo album *Chitukutuku* reflecting his life experiences in various southern African

countries over the years (Paliani n.d.).[5] During our correspondence in the months and years that followed, recurring themes arose that included the idea of a southern African citizen, criticism of the arbitrary state borders in the region, and advocating for southern African unity. From these two case studies I formed my initial hypothesis, suggesting that a southern African subjectivity was emerging in this part of the continent.

2012-2013 Dissertation Field Research

In December 2012 I arrived in Johannesburg to begin research for this dissertation. For six months I resided in the northern suburbs of the city and worked with four Malawian musicians, three in the greater Johannesburg area, and one, Erik Paliani, over three hours north in Polokwane. I had worked with all four of these musicians previously in Malawi in 1997-98 and two of them as early as 1992. One objective of this research was to understand how music making and community ties, like national citizenship, operated for these individuals. I worked closely with them, spending time with each one at their places of residence and working alongside them in rehearsals, recording sessions, and performances. A great deal of our time was spent in recording studios, which directly affected the organization of this dissertation.

Another objective of the South African (Johannesburg) portion of my research was to acquire a better understanding of the general music scene, the dominant media channels, the music most circulated, and how Malawian musicians fit into this. I attended live music shows, jam sessions, recording sessions, rehearsals, and several shows featuring live DJs but no bands. I also monitored music channels on television and radio. I made three trips to Cape Town where I attended jam sessions, festivals, and live music concerts as well as attending the Breathe

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[5] See also: http://www.theorbit.co.za/erik-paliani/

Sunshine African Music Industry Conference, which proved extremely insightful. I conducted formal and informal interviews as well as archival research at the International Library of African Music (ILAM) in Grahamstown. My goal in acquiring this data, together with those of my trip in 2009, was to gain a broad understanding of commercial music making in South Africa and compare this to the music scene in Malawi. I was interested in understanding how South Africa functioned as a center of cultural production from a vantage point within South Africa itself as contrasted with how it was perceived in Malawi.

Following my stay in South Africa, I went to Malawi to continue the second part of this project. I engaged in extensive travel to gain a better overview of musical activity throughout the country to supplement my prior experiences in Lilongwe and Blantyre. This included a brief stay in the Nsanje district at the far southern tip of Malawi near Mozambique and an extended trip to Karonga, Nkhata Bay, and Mzuzu, which are located in northern Malawi. The trip north was further extended to include a bus journey into Tanzania for a one-week stay during which I traveled and performed with Malawian musician and ethnomusicologist Waliko Makhala at an ethnomusicology symposium in Dar es Salaam.

My primary base was in Blantyre, where I spent considerable time rehearsing, performing, and recording with several musicians. I also made numerous trips to Lilongwe, the other major city in Malawi, located approximately 225 miles north of Blantyre in the central region of the country. While there, I also rehearsed, performed, recorded, and interacted more broadly with various musicians. In all locations I conducted formal and informal interviews in addition to archival research at the *Nation Newspaper*, the *Daily Times*, and the National Archives. During this trip to Malawi it became clear to me that while a conception of southern Africa as a geographic region, a socio-cultural influence, and subjectivity manifested itself in

various, albeit subtle ways, it was far from the dominant theme upon which my hypothesis was originally based. The idea of defining Malawianness, however, was palpable, and the path toward understanding this involved my own subjective (re)assessment.

Reflecting on Reflexivity

As an ethnomusicologist who engages in participant-observation I am aware that my very presence influences the context and content of my analysis–even more so following this particular trip. Within the few weeks prior to and following my arrival in Malawi in June 2013, I made three appearances in local newspapers due in large part to my previous work with Malawian musicians as a recording artist and producer. I describe them here in some detail with the intent of highlighting the Malawian musical context in which I was a participant-observer. The first of these appearances featured a large picture of "Africulture" jazz musician Chris Kele and myself standing in a recording studio in a south suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa. The article discussed Kele's anticipated album and tour of Malawi, and was published about a month prior to my arrival in Malawi. The second instance occurred at the end of my first week in Malawi and featured a small picture of me performing on saxophone with the Black Missionaries, one of the leading reggae bands in the country. The picture was used on the front page as a teaser for the main story located inside which discussed the concert as a whole and included a couple of sentences about my performance of the one song in which I was featured. About one week later I was approached by a journalist to appear in a feature article in the weekend edition about my previous work with Malawian singer-songwriter Nathaniel Chalamanda, with whom I released an album, *Hometown Stranger*, in Malawi in December of 1999.

This situation is telling in a number of ways. My already privileged status afforded to me by my US citizenship and white skin was entangled, for better or worse, with my status as a musician of some renown. It also speaks to the nature of the music scene in Malawi, which is considerably smaller than those found in many of its neighboring countries. It would be more accurate to describe it as a collection of music economies, following the work of Alex Perullo in Tanzania, than to talk of music industries in Malawi. This being the case, my long association with the Malawian music scene as a performing musician and music professional has to some extent shaped the site and subjects of my research beyond my immediate presence during research for this dissertation. First, the aforementioned album was produced with "world music" aesthetics in mind and included indigenous dance rhythms and mid-20th century Malawian popular styles combined with elements of jazz and American acoustic music.[6] It gained popularity at the cusp of a larger folk-revival trend in Malawi that began in the early 2000s. There are several other recordings on which I appear as a saxophonist that are well-known to the Malawian public, but not necessarily associated with me by name except in the instances where the listeners are also musicians.[7] Second, during my research a few younger musicians told me that they remember listening to my music when they were kids, and were eager to work with me or that the Chalamanda/Deja album influenced their own music. In two interviews which I conducted different musicians referred to me in the third person while I stood there (i.e. "I worked with Rick Deja") and in another they asked me to stop the interview in order to clarify how to discuss our previous work together. This may have been due to a perception of interviews

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[6] This album is mentioned in the 2007 edition of Rough Guide to World Music, not likely read by many Malawians, but is indicative of its role in the sonic discourse of Malawian music.

[7] For instance, an instrumental clip featuring Stonard Lungu on guitar and me on saxophones is still used on Television Malawi as a segment bumper. In another instance, a saxophonist who became active in the studio scene in the 2000s told me he was sometimes asked to contribute to projects where I had been the original saxophonist.

being strongly linked with commercial broadcast and less familiarity with ethnographic data collection. Finally, some musicians, perhaps aware of my status as both a white foreigner and someone with previous professional experience in Malawi, were reserved, if not politely uncooperative, about what they would share with me.

My social positioning in these contexts has thus shaped me as a musician and person, and ultimately influences my perspective on my research. Like many ethnographic researchers who spend considerable time within the community they research, I consider myself neither insider nor outsider. Perhaps this position of liminality has made me prone to see things as something other than a binary opposition, but hopefully it has allowed me to have added insight into a nuanced situation; I suspect both apply. This is another aspect where Unruh's work proves useful, specifically in his idea of having four modes of participation within social worlds: stranger, tourist, regular, and insider. To what degree one is able to occupy a role between classic detached observer and intuitive insider is difficult to assess. It is this dilemma that led me to appreciate the reflexivity found in Michelle Kisliuk's work (1998). Her auto-biographical content in a sense helped me calibrate my reception of her work, which was the primary lens on which I relied in order to learn about her research subject—individuals about whom I had no firsthand knowledge. In part, it is in that spirit that I delve into my own biographical sketch as it pertains to music making and Africa. More importantly, since so much of my experience with Malawian musicians in and outside Malawi lies outside of a typical fieldwork setting, I have elected to elucidate it here.

Prelude Expanded: Biographical Background and Preliminary Research

My interest in Africa and the music produced there resulted from a confluence of factors that occurred beginning in 1986 while a high school student at Interlochen Arts Academy, an international fine and performing arts boarding school located in rural northern Michigan. This experience led to a romantic notion of Africa informed by my cosmopolitan subjectivity, but one in which I wanted to participate, first hand, based on individuals with whom I had close contact. From my sophomore to senior years I had developed very strong relationships with two people with firsthand connections to Africa: my South African roommate, and a daughter of a US embassy employee based in Burkina Faso and later Madagascar. My exposure to literature and film with African content — *Heart of Darkness, Out of Africa, The Gods Must Be Crazy* — was measured against contrasting experiences conveyed by my friends who lived there, thereby making it clear to me the importance of gaining firsthand knowledge. I developed a strong admiration for African popular music introduced to me by my roommate; this came most memorably via recordings of the group Juluka, a racially mixed South African band that combined Zulu *maskanda* with European folk music in a cosmopolitan popular music format. This listening experience just preceded the release of Paul Simon's *Graceland* album (1986). The temporal proximity of these two experiences, however, situated this type of music as a normal endeavor to my mind. For me, these recordings represented a direction that I thought popular music would sustain from that point onward. The growth of the world music trend into the 1990s further instilled in me this perspective and situated international collaboration as a normal and desirable behavior in music making.

During my sophomore year at Indiana University I made the acquaintance of Malawian acoustic guitarist Wongani Katundu, a master's degree student in ethnomusicology. He had

considerable expertise on early acoustic guitar music from mid-twentieth century Malawi. We performed on occasion as a duo, playing what we described as Malawian folk and jazz music. This experience proved illuminating both at the time and in retrospect. At the time it complicated my notion of jazz as a musical *lingua franca* and introduced to me subtleties in African popular music best apprehended through embodied experience. In retrospect, I can look back at this with theoretical insight about how contrasting background experiences can complicate successful communication despite a shared language (Hanks 1996). Similarly, it demonstrated how certain breakdowns at particular points during communication help to illuminate the thresholds and boundaries of shared experiences and social worlds (Unruh 1980; Stone and Stone 1981, Stone 2010[1982]; Hanks 1996). My experience playing with Wongani brought to my attention my own deficits as a musician performing in this style. Specifically, the way of approaching rhythmic anticipation, arpeggiating chords, and using passing tones alluded me. This experience was fundamental in understanding the way these and other musical devices are employed in practice and how they function collectively as a repertoire of expressive devices which frequently occur in southern Africa and into parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and east Africa. Thus, in my mind, social allegiance was in part reified in musical practice, and though I did not conceptualize it this way at the time, this understanding shaped how I approached subsequent music making and later how I approached ethnographic research.

1991-1992: Malawi Trip One and Early Data Collection

Beginning in October 1991 until June 1992 I spent ten months at the University of Malawi as part of a study abroad cultural link partnership between Indiana University and University of Malawi-Chancellor's College. Several experiences, research projects, and events

from this trip were fundamental in shaping how I came to understand music making in Malawi and remain relevant to this dissertation. In general, this experience was crucial in helping me understand first, the general state of music economies and practices in Malawian local and national settings, and second, the social conditions in Malawi during the authoritarian presidency of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Furthermore, I first met many of the people with whom I worked in 2013, during this trip over twenty years earlier.

As a musician, some of my first impressions were of the sounds that were popular in the public sphere. One thing that became apparent was the dominant presence of music from South Africa, the DRC (then Zaire), and Zimbabwe along with roots reggae and American dance music, hip-hop, and country music. MC Hammer, Vanilla Ice, C & C Music Factory, Bob Marley, Jim Reeves, Don Williams, and Dolly Parton were among the hugely popular pantheon of North American artists. I was not able to identify regional African sounds at first, but was struck by how my peers were cognizant of various styles and their countries of origin. I later came to know the works of South African singers Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Brenda Fassie, and Lucky Dube. *Sungura* music from Zimbabwe and *kwasa kwasa* from Zaire resonated seemingly non-stop from every beer hall and vendor booth throughout town. It was against this backdrop that I came to see how local Malawian music was perceived by many members of the younger generation, who so often expressed to me, as mentioned earlier, that Malawian music lacked its own identity.

My first formal research project stands in contrast to this experience. I conducted a brief study of music in KuMatache village, outside of Zomba, the town in which Chancellor College is located. Members of this village were of the Yao ethnic/language group; while I was there, we participated in a dance called *sikiri*. This was a memorable outing as it demonstrated the

diversity of Malawian music and an example of music making outside a commercial framework. Most members of this community were Muslim and this musical practice featured a vocal timbre rich in mid-range frequencies and often described as nasal in character. The overlapping, cyclical nature of the vocal melodies resembled those described in indigenous sub-Saharan African music (Rycroft 1959, 1971, 1977; Kisliuk 1998). It was an important excursion for me, because aside from commercial music it had only been Christian-influenced musical practices that featured highly in the soundscape I had come to know. The juncture of Islam and music in Malawi stood in stark contrast to the Christian crossroads that paved over Malawian music. Among my peers at university and several of the musicians I worked with in the major towns, it was clear that the European hymn performance aesthetic, characterized by clear timbres and uniform melodic movement, as highly valued. For some, I noticed, this seemed to discourage the incorporation of indigenous rhythmic and timbral stylistic elements. Conscious efforts at incorporating indigenous musical elements into amplified commercial music in the cities seemed to be more the exception than the rule, something that clashed with my own musical aesthetic, driven by influences of the world music trend popular at the time in the U.S.

These two musical contexts, one featuring the latest international styles popular on the radio and the other a participatory event in a rural village, played an important role in framing how I came to understand music making in Malawi. The dominant discourse regarding local music was situated within the binary of "traditional" and "modern," to which rural and urban practices or local and foreign practices were each assigned respectively. I saw these contexts from the perspective of someone with interest in Africa and favored inclusion and eclecticism commensurate with my cosmopolitan background. As a jazz musician and composer I perceived various aspects of the music I heard and considered how I might incorporate them into the music

I improvised or composed. It was not until I had performed with various musicians and bands that I began to internalize some aspects and understand my failures in grasping others. This became an important element in my socialization as a musician, as it is with many musicians, particularly those working in settings which may be foreign to them. My cosmopolitan perspective and musical training on saxophone, an appreciated but uncommon instrument in Malawi, had operated in tandem with the country's small-scale music economy and Malawians' favorable view toward Americans, and crucially so, in order to create the opportunity for me to occupy certain privileged social positions. This afforded me useful insights in the years that followed and a modest place within Malawi's musical horizon.

I was fortunate to have performed with some exceptional musicians, many of whom I would continue to interact with in the years to come. The commercial music scene, being as small as it was, made it easy to meet influential performers, particularly as a foreigner. Additionally, my role as a saxophonist tended to direct my interactions toward the cohort of instrumentalists circulating among the top bands, or among the groups accompanying the top singers of the day. It afforded me some level of insight into various bands either as a first hand participant or vicariously through interactions with musicians who were fixtures of the popular music scenes in Blantyre and Lilongwe.

One notable acquaintance was Bernard Kwilimbe and his band The Rainseekers, based in Lilongwe. Kwilimbe was the musical director of the Malawi national dance company known then as Kwacha Cultural Troupe. He was widely respected for being one of the few artists with the passion and skill for incorporating indigenous musical elements into his popular songs, both with the Rainseekers and the Malawi Broadcast Corporation house band (MBC Band). I admired this, as well. I had come to know Mr. Kwilimbe from visiting the rehearsals of the Kwacha

Cultural Troupe at the invitation of their lead choreographer, Waliko Makhala. These two individuals, Waliko in particular, were instrumental in helping me navigate the Malawian music scene during that and subsequent visits. Kwilimbe continued to rise in the ranks of the Department of Arts and Crafts to become Deputy Director of Culture. Waliko studied ethnomusicology in Zimbabwe and went on to flourish in journalism and broadcast media as a writer, television producer, and lead researcher at MBC. He also maintains an active performance career in which he, like Kwilimbe, is known for his use of indigenous music and instruments in his performances.

One of the most widely known musicians with whom I worked was Wambali Mkandawire. When I met him he had just released two albums that he had recorded in Glasgow, Scotland: *Kavuluvulu* and *Kumtengo*. Though I never recorded with him, I did receive some peripheral print media and radio coverage as the American saxophonist performing with him. We performed a series of shows, but the tour got cut short due to political unrest in Malawi, which prevented his cassettes from entering the country on account of alleged illegal political affiliation with a banned party whose leaders, like Wambali, hailed from the northern part of the country. Wambali is widely celebrated for incorporating indigenous musical aspects into his music. He has received critical acclaim, including a nomination for the esteemed Kora African Music Award in 2003 and winning the Bingu Presidential Award in 2011. His music videos can still be seen in South Africa. Wambali's sound was ahead of its time but is currently regarded as the paradigmatic model for many bands who seek to incorporate indigenous regional elements into their commercial music.

Performing with Wambali opened my eyes not just to the musical, but to the political landscape in Malawi. Politics were a salient part of daily life and created the context for what

became a memorable close to my stay. Shortly after Wambali's tour was canceled, the first civil

unrest occurred since the days of independence struggle and the cabinet crisis in the mid-1960s.

In April 1992, what was referred to as the Pastoral Letter was read in the Catholic churches

country-wide. This letter criticized the Malawian leadership for human rights abuses and other

ethical transgressions. The public reading of the letter resulted in the detainment of several

members of the congregations, among them several Chancellor College students from the

campus I attended. They were detained at local police stations and word of this mobilized other

students on campus to assemble in protest. Resonating among the crowd of students gathered in

the common area outside of the library rang the melody from the famed South African song

"Shosholoza." The song was adapted, however, so that the Zulu lyrics "Wen'uyabaleka" (You

are going away) and "Shosholoza" (the sound a train makes) were replaced by "Ife tikufuna

maltipati" (We want multi-party). News of the gathering of students in this manner made its way

to the police, who soon responded by surrounding the campus with teargas guns. An atmosphere

of mild chaos ensued over the next few days that included looting in the nearby commercial

center of Blantyre. The university closed early for the year in April and I remained in Malawi

until June. The political events in Malawi precipitated a referendum for multi-party democracy

which took place on June 13, 1993.

  These events were among those central to framing how I understood not only music

making in Malawi, but within my now expanded musical cohort and social world. My position as

a skilled white male foreigner granted me access to particular avenues of musical interaction in

Malawi and paved the way for future endeavors there. As a cosmopolitan coming of age in the

late 1980s and early 1990s, I sought inclusive international experiences as a participant. At the

time I was not fully aware of how notions of racialized and gendered privilege factored into my

life. Nor did I comprehend the effects of having Malawi as my only firsthand experience in Africa. I had, however, come to understand novel aspects of music making on an intuitive and unreflective level. This had a tremendous impact on subsequent musical interactions with American and African musicians. At the time, world music was a salient topic in the US public entertainment sphere and fostered an ethos of inclusiveness, but was still subject to popularity driven by power centers within that discourse. My experience in Malawi enhanced some musical interactions but hindered others.

Following my undergraduate studies, my time playing with Nigerian and Congolese musicians in the California Bay area was pivotal in demonstrating to me the profundity of musical sounds and their associations. Insider versus outsider status was measured partially by the degree of skill musicians had with particular musical styles and their idiosyncrasies (demonstrating correct feel in 12/8, or appropriately syncopating melodies in the up-tempo dance section, the *seben*, of a *soukous* tune). More striking to me, however, was that despite the many similarities between contemporary African musical styles, the absence of Malawian musical references, in particular, created in me a sense of loneliness and nostalgia. The repertoire of expressive devices found in highlife, Afrobeat, and Congolese rumba, in this case, as only loosely related to the sounds I had grown accustomed to in Malawi, and therefore was not sufficient in creating in me a sense of home (albeit a second home). Repertoires of musical devices and their particular indexical associations play an integral role in fostering social belonging. It was for this reason that I returned to Malawi as an amateur recording engineer and producer.

1997-1999: Dejabrew Productions

In April 1997 I returned to Malawi in order to operate a recording studio in Blantyre. I eventually got settled in the township of Chimwankunda at the residence of Waliko Makhala and his family. Being situated in the townships further from town allowed the residence to be used as a studio without concern for creating a disturbance, and it provided an accessible spot for many working class musicians. It also came to be a considerable challenge for me over time as the day-to-day realities of township life began to take their toll, despite my identity as an open-minded, seasoned traveler. At various times a few musicians, most memorably Wambali, came to visit me and discussed in varying detail how I should not underestimate the conditions I had grown up with, no matter how humble I thought they were. As many people who have conducted extensive fieldwork know, successfully adapting to a new environment has perhaps less to do with the overt physical conditions than the sedimented build-up of subtle alterations to one's habituated expectations. Wambali said to me something like, "Maybe you'll want to have yogurt and granola for breakfast. You won't find that here. Even Johnny Clegg didn't live fulltime in the townships." To be sure, the situation in which I had placed myself differed greatly from my time at Chancellor College, and was further exacerbated by my ineptitude as a business person and failure to bring sufficient startup capital. That said, the experience of living in the township was vital in shaping my perspective of the Blantyre and Malawian music scenes and how I fit into them as neither insider nor outsider, but perhaps more as a "regular" (Unruh 1980).

As an entrepreneur in a foreign country I had to occupy different roles within the network of music economies found there. As a studio owner this meant producing radio jingles for corporate clients, and this work provided an intimate look into the nature of musical genres and stylistic elements together with their perceived social associations. As an engineer and producer

it also highlighted the rift between pragmatics and creativity in music production. Finally, this type of work carried over into the realm of marketing and management, offering further insight into the relationship between musical practices in a capitalist context in a location other than the U.S. Running the studio more broadly shaped how I viewed the role of participant-observer as being more than living among community members and participating in an ensemble, as is common among ethnomusicologists. While my modes of participation included these activities, they also included participating in the larger social framework of commercial music making at citywide and countrywide geographic scales. In addition to the interaction found within a band operating in a performance space, I found myself interacting in the public space by way of recorded, broadcast, and print media. This situation created a dialectical relationship between researcher and research object that was magnified by the lens of public discourse in which I was a participating member. My temporary physical presence would be partially superseded by the objects of my creation (i.e. musical recording, jingles, radio interviews, and references in the print media). This in turn informed my research in 2012-13, in which I occupied similar roles without necessarily seeking them out, having put them into play so many years before.

In the chapters that follow I draw from many of these experiences and will expand upon them as needed. It is worth listing in summary a few of the projects that had longevity between my time in Malawi during the 1990s and my return in 2013. The time I spent as a performing saxophonist was largely with the Acacias band, which was among the top few secular popular electric bands in Malawi during the latter part of the 1990s. Three of the members went on to have extremely successful solo careers, including Ben Makhamba, Chris Kele, and Erik Paliani, all of whom I worked with upon my return—particularly Chris and Erik. As the default house saxophonist in my studio, anybody who wanted to have live horn parts or solos included me on

their project. I am unsure of the exact number of recordings I played on, but the most significant in terms of public exposure were those of gospel musician Allan Ngumuya. I worked with Allan both in Malawi and the U.S., recording on five of his fifteen albums between 1997 and 2013. I also finished recording an album that I started in Malawi with Nathaniel Chalamanda. Allan and I traveled together to Malawi in 1999, promoting each of our albums in a joint tour. In addition to contributing as a sideman, I produced albums for two other artists that became significant as well. One was for reggae singer Rasta Wazza and the other for acoustic guitar legend Stonard Lungu. The recordings that I produced did not enjoy market success, but were their first albums and served as platforms to expand their subsequent careers. Their music, including some songs I recorded, is still heard on TV, radio, and in beer halls around the country.

Finally, most notable in the local scene was my aforementioned work with former Chancellor College student Nathaniel Chalamanda. The album we recorded together, titled *Hometown Stranger*, occupies a strange position in the Malawian commercial music soundscape. It is mentioned in *The Rough Guide to World Music* and it reached number 13 on a Malawian radio chart when I first released it, but aside from this, I have little more than anecdotal evidence of its impact. After completing the Malawian tour in 1999, it appeared that this album would struggle to penetrate the popular music market there. I felt it a better option to leave it in the hands of others so they could utilize whatever proceeds would come of it, rather than to try managing it from abroad. Over the years, people mentioned it in passing, but I thought nothing of it. When I finally returned over a decade later it appeared that it had achieved a status resembling a cult classic among aficionados of jazz and acoustic music. In addition to the many musicians who were familiar with it, I found people from hotel patrons to taxi drivers that referenced the album upon learning my name, albeit infrequently.

My position in the music economies of Malawi and its diaspora has in effect been that of participant-observer across different social worlds from sideman to bandleader to executive producer to promoter. This helps to illustrates how people working in the business of music making regularly respond to and influence various social worlds. It is also characterized by both a prime vantage point and the loss of objectivity, as observer influences the observed. Despite reflexive problems, this positioning also highlights how music is intertwined in social structures and processes.

Structure of the Dissertation

In the first two chapters of this work, I provide an overview of contemporary and historical conditions for music making and social interchange, as well as some descriptions of musical genres and styles. In Chapter 1, I focus on contemporary settings and musical genres to familiarize readers with Malawian current musical practices as of 2013 and shortly after. My aim is to provide a lens through which to view contemporary social worlds and interactions in a context where ideas about Malawian identity and participation in the international market place are salient. I also introduce the idea of social worlds as described by David Unruh (1980), as a means of looking at the complexities of social belonging in translocal settings. This is then woven into a contextualization of commercial music production and reception in Malawi at the national and sub-national level. Ultimately, the chapter begins to unpack the complexities of social positioning in relation to economics, gender, sacred vs. secular, and politics.

In Chapter 2, I look at the backstory behind recent commercial music genres and their contexts of production. I trace major historical changes beginning in the 1830s and continuing through to the 1990s, during the introduction of multiparty democratic governance. Many of the

current challenges Malawian musicians face, such as national representation and development of commercial infrastructure, are not unique to the 21st century, and have roots dating as far back as the 19th century. In an effort to address the multifarious nature of translocal cultural influence, I draw upon the idea of nested scales as described by geographer Philip Kelly (1999). This helps frame social interchange in more detail, without simply reducing it to local and foreign elements. Furthermore, I examine heightened interchange prior to and during the time of globalist discourses popular in the late 20th century. This chapter compliments Chapter 1 by providing a historical supplement investigating the arrival of large-scale social groups, in connection with religious, political, and economic developments, and their long-term effects on musical activities.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the nature of social belonging vis-à-vis perceptions of what is universal, versus indexical association with the continent of Africa, the country of Malawi, or the region of southern Africa. In Chapter 3, I discuss these various social and geographic scales as they relate to the idea of place to placelessness. I evaluate the concept of placelessness as it involves cultural production either unmarked by, or unconcerned with, place, as well as referencing positions of privilege in constructing what is to be understood as universal. In a series of case studies, I examine national representation in domestic and international settings where the place of origin of musicians and their music is leveraged, obscured, or ignored.

In Chapter 4, I explore the notion of Afropolitanism and how the term came to be understood in various circles, including both advocates and critics of its use. I am especially interested in how it articulates with the creative and strategic decisions of individual actors regarding their social allegiance, within and outside of the African continent. I reflect on how it might be applied to an intermediate geographic scale such as southern Africa. The careers of

multinational musical group Mahube and Malawian jazz musician Erik Paliani serve as case studies here. Finally, in Chapter 5, I focus on particular sites of cultural production in recording studios, music education centers, and performance venues to illustrate to complexities of negotiating ideas of international participation and ideas of Malawianness. The specificity of these sites, and the focus on the individual actors within, serve to add nuance to the overall discussion of social allegiance and translocal interchange. It serves as a sort of capstone conversation exploring not only the various geographic and social scales, but grounds my overall discussion in the lives and creating decisions of individual personalities. I do this in part so that the contributions and styles of unique musical artists are not lost in collective cultural analysis and generalities.

CHAPTER 1

COMMERCIAL MUSIC IN MALAWI: INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

At its core, this story is about individuals grappling with the details of their social positioning and their contributing role in what is a dynamic, multifarious, and translocal setting. I cannot definitively say to what extent the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, but the idea of international participation seems almost relentless for so many of the musicians I worked with in Malawi and South Africa. Within the first few weeks of my arrival in 2013, I felt overwhelmed by repeated lamentations about Malawi's lack of musical identity and the incessant contemplation of the state of the music industry, or lack of an industry, as some argued. Tenacious concerns with national identity eroded my original research hypothesis. Ultimately, what began as a proposition about the emergence of a pan-regional southern African subjectivity, became a journey into the lives of musicians caught in the tide of chronic renegotiation of Malawianness in the face of the international free market.

Introduction: National Rhetoric and Cultural Practices

The language contained in the August 2013 draft of the country's national cultural policy clearly illustrates the chronic interest in local representation within broader contexts, and highlights the thematic thread that is woven throughout this narrative. Throughout the policy, including in its forward, preface, and policy objectives, there is an emphasis on three areas of concern: preservation, economic development, and national identity, especially in the face of recent changes stemming from globalization and multiparty democracy, still relatively new to Malawi. These areas of emphasis are illustrated in the opening of the policy document:

It [culture] is exemplified by national monuments, artefacts, relics, museums and cultural expressions including: music, folklore, crafts, the fine arts and traditional dances, language, literature and religion. Furthermore, culture provides a viable strategy for poverty reduction, sustainable socio-economic development, and a source of increased sense of national identity and unity and any other human endeavour. … To this end, this policy document seeks to put in place measures that will ultimately translate to sustainable preservation and conservation of Malawi's cultural heritage for posterity and education purposes.[8]

The rhetoric in the media further illustrated the tenacity of national identity construction. One article is of particular interest because it was published near the time of my stay and for its especially pithy character. The August 17, 2012 *Malawi Nation* newspaper contained a piece by correspondent Albert Sharra titled "Does MW [Malawi] Music Have Identity?" In this article, Sharra comments on opinions among various people in the capital city Lilongwe, specifically, about how Malawian music has no identity. People discuss this in comparison to Zimbabwe and South Africa, and mention that foreign influence is a major factor. In addition to random citizens, the author interviewed well-known musicians like Malawi Musicians' Association (MAM) president Rev. Chimwemwe Mhango, who echoed views about how foreign music is often valued more highly than local music, and that Malawi needs to have its own musical identity. As I have discussed, this has been a long-held view, the longevity of which is further evidenced in promoter Jai Banda's quoted response, "I do not know the problem with our artists, I talked about this for over 20 years. Reggae, mbira, hip hop, *kwaito*,[9] *kwasa kwasa*,[10] Rhumba are not our own identity. Our musicians have the role to develop this identity and sustain it."

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[8] From the first page of the "Forward" to the unpublished August 13, 2013 "Draft: National Cultural Policy" provided by the Malawi Ministry of Tourism and Culture

[9] *Kwaito* is a style of music made popular in urban areas in South Africa, particularly Johannesburg, incorporating elements of house and hip hop. Vocal melodies are comprised of short phrases repeated throughout much of the song. The underlying rhythmic accompaniment is often highlighted in the hi-hat sound of a drum kit, and is played on the off beats similar to that found in disco. There may be a slight lilt, swing, or shuffle feel in the rhythm, and the timbre tends to feature higher frequencies played in a crisper manner than the open hi-hat sound in disco.

[10] *Kwasa kwasa* is a style of dance music originating in the Congo region, especially Kinshasa and Brazzaville. It is a style within the Congolese rumba tradition with underlying Cuban influences and interlocking guitar melodies. The term *kwasa kwasa* also refers to a particular dance move popular in Congo and D.R.C. at one time, but is often used in Malawi as the generic term for all

The counter viewpoint, also presented in the article, is one that evokes notions of generational relevance, broader interpretations of authenticity, and economic viability. These views are summed up in a quote from hip hop artist Young Kay, stating, "I am a hip hop singer and I cannot say I am leaving hip hop for local music, then I am joking. There is life in hip hop and many people like my music. This is the generation for urban music and one cannot concentrate on traditional beats when you cannot sell."[11] Here, Young Kay is demonstrating a desire for unmarked participation, that is, involvement in a musical practice that is not burdened by local national markers of identity. This is set in contrast to appeals for a national representation and assertions of local identity in a broader economy of expressive practices, a strategy common during the heyday of the 1990s world music scene.

These two perspectives, the highlighting of and aversion to the local, form the basis of my use of the terms place and placelessness. Like other studies of commercial music in Africa, central to this analysis is an interest in musicians' engagement with musical practices in relation to extant sonic materials and circumstances. Extended studies of Malawian commercial music in particular are dominated by relatively few authors. One contribution closely related to this study is found in the work of John Fenn (2004), who focused on Malawian hip hop and *ragga*[12] musicians between 1998 and 2000. Rooted in performance theory and drawing from notions of cosmopolitanism as defined by Thomas Turino and Ulf Hannerz, Fenn examines how hip hop and *ragga* musical scenes inform the lives of musicians in rural, urban, and international

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Congolese commercial dance styles, similar to the way the word *soukous* is used in America within the discourse associated with world music.

[11] Albert Sharra. 2012. "Does MW Music Have Identity?" *Malawi Nation*. August 17, 2012.

[12] Derived in part for the term ragamuffin, referring to a raggedly dressed youth, *ragga* is a musical genre of Caribbean origin featuring elements of hip hop and reggae, or subgenres of reggae like dancehall. Some notable characteristics include electronic timbres and rhythmic samples common in dance club music, and spoken or chanted vocal riffs.

contexts. Gerhard Kubik, in his work on the *kwela*[13] music of the Kachamba Brothers Band

during the 1960s and 1970s, situates these young musicians as performing neo-traditional music,

organically integrating local and international practices (1974). Other studies focused on

commercial music in Malawi include contributions from John Lwanda (2008a, 2008b, 2009,

2013) in which he examines topics such as the nature of syncretism in Malawian music, gender,

musical appropriation, and politics, and Rueben Chirambo (2001, 2005, 2009) who examines

popular commercial musicians and music as political commentary, both perpetuating and

challenging the dictatorship and policies of President Banda's regime, as well as the corruption

of subsequent leaders. Still, there is much to learn from musicians operating in dynamic

environments characterized by change, adaptation, and processes of enculturation not fully

captured by theoretical paradigms rooted in syncretism, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism.

The primary objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of contemporary life and

music in Malawi, particularly in relation to the commercial music industry. I present a survey of

some of the main commercial music genres popular there, namely hip hop, R&B, gospel, reggae,

and Afro jazz. These genres were widely known during 2013, roughly two decades after the

introduction of multi-party democracy and liberal economics. My aim is to provide a working

understanding of the basic stylistic elements commonly employed by musicians, essentially their

repertoire of expressive devices. My discussion of these genres is punctuated by descriptive

passages introducing social and environmental aspects within Malawi, that contribute to the

broader setting in which commercial music genres are created, circulated, and consumed. I do

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[13] *Kwela* is a musical style that features pennywhistle, and is often accompanied by guitar, one-string bass, and rattle. It was popular in Johannesburg and other South African urban areas during the 1950s. It exhibits stylistic features similar to American swing-era jazz band music particularly in the swing feel to the rhythm and the role of improvisation. In addition to American musical elements, local South African styles contributed to the *kwela* sound as well. This music's appearance in Malawi is a result of labor migration that continues to draw itinerant workers from Malawi and other southern African countries.

this in order to familiarize the reader with the interplay between contemporary social worlds, explicated herein, in relation to musical creation and interaction. I also discuss this as it pertains to related musical scholarship. Ultimately, this chapter sheds lights on the complications of and desire for individuals and groups to conceptualize a national identity through music making, with reference to a larger international economy of cultural production.

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Entering Malawi by plane in the second decade of the 2000s, one can expect to arrive just outside one of the two main cities, landing on a tarmac runway and proceeding on foot from the aircraft to a perfunctory airport on a savanna completely surrounded by no tall buildings. Chileka Airport, about a twenty-minute drive outside of Blantyre, is a single terminal non-air-conditioned building with understated amenities. The small town of Chileka is the base of operations for one of the most popular Malawi reggae bands, The Black Missionaries, affectionately known as MaBlacks, a coinage resulting from the incorporation of pluralization rules of both Chichewa and English. Their music speaks to the working class and the youth of the country. The band rehearsals launch into the air the punchy sounds of several keyboards articulating signature reggae offbeats, and a lyrical vocal melody that can be heard resonating far beyond their compound at the intersection of red dirt roads and footpaths. Members of the group include the sons of the late Robert Fumulani, also local to the area, and one of the great electric guitar band leaders of the 1970s and 1980s. Another voice of the people as it were, but of an earlier era when shimmering interlocking guitar parts dominated overburdened speakers in the bottle stores (pubs)

that dotted the region playing the latest *kanindo*[14] and *sungura*[15] music from Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Chileka is also the home of the late Daniel and Donald Kachamba, pioneers of the late 1960s Malawi *kwela* sound and acoustic guitar style. It is now the seasonal home of ethnomusicologists Dr. Moya Malamusi, one of the original members of the Kachamba Brothers Band, and Dr. Gerhard Kubik, who played an influential role in raising the band's local and international profile, in addition to being one of the most prolific scholars of Malawian music. Together with Sinosi Mlende and Christopher Gerald, Malamusi and Kubik constitute the Donald Kachamba Kwela Heritage Jazzband, most likely the sole surviving *kwela* group in the country.

Although rooted in a now historical style, the group performs a noticeably different *kwela* sound resulting in part from Sinosi's guitar chord substitutions, adding greater harmonic variety in refreshingly dissonant voicings. Gerhard Kubik, ethnomusicologist and clarinet player in the group, explains Sinosi's guitar playing and background in relation to the group's sound:

> For example, our Sinosi, he experiments pretty much with modern harmony…you see of course this comes from knowledge of jazz records, you see, but perhaps with this group, with Sinosi, what is also interesting is that he is interested in old forms of jazz, and traditional jazz, and he has absorbed quite a bit of jazz of the times of Bessie Smith and revival New Orleans jazz … but with modern chords. … This only happens to someone who gets into jazz and listens to recordings and has an idea, and has listened to Parker at least, and Miles Davis and so on, and so on, you see. And that was the case with Sinosi. He was in Europe 6 or 7 times and also in jazz clubs, for example in Rome (Interview Gerhard Kubik 26 Sept 2013).

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[14] Originally the name of a record label from Kenya, *kanindo* refers to a style of music featuring multiple guitars playing interlocking melodies at various registers/tessituras. Triple meters are prominent, but duple ones are common as well. It is derived in part from Congolese styles of popular commercial music.

[15] *Sungura* is a guitar-based musical genre popular in Zimbabwe and neighboring countries within southern Africa. It contains stylistic elements from eastern, central, and southern Africa. Sungura is a Swahili word meaning rabbit, and was the name of a popular Kenyan record label whose recordings were widely-circulated throughout the region of southern Africa.

It is important to note the sedimented international components present in Malawian *kwela*. Historically, the style draws from U.S. and South African music, and was later transported throughout southern Africa via labor migration and recordings. In this case, it continues to operate within an inclusive translocal context, through the contributions of Austrian and Malawian musicians and ethnomusicologists, performing in Malawi and abroad.

A town which at first glance may appear unremarkable and subdued, Chileka is a center of musical diversity, representing a vibrant cross-section of contemporary and historical Malawian music. Like many places in Malawi, the town is host to several musical traditions and social groups, often overlapping as a result of translocal cultural interchanges. Much literature addressing music as it pertains to such interchanges—describing them in conjunction with transnationalism, globalization, or cosmopolitanism—tends to focus on a single genre (e.g. Atkins 2001 [jazz in Japan]; Rommen 2007 [rock in Trinidad]; Ntarangwi 2009 [hip hop in East Africa]). My interest was not in a single genre, but in how musicians across genres similarly employ strategies of social representation and affiliation. My overall musical experience in Malawi resembles the context described in Chileka, where there are various communities of musicians working in different widespread genres of commercial music (i.e. jazz, hip hop, reggae, and gospel music). Performers of these genres tend to freely borrow stylistic elements from one another due in part to their broad diffusion, as well to their compatible structures.

Thus this aspect of my research is in part inspired by Gerard Béhague's work with rap, reggae, rock, and samba in Brazil (2006). Béhague examined multiple genres of Brazilian music and how they illustrate differing ideologies and multiple social and ethnic identities (89). He was interested in the social interaction and sometimes oppositions between these genres and associated social groups (82). I am looking at how each of these inclusive genres are dialectically

involved in social belonging in terms of cosmopolitan, African, Malawian, or other social bounds. To better understand this it is useful to survey the current sonic spectrum in Malawi and the local conditions that generate it.

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Along the road from the airport into town are various shops, many with iron corrugated roofs, some with thatched grass, others of construction more familiar to an American—featuring cement and steel structures with manufactured signage that stands apart from a forest of hand-painted sidewalls. In a way, this is indicative of the larger economy, which consists of a significant portion of cottage industries and informal commerce. The main road, a narrow two-lane strip of paper-thin tarmac with shoulders of red soil, is punctuated by several roundabouts on the roughly 25-minute ride to Blantyre. The road is shared by cars of all makes from recent model BMWs and Toyotas to old cars whose make is not always obvious due to age and makeshift repairs. Public transit is dominated by an informally regulated minibus industry common in many parts of Africa, including the bustling city of Johannesburg. More extensive research is needed, but I am convinced there exist no new minibuses (passenger minivans) in Malawi, with exceptions being made for corporate-owned private ones. Pedestrian traffic is massive and looks to be hazardous. Narrow shoulders leave little room for hundreds of people walking, many with bicycles, some with ox-driven carts. Larger buses travel between distant towns. Due to excessive accidents, public minibuses are excluded from the longer routes like the one between Blantyre and Lilongwe (5 hours). Sadly, road conditions have led to tragedies that have caused injuries and cost the lives of promising musicians, even in private well-maintained vehicles.

Upon entering Blantyre, social and environmental juxtapositions become starker. Formal and informal economies overlap, creating intricate social relations and contrasting visual cues clumped together in ways binary description alone fails to capture. Listening carefully, one can hear the destinations of mini buses being yelled out by the conductors, a call to prayer, polite hoots of imported cars, occasional bicycle bells, laughter, kids not in school, choral singing, and distorted music thrust loudly from small speakers. There was a time when you might come across street musicians playing homemade banjos or guitars, but that sound has been in steady decline for the last several decades. There is a reasonable live music scene at several venues between Blantyre and its twin city Limbe, 20 km apart. Gospel, reggae, and cover bands seem to dominate, whereas jazz and acoustic music periodically occur here and there.

So much of the widely circulated commercial music in Malawi is channeled through Blantyre and Lilongwe, the leading commercial centers in the country. As a consequence, much of my research involved working in these places for the majority of my stays. Given this fact, I became concerned that I risked forming a synecdochical understanding of Malawi and the music made within its borders. Also, nearly all of the musicians with whom I worked expressed some type of connection to a home area beyond the urban centers, in various parts of the country. As a result, I made a concerted effort to travel to the three major regions, including the north and south border crossings, in an attempt to better understand the larger collection of practices and physical environments that contribute to music making in Malawi. This turned out to be immensely valuable in furthering my understanding of a country whose image on a map may appear somewhat underwhelming (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Map of African Continent with Malawi Highlighted. [16]

Malawi is a relatively small landlocked country about the size of Pennsylvania or

approximately half the area of the United Kingdom. The current borders were established in

1891 (Figure 1.2); their placement was motivated in large part by business and political

aspirations and secondly by physical geography (Johnston 1897). Lake Malawi, the third largest

lake in Africa, is roughly analogous to the Great Lakes around Michigan, and is at the heart of

Malawi's modest tourism industry. The lake forms a significant portion of the national border

with Tanzania to the northeast and Mozambique to the east. Just to the south, the land border

with Mozambique engulfs Malawi's southern tip flanking the southern region to the east and

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west. Here you may find musical groups of the *ulimba*[17] xylophone tradition. It has grown increasingly rare, however, and local residents told me you are more likely to hear these sounds emanating just across the border in Mozambique. Malawi's national border to the west is shared in part by Mozambique and primarily by Zambia. The convergence of the three countries overlaps with the Chewa cultural group home of the great music-dance tradition *gule wamkulu*. This performance practice features richly costumed masked dancers and is a source of national pride among many of my Malawian acquaintances. It is a tradition that has been recognized by UNESCO as a protected intangible heritage representing Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia.[18]

Within the borders of Malawi there are considerable climate variations due in part to elevation differences across the country's elongated shape. I have sometimes wondered how this factored into the nostalgic stories often related to me by friends hailing from diverse parts of the country. Malawi lies at the southern end of the East African Rift System and encompasses a mountainous region in the north dominated by the Nyika plateau at an elevation of over 7000 feet. In the south sits the low lying Shire river valley at 200 feet above sea level and notoriously hot in the summer. The environmental diversity and sparse infrastructure makes the size of Malawi appear deceptive, particularly if you are to travel by bus,

Figure 1.2 Map of Malawi and Bordering Countries.

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[17] *Ulimba* is a type of xylophone found in southern Malawi and Mozambique. It has over 20 tuned wooden slats and is played by three musicians, two sitting opposite the third, each using one mallet in a designated area of the instrument. The musicians play melodic parts which interlock with one another to form a composite melody. Songs are generally accompanied by a pair of rattles, as well as women who sing and dance in a circle.

[18] Note that on the map, Lake Nyasa is referring to Lake Malawi. Lake Nyasa is the term used in Tanzania (just as "Lago Niassa" is used in Mozambique). Map obtained from the CIA World Factbook https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html accessed March 18, 2016.

along the North-South route. Malawi is roughly four times longer than it is wide, so traveling from the northern to southern most points via the major roadways is a considerable trek. It will take you through forests, rolling hills and mountains, down the lake shore, through savannas, and into a river valley on a nearly 700-mile journey with a 4000-foot altitude change.

Prior to arriving Malawi in 2013, I had spent so much time in Johannesburg that, while in Malawi, I found it difficult to overlook the natural environment. It is truly exceptional in many places, but also serves as a comment on the sparsity of infrastructure and construction—two signs often equated with development. Despite its geographically small footprint there are vast expanses of land unobstructed by roads and containing minimal evidence of architecture for as far as you can see. There are few tall buildings to divert one's attention from the many massifs dotting the landscape and horizon. The capital city of Lilongwe has been rapidly growing economically and consequently in population. It has an assortment of shopping centers, newly paved parking lots, and wide sidewalks, many of which resemble areas of suburban Johannesburg. Part of this is due to the presence of particular fast food eateries, grocers, and retail franchises that have expanded from South Africa into the Malawian market. The expansion of Lilongwe is uneven; housing complexes that have been built in emerging suburbs, seemingly overnight, are navigated by miles of dirt roads as a result of outpacing civic and national governments' construction efforts.

The paucity of major infrastructure and urban skylines serves as a constant reminder of the economic conditions in the country. Malawi is ranked in the bottom dozen of the world's countries based on GDP and nearly last in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) (Sparks 2014, 749). This does little to tell a complete story of day-to-day life and obfuscates how socio-economic interaction exists on the ground. It does, however, help calibrate broader expectations

regarding the state of the commercial music industry on a countrywide level. As mentioned earlier, the bulk of the contribution to the music industry emanates from two cities, Lilongwe and Blantyre, representing a very small percentage of the total population that resides primarily in a rural subsistence farming context. The mainly agricultural economy continues to influence seasonal and long term migration and travel to more industrialized centers like Harare and Johannesburg. It is not uncommon to find Malawians of varying social and economic classes who have spent significant time in neighboring countries and who have some familiarity with languages spoken outside Malawi. While the country ranks low on lists measuring economic status, there are numerous wealthy Malawians, many of whom have studied and traveled internationally in Africa, Europe, and North America. A portion of this population has played a role in popularizing urban musical styles like hip hop and R&B in recent years. Political and economic liberalization since 1994 has contributed to the popularization of this sonic world in conjunction with a bourgeoning mass media industry.

Urban Music: Lilongwe and Blantyre

Urban music, an umbrella term encompassing R&B, hip hop, and electronic dance music, often together with Caribbean styles such as *ragga* and dancehall reggae, has steadily grown in popularity in Malawi, and indeed in many of the cities and towns across other parts of Africa. I have chosen the heading urban music because it is used as a catch-all term within the media there and by numerous Malawian musicians. Additionally, many of the musicians working within this category borrow freely from contemporary styles and genres to which the term refers. In the U.S., the term "urban music," (also "urban contemporary"), replaced "black music" as a marketing strategy to appeal to radio advertisers targeting a broader audience. As such, it is

enmeshed in racial politics endemic to the U.S. The situation is slightly different in Malawi, however, where urban music tends to stand in contrast to "local" or "traditional" music, and perhaps actually corresponds in part to a perceived urban-rural distinction. In a sense, the urban music moniker is a stand-in for "modern." The idea of music and racial associations are not absent in Malawi, to be sure. Associations based in ideas of race, however, are a bit more difficult to untangle, since they are so strongly tied to nationality and place origin. Essentially, white is foreign and black is local.

Urban music enjoys considerable presence in Malawian entertainment media, but is not yet a mainstay as compared to reggae and gospel, or in comparison to its presence in countries like Nigeria and South Africa. Examining the musicians and practices associated with urban music provides an important lens through which to see the sentiment of many Malawian citizens in reference to feeling a shared participation in larger international socio-economic cultural practices, often uncritically accepted as normal and as part of a natural trajectory of progress. That is to say, many individuals have grown up with urban music as a regular part of their sonic horizon, similar to Young Kay mentioned above, while others wish to shed the stigma associated with living in a developing country in favor of being active participants in practices described within the rhetoric of the globalization discourse and related to social elites in post-colonial nationalist contexts.

It is not wrong to understand many interlocutors in this study as being cosmopolitans. The question that arises in my mind is how changes and variations within this cultural formation are understood. Cosmopolitanism, according to Turino, is defined and perpetuated in part by expansion from within that cultural formation (2000, 9). Given this continued expansion and diversification of socialization, what paradigms of social analysis are most useful? I have found

sociologist David Unruh's social worlds concept to be a useful alternative to ideas like subcultures or cohorts in its comprehensive scope, continued relevance to translocal settings, and ease of addressing the interplay between social and sonic aspects of music making.

Social Worlds

Unruh describes social worlds as units of social organization that are comparatively less structured than those built around kinship or other formal ties. He positions them as more appropriate for social analysis in late 20th-century urban settings comprised of non-centralized groups sharing similar interests and technologies and bound together by interaction that includes mediated discourse. He sums up a description of social worlds as "amorphous and diffuse constellations of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into spheres of interest and involvement for participants" (1980, 277). The term is derived from common usages as in the "art world" or the "baseball world" and suggests the idea of "world views" which unite individual actors (272). By extension this goes as well for the hip hop world or the Afro jazz world, which are bound by ideas and actions centered on the social and the sonic. I do not necessarily advocate using these labels in such a direct adaptation, as to say "members of the reggae world," for instance, nor do I avoid it altogether. I believe the value lies in instances when discussing musicians of varying backgrounds, one may speak in terms of having perspectives informed by differing social worlds.

My interest in the term also includes the intricacies and a number of the parameters Unruh meticulously outlines. Social worlds are essentially practice-based and thus non-deterministic, and recognize the agency of the individual subject. Unruh mentions three general characteristics: partial involvement, multiple identification, and mediated interaction (1980, 277-

282). The level of involvement and familiarity or belonging is cast by Unruh as outside the traditional insider-outsider binary in favor of four categories: insider, regular, tourist, strangers. Using this framework, insiders within the Malawian commercial music industry maybe strangers to the international music industry, a helpful distinction that allows for variability in experience and senses of belonging. The idea of multiple identification is fairly intuitive. For instance, even if participating in music occupies most of someone's time, or life, their role as a musician can be subverted or caused to recede if they are a family member or person of Christian faith. Finally, mediated interaction allows for a range of interaction which includes face-to-face encounters but also long distance and indirect ones. It is important to consider belonging in terms of a spectrum in order to avoid tendencies that map onto a binary opposition resembling that of local and global.

Individual actors within the world of urban music in Malawi derive their aesthetic preferences from myriad sources, from travel between Blantyre and Lilongwe, to international and overseas travel. Additionally, mediated interchanges may be facilitated by various social media platforms via the Internet and cellphone, or less interactive forums in the case of broadcast media. This is perhaps commonsensical for the most part, but is important to bear in mind when internalized understandings of how specific musical sounds and gestures operate fail to remain consistent among Malawian musicians operating within the same genre. That said, it is useful to describe some overarching musical features of salient genres in comprising the Malawian soundscape.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The characteristics of urban music in Malawi include percussive electronic drum beats that are often repeated short patterns (especially the dotted eighth and a sixteenth note followed

by an eighth rest and an eighth note as in reggaeton, or one half of the son clave. Ex. 1.1),[19] electronic synthesizer sounds and sound effects, and vocals processed using pitch correction software (set with extreme parameters causing the voice to have an artificial quality). These attributes are shared with urban music produced in other African urban centers as well as abroad. Some Malawian artists who have experience overseas seem more likely to incorporate local influences into their music. This has the benefits of marking distinction in a larger market and mobilizing national pride among the domestic listening audience. Hip hop artist Tay Grin (discussed in Chapter 3) is a notable example, incorporating within much of his music local *ngoma* drums (cylindrical single-headed drums played with the palms of the hands).

Still, for many Malawians that I encountered, the clearest distinction in Malawian urban music is the use of the local vernacular, though some mentioned there was a difference in overall quality at times. Similarly, several travelers and expats expressed the opinion that a lot of Malawian music suffers from being a poor copy of Western music. These views are understandable, and were expressed by musicians and non-musicians alike. A few seasoned musicians demonstrated a more nuanced opinion. One thing that came up was that the availability of free or inexpensive recording and drum loop software tends to obfuscate distinction with regard to timbres. A discerning ear may be able to notice outdated sounds or different production techniques, but otherwise electronic drum samples tend to be broadly associated with non-Malawian music. Interestingly, the lack of distinction can serve as an identifying feature of Malawian productions. One producer shared with me his frustration when

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[19] **Example 1.1. Reggaeton and Clave Rhythm.**
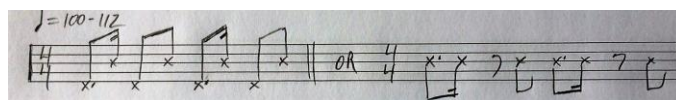
his fellow Malawian recording engineers and producers used ready-made drum loops and samples without adding any alterations (Dumi, personal conversation 10 June 2013).

I certainly understood his point, and can relate to people's views that there were many familiar sounds on the local Malawian music scene. I also believe that music is not governed strictly by one's nationality, and that creating music is often a formulaic process based on precedents in many different countries and music scenes. Participation in a social world occurs with varying command over nuances and other expressive factors. If one looks at the musical sounds together with other elements, the urban music scene in Malawi, and in other places, is perhaps more revealing of various distinguishing stylistic elements. So rather than glossing hip hop in Malawi, for example, as merely a copy of American precedents, let us take the time to examine the multiple variables involved in the creative decision making. This should not only illustrate differences resulting from local conditions, but differences rooted in aesthetic preferences and stock knowledge of groups and individuals.

One way of looking at this is by considering the urban music world in Malawi as a site in which new social spaces may be forged or contested. As mentioned, urban music is understood by many Malawian I worked with to be associated with modernity, and in opposition to the past. For Malawian women, the past (prior to 1994) meant that the wearing of slacks or jeans was prohibited, and social norms included the encouragement of women to kneel slightly when addressing elders, usually men. After the year 2000, a number of women began to emerge on the urban music scene, often eschewing such traditions.

Wendy Harawa is perhaps the most well-known and successful Malawian female urban music recording artists. She is usually described as a dancehall artist, infusing the sounds of contemporary Jamaican dancehall into her music, but she incorporates elements of Congolese

kwasa kwasa as well. She has been active in the recording industry since her debut album *Nowa Kusowa* was released in 2001. Since then, she has collaborated with major local artists including rapper Tay Grin and reggae musician Sally Nyundo, as well as Zambian artist-producer OC Oscillation. Her fame as a female secular artist highlights some of the challenges facing women musicians in Malawi.

Simply put, women musicians in Malawi, as in many places, are held to different standards than men. Those who assume leadership roles beyond being backup singers, or church musicians, risk being viewed as having questionable morals, or generally failing to conform to the role of homemaker. Harawa once stated in a newspaper interview, "When I started music, my family never liked it, for obvious reasons that our society stereotypes girls who are in music as immoral"[20] Similarly, another female secular artist, Villa Kanyemba, spoke of her aspirations and general challenges like music piracy. She is also quoted saying, "There are people who think being a lady musician is interchangeable with being [a] girl with loose morals. This is bad and unbecoming. The artists deserve respect like anyone else"[21] Where some look down on female artists as immoral, others expect them to be sex objects. Once again, Harawa speaks out about this in a 2015 news interview saying, "Most the time when I visit their offices [radio DJs] they ask for sex or sexual relationships and they would not render any help if I don't comply with their desires."[22] In the same article, the president of the Musicians' Union of Malawi confirms that several women musicians have brought this up in union meetings.

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[20] (author not credited) "Wendy on Her Fourth Album," *Nation Online.* August 28, 2012. http://mwnation.com/wendy-on-her-fourth-album/ (Accessed 6/30/2016).

[21] Herbert Chandilanga "Artist of the week: 'Stump out the stigma'," *Malawi Nation.* August 15, 2006 (accessed 6/2/2016).

[22] (author not credited) "Sexual Abuse in Malawi Music Industry – Wendy Speaks Out," *Malawi News Now*. September 4, 2015. http://malawinewsnow.com/2015/09/sexual-abuse-in-malawi-music-industry-wendy-speaks-out/ (Access 6/30/2016).

This situation is only made worse by an industry dominated by males. In a 2005 news article focusing on rising secular artist, Emmie Kamkweche, the reporter explores the lack of female representation in the Malawian secular music scene. Kamkweche is quoted, "It is a fact that there are very few women in the industry. This is because women meet more problems than men in this field. When we go to the studio, it is men who are engineers and producers, when we want to promote our music, most of the DJs are men, some of whom tend to have ill intentions."[23] This sentiment was echoed seven years later in another article by Yvonnie Sundu for the *Malawi Nation*. In it, R&B artist Angel "Tigris" Mizinga and Gospel singer Rudo Chakwera advocate for more female producers. Tigris states that financial inequities are a challenge along with Malawi's patriarchal society. Chakwera adds, "I don't think the Malawian society is ready to accept a female music producer, so the dream is there, but I don't see this happening soon."[24]

Financial inequities, in general, tend to permeate the music industry, and urban music in particular. The imagery associated with Malawian urban music tends to reflect economic prosperity and keen fashion sense. Formal wear in this circle deviates from that found in other business or educational contexts. Men's suits, for instance, may be brighter in color, have visibly exaggerated stitching, slightly altered proportions, and ornamental pieces. Some of these may index African clothing traditions in color scheme or design. Women's clothing may be more revealing, but moreover demonstrating a keen sense of current fashion trends. This is also true of Urban Music imagery that dominates much of the African-based satellite television and print media channels, driven in large part by Lagos, Johannesburg, and Nairobi.

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[23] (author not credited) "Kamkweche, New Female Voice in Secular Music," *Malawi Nation.* May 9, 2005 (accessed 6/2/2016).
[24] Yvonnie Sundu "Where Are Female Music Producers," *Malawi Nation.* June 10, 2012.

Music and fashion demonstrate marking both difference and competence. The overall creative values are firmly within the modernist-capitalist cosmopolitan formation. Marking difference via assertion of African imagery and sounds is subtle and used at the discretion of individual agents. I include this last point in order to highlight what I understand to be a contrast to imagery and sounds within the world music style complex which also operates within the modernist-capitalist cosmopolitan formation. The intended audiences of these two style complexes are in contrast to one another such that in one, dominated by white Americans and Europeans, cues associated with Africa tend to be understood in terms of exoticism and/or authenticity, whereas in the other, dominated by black Africans, economically empowered, with recent or current ties to the continent, African cues do not register as exotic. There is a sense that they are viewed as something shared, calling to mind pan-Africanist sentiment, but often criticized for lacking the ideological depth of that movement. One thing that is important in this style complex is the interplay of cultural competence and marking difference. The musical style offers a broad sonic palette with which to operate. Audio and visual indices to general and particular African expressive practices serve a dual role as markers of difference in an expanding market and as an anchor to situate Africa on equal footing with similar realms of music making.

In some ways these indices mirror the political climate in Malawi. By 2013, Malawians had experienced their second full decade of a multi-party democracy. The ease of censorship and relaxed restrictions of imported cultural products have broadened the sonic horizon in terms of styles and lyrical content. During this period, political leaders would speak of various development projects. Some of these projects directly impacted music as it relates to media and Internet technologies. Others had less obvious connections, like infrastructure facilitating better

travel. In either case, developments like these were often coupled with rhetoric about a new era of democracy, and had implications for participating in a larger international arena.

Music has played a big role in the political sphere since independence in 1964 and continuing to the present day. The arrival of multi-party democracy brought the need to educate the populace on the logistics of such a system and voting process as much as, or more than, the platforms of the newly formed political parties. Musicians were called upon for voter education campaigns to educate the entire populace regardless of literacy rates. This is a continuing trend which sees some musicians making creative and strategic choices with the political cycle in mind, such as whether or not to be politically aligned or remain neutral as the campaign season approaches.

Although musicians of various genres and social worlds have engaged in rhetoric criticizing or praising political figures in Malawi, the popularity of reggae among the masses has made it a notable platform for political discourse. This was particularly the case beginning in the late 1990s and onward, and was exemplified by Lucius Banda, one of the pioneers coming out of Balaka in Malawi's central region, and Evison Matafale, from Chileka in the southern region. Lucius remains a prominent figure in Malawi, drawing large crowds and maintaining a positive public image as the voice of the common man. His involvement with music and politics ranges from having been imprisoned for several months to being a member of Parliament. His music continues to be subject to government bans or de facto censorship. Matafale was the founder of the massively popular Black Missionaries, but died tragically in police custody in 2001. Matafale was vocal in his dissatisfaction with Malawian politicians, and his death is understood by many as an assassination.

These artists are revered for their lyrical prowess and topical songs. Other scholars have addressed this aspect of their music (Manyozo 2004; Chirambo 2005; Lwanda 2008a). My interest is in the sonic aspects of Malawian Reggae that they and others have established as a fixture in Malawi's soundscape.

Reggae

At first listen, Malawian reggae (also known as "Malawi reggae") may seem devoid of musical cues associated with the African continent, much like its counterpart in Urban Music is sometimes perceived. Despite this, it actually encapsulates a great deal of the general compositional approaches and creative values linked with commercial music making in and around the urban centers of Malawi. It is practically ubiquitous, such that even the homemade banjo bands once performing rhythmically vibrant compositions requiring virtuosic skill are more likely to play in the country's adopted musical *lingua franca* that is Malawi reggae. It is likely the most popular commercial style, beyond gospel music, which itself includes gospel reggae. An examination of this topic highlights the pragmatic nature of commercial music making in an economically precarious environment. Such an investigation also illustrates how music making articulates with the political sphere in both antagonistic and complementary ways. This musical-political narrative is shaped by the fact that reggae in Malawi emerged within an oppressive political atmosphere and expanded during the introduction of democratic governance. The political environment in Malawi has subsequently oscillated between these two extremes. Through all this, the story of Malawi reggae is one of pragmatics and the power of popularity.

The Malawian reggae sound is one I consider as distinctly Malawian, but difficult to export in a market driven by recording industry world music aesthetic values, in turn informed

by some degree of exoticism (often indexed by acoustic indigenous practices). Malawi reggae is

cosmopolitan in the sense that it would easily be recognized as reggae, but falls outside the

typical cosmopolitan artistic values particularly since it lacks an exotic element that is often

sought after by North American and European audiences. There are a few salient influences and

sonic similarities to other styles within the reggae style complex. First, there are musical

elements and verbal acknowledgements of roots reggae as performed by Bob Marley, Peter

Tosh, and Freddie McGregor. Another major influence can be found in the works of South

African *mbaqanga*[25] come reggae artist Lucky Dube. Though rarely cited as an influence, the

music of UB40 was massively popular during the 1990s and bears a striking resemblance to

Malawian reggae in its use of major chord sonorities and "Top 40" production aesthetic. My

experience with foreigners in Malawi repeatedly suggested indifference or outright dislike of

Malawian reggae. If I am to be honest, as a jazz musician, I often find it unremarkable, but as an

ethnomusicologist it is rather fascinating.

Reggae started to become popular in Malawi during the late 1970s, several years after

Jimmy Cliff's rise to international stardom via the film *The Harder They Come*. Popular music

"Top 10" lists published in the Malawi *Daily Times* regularly included reggae songs or artists

throughout much of the 1980s. This should come as no surprise given Bob Marley's historic

performance during nearby Zimbabwe's independence celebrations in 1980. Such an event

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[25] *Mbaqanga* is a musical genre from South Africa, largely associated with Zulu musical roots and urban jazz styles like *kwela*. *Mbaqanga* deviated from its jazz roots in its focus on vocals, typically a male lead vocalist together with several accompanying female singers. Some distinguishing characteristics can be heard in the lead guitar parts which employ double-stop perfect fourths and diatonic thirds, occasionally ornamented with scoops, where the target note is approached from the tone below using a sliding technique. Pentatonic melodies are common, and the picking style is rather percussive, with a slightly piercing timbre. The organ or keyboard player often plays in a similar style. The bass part is prominent due to its volume, timbre, and percussive delivery, sometimes using a plectrum (pick) instead of one's bare fingers. The tempos are often medium to up-tempo in duple meter. The drum set plays a steady underlying groove punctuated with syncopated accents from the kick drum, snare, and hi-hat. The paradigmatic model of the male voice came from Simon "Mahlatini" Nkabinde, with his low raspy voice that resembled growling. The accompanying female vocals are harmonized using diatonic thirds and fourths.

taking place in Africa likely propelled an already growing popularity of reggae throughout much of the continent. Toward the end of the 1980s Lucky Dube and his brand of South African roots reggae also grew increasingly popular in southern African countries. This was indeed the case in Malawi and was likely fueled in part by political and labor relations with South Africa. Particular conditions and events within Malawi mapped onto this musical trend and dramatically elevated the popularity of reggae music on the Malawian soundscape.

In 1977 Father Mario Pacifici arrived at Balaka Malawi for mission work and a year later established the foundation of what was to be known as the Alleluya Band.[26] What started as a church choir and youth ensemble eventually became a musical power house with the material and structural support of the Catholic Church in Malawi. For much of the band's history they had access to superior equipment in terms of instruments, amplification, and recording hardware. They also had a built-in market in the network of churches throughout the country.[27] Being a religious group, they tended to operate relatively free of public and political scrutiny during the overbearing Banda regime and prevailing Victorian cultural values of much of the population. Much of the repertoire of Alleluya Band drew from reggae or Congolese Rumba (African Rumba may be a better name, as it was widely adapted such that the Congolese roots were taken for granted.) Their music eventually adopted a more prominent reggae sound. By the early 1990s there was a marked decline in the presence of major guitar bands like the Police Orchestra, The Army Band, and major groups like Kalimba, Makasu, and Love Aquarius.[28] From that point onward until well into the 2000s the sound established by the Alleluya Band became the paradigmatic model for reggae in Malawi, and to some degree of popular music across the board.

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[26] http://www.alleluyaband.org/ accessed August 24, 2015
[27] Personal conversation with Waliko Makhala July 20, 2013
[28] Personal conversation with Waliko Makhala July 20, 2013

Essentially, reggae was a regular fixture in commercial music, analogous to rock, R&B, country, and hip hop in North America.

There was a growing popularity and availability of the electronic keyboard during the 1990s, and this was for many people I encountered an index of progress and modernity. While rehearsing with the Acacias Band in 1998 I recall Erik Paliani explaining his desire to transition to being a keyboardist despite his notable skill on guitar.[29] It was unclear why, exactly, but it struck me as having the same underlying sentiment about how the drum kit was viewed more favorably then congas or *ngoma* drums. These percussion instruments were often used as entry level training positions for new members in bands all around Blantyre. Similarly, the electric guitar was at the end of a learning progression that typically began with homemade oil can banjos and followed by acoustic guitar.[30] Regardless, the keyboard became the featured instrument alongside, if not replacing, the guitar.

Sonically speaking, the use of keyboard had an enormous impact on the reggae sound, and production values across the popular music stylistic spectrum in Malawi. The predominant timbre was that of a digital piano. It resembled the sound of a piano but contained higher frequencies, giving it a piercing effect which was exaggerated when performed in the staccato style of the offbeat reggae strumming pattern. The manner of playing the keyboard "strumming" part was best rendered in a very deliberate manner – rhythmically precise, staccato, and moderate to loud volume.[31] The offbeat pattern tended to dominate the mixes as if it was the only index of the reggae genre. A byproduct of this was the efficacy by which the sound carried regardless of

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[29] He did not as it turns out become a keyboard player, but is now regarded as one of the leading guitarists to come out of Malawi.

[30] It would appear that the guitar holds a fairly negative connotation in other parts of Africa. In South Africa for instance there is the much recited Zulu phrase "isiginci asak'umuzi" (a guitar doesn't build a homestead). Carol Muller writes in more detail about this in her book *Music of South Africa* (2008, p119).

[31] Field notes from Rasta Waza and Chris Kele recording session (insert date)

the quality of the speakers through which recordings were played. Street vendors selling cassette tapes and mini bus operators with old or damaged playback equipment had little problem getting the proper "punch" from the music in these recordings.

The offbeat pattern had two important qualities that I believe lent themselves to the perpetuation of the Malawi reggae genre as a long-term fixture in the commercial music scene. First, the nature of professional music making in urban Malawi operates in conjunction with the existence of a large proletariat class. For many, music making is a means for an individual of limited formal education to earn a meager wage to sustain themselves in the urban areas. Music making is not always conceptualized as an activity reserved for those who have "talent" or specific training in music. Music making is viewed by many as a pragmatic option for a underskilled laborer. Often bands are created because someone with access to capital has purchased equipment. They need employees to run the equipment. The keyboard part in a reggae band is an entry level position because it can be reduced, if necessary, to a formulaic kinesthetic operation. The second factor that lends itself to the adaption and longevity of Malawi reggae is that musical practices and values of reggae are easily mapped onto pre-existing (local) ones.

The overlapping offbeat punctuations of the guitars and keyboards, with the different rhythmic pattern, maps onto the already existing practice of interlocking guitar parts as found in Congolese rumba. Among the chordal instruments there are two patterns played. One is the backbeat chord strike that occurs on beats 2 and 4 in the context of a common (4/4) time signature. The other pattern is typical of one of the keyboard parts, sometimes referred to as the "bubble," in which the left hand strikes the chord on the second half of each beat and the right hand strikes the chord on beats 2 and 4. The right hand part is typically executed with more emphasis than the left. The drumkit will typically consist of a cross stick strike of the snare on

beat 3 and play either a "one drop," in which the bass drum is also struck on beat 3 of each four beat cycle, or on all four beats, sometimes referred to as "four on the floor" in the US. The latter of these patterns is common in guitar and banjo bands and is similar to the various drum patterns that accompany indigenous dances, where there is a clear marking of the pulse with an open hand strike to the middle of the *ngoma* drum head, sounding a low bass tone from the drum. The composite rhythm is a constellation of simpler interlocking parts, common to many indigenous African styles.

The bass guitar part plays a large role in the shaping of the paradigmatic reggae styles. In Malawi, many of the characteristics of roots reggae bass lines carried over to Malawi reggae – sparse, melodic, complementary to other melodies, often utilizing the major or minor triad as the melodic foundation, and a prominent presence in the mix. This could be said of African rumba as well, with the possible exception of the sparsity of the bass line. A similar assertion could be made regarding South African *mbaqanga* as well – both styles of notable presence and influence on the Malawi broadcast media soundscape.

In addition to these rhythmic and textural foundational elements, there are several other key components that contribute to not only the Malawi reggae sound, but most of the Malawian popular or commercial music styles more broadly. They are as follows: a melodic introduction played on keyboard or horns and often recurring as an interlude, a guitar lead (improvised embellishment of the main melody or verses), horn lines, keyboard strings or organ to provide an underlying harmonic pad, backing vocals especially on the chorus. The harmonic basis and song form usually consist of a cyclic progression of three chords over which both verses and choruses are sung. Some composers will incorporate a bridge, but it is more typical to have the melodic

interlude or horns to break up the arrangement as the bridge does in American and European songwriting practices.

Individual stylistic variation occurs within this framework to reflect the singer's individual preferences or the standard practices of the sub-genre. For instance, Billy Kaunda is a veteran of the Alleluya band who, like many, went on to develop a successful solo career. His background is rooted in church music and hymns, which is an important feature in the popular gospel-reggae genre. The contour of the melodies stays true to church hymns, but is accompanied by the reggae underpinning as described above. Other singers may sing in a manner that is more congruent with styles from their home villages or with secular rural styles like the homemade banjo bands. There are various options, including original roots reggae, hip-hop, African rumba[32], *mbaqanga*-derived styles (e.g. South African "bubble gum," roughly analogous to 1980s era Madonna in the U.S.), but generally within the bounds of a North American, European, and African-driven cosmopolitan value set (more particularly, one that articulates with the African diaspora; see Ch. 4 On Afropolitanism).

The paradigmatic model described above serves as a good point of reference for the sound of Malawian commercial music in general and reggae in particular. It remains in circulation, but began to recede as the dominant paradigm in the early 2000s as market diversification increased with the expansion of broadcast media outlets, the liberalization of media content, the influx of affordable music and recording equipment, and the return of diaspora Malawians and their families following their exile, often to the UK, under the Banda regime, which ended in 1994. More recently, during my research in 2013, there was a growing

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[32] African rumba, or Congolese rumba, are generic names for music popularized in Brazzaville, Congo, and Kinshasa, DRC. These styles draw heavily on Cuban son music via imported records, together with indigenous styles and genres. The songs and arrangements feature lyrical vocal melodies and several interlocking guitar parts. Older bands often had brass sections as well.

audience for reggae sounding more like the internationally-recognized Jamaican roots reggae style and contemporary reggae sounds. Such Malawian reggae artists include Apatsa Kwilimbe and Sally Nyundo. Prior to this, in the early 2000s, *Ragga* and Dancehall, styles of reggae that incorporate hip-hop and electronic dance (house, electronica) elements were, and continue to be, popular as well (see Fenn 2004).

Gospel

One musical genre that rivals the popularity of reggae and urban music in Malawi is gospel. Although my research interest was broadly cast to include commercial music in general, I found myself working with a sizeable number of musicians who identified as gospel artists. This distinction, however, was often expressed in the lyrical content more so than musical style. As in the United States, Christian and gospel musicians borrow freely from other musical styles popular at the time in order to appeal to their audience and congregations. In Malawi, however, my sense is that the stylistic boundaries are more porous. There also appears to be a greater degree of crossover success where gospel artists are well-represented in secular radio play and entertainment markets.

During my stays in Malawi I was often struck by the saliency of Christian practices, particularly among musicians. Malawian citizenry is over 80% Christian but contains a sizeable Muslim population of about 13% of the total population (Hutcheson et. al. 2015, 763).[33] Christian beliefs and practices are quite noticeable in day to day living in the towns and cities.

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[33] The Muslim population is a minority one, but still has a significant presence as compared to places in the US. I did not witness notable Muslim participation in commercial music during my stay, but it is present in artists like Ahmed Philo and Ismael Katawala. They and similar artists enjoy some airplay on the privately-owned religious station Joy Radio, the state-run Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, and the only Islamic radio station in Malawi, Radio Islam Malawi. (http://www.voanews.com/content/malawis-muslim-artists-experiment-with-new-sound/1447799.html ; http://www.malawimuslims.com/featured/radio-islam-clears-katawala-nepman-single/) accessed 3/3/16

People are far more likely to openly express their opinions and thoughts in terms of Christian teachings than I have encountered during my experience in the rural American Midwest. It is not unusual to see people carrying Bibles on a daily basis. Politicians employ Christian rhetoric unreflectively and in this way resemble conservative political groups in the US. The Christian population includes evangelicals, born agains, as well as progressive believers seeking relevance to local lifeways and looking beyond the conservative teachings propagated by some missionaries and evangelists.

Gospel music is a substantial sector of the music industry, one complicated by the potential for financial gains and religious doctrine. It has also provided a creative space for women musicians, without some of the social stigmas associated with secular female artists, such as in the urban music scene. Grace Chinga, often equated with the revered South African gospel singer Rebecca Malope, was a leading performer on the Malawian gospel scene, and consistently earning national recognition. She began her career briefly in the late 1990s, but did not fully engage with the music profession until 2007 and was perhaps best known for her 2010 album *Udzaimba Nyimbo*. This album, together with a rigorous performance schedule, sustained her career for over five years before she ventured into recording again. Sadly, this was cut short due to her completely unexpected death in March of 2016.

Another leading figure in gospel music is Ethel Kamwendo-Banda. She comes from a musical family, and has had a long-lasting career that began in 1980 as a teenager in the Kamwendo Brothers' Band. She shared the spotlight as a singer in successful secular bands during the 1990s (WEPAZ, Sapitwa, The Ravers), before transitioning to exclusively gospel music in 1999, as a solo artist. As a woman musician in Malawi, the longevity of her career is notable. She is perhaps one of few female artists to be highly revered in both secular and sacred

circles. Starting her career in a family-run band may have benefitted her public image as a woman in the entertainment industry, though it is difficult to say, because her work has been of consistent quality, prior to, and after her switch to gospel music.

Occasionally born again Christian musicians will struggle with how music fits into their lives, resolving to only perform in church or in Christian contexts. Some retire from music altogether, while others bring overtly Christian groups to perform in bars. This latter example manifested in a controversy when a Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) group performed at a tavern in Limbe, causing a public debate in the print media. Other gospel musicians are subtler when performing in secular contexts, while asserting themselves as members of the Christian faith. When Malawian "Afro-vibes" musician Peter Mawanga and the Amaravi Movement performed in St. Louis in October 2015 he described a "single book" from which he gets guidance, rather than referring to this book as the Bible. In Malawi, Peter's music is described interchangeably as Afro jazz and gospel. It is simply not that important of a distinction. This is also the case with Wambali Mkandawire, another artist well known in terms of both Afro jazz and gospel music. Because of his pioneering efforts in developing the Afro jazz sound in Malawi, I will discuss him in the context of the Afro jazz genre.

Afro Jazz

The paradigmatic model for Afro jazz in northern Malawi, and arguably the entire country, is the music of Wambali Mkandawire, often referred to as Mte Wambali (from the ChiTumbuka term "Mtebeti" meaning "servant," in this case, servant of God). Prior to the early 2000s in Malawi, Wambali's music was something of an anomaly. In terms of song forms, arrangements, production value, and his particular use of indigenous musical styles, there was no

one in Malawi creating music that resembled Wambali's sound. It could be argued that there were musical analogues outside Malawi in the likes of Youssou N'Dour or in various Art Rock or Progressive Rock artists and groups from the UK since the 1970s. Wambali's music was frequently labelled "rock" or "jazz rock," likely due to how he utilized drum set sounds and thick textures with bass, guitars, and keyboards. Early in his career he favored being a rock musician before becoming a born again Christian. When I worked with him in the 1990s, he described his creative goals in terms of utilizing indigenous Malawian music from his home area (and advocated that all Malawian musicians do this) in ways that a composer would, rather than a songwriter. For instance, he described wanting to create an orchestra using multiple *penenga*, a gourd instrument one hums into, creating a sound like a kazoo. Part of his rationale was to erase the stigma of local Malawian music as backward and undeveloped by situating it in the same context as European Classical music. In the context of Malawian commercial styles (1970s onward), his music conspicuously avoided the oft used influences emanating from Congo and South Africa. For instance, song forms are not based on cyclic chord sequences. They are often highly arranged, similar to progressive rock (which some describe as drawing from jazz and classical music).

Wambali is much more thorough when including elements of indigenous genres than many of his contemporaries. A common formula that has been used by many Malawian recording artists is to incorporate a rhythmic pattern that typifies a certain indigenous style. One of the most common is the Manganje dance rhythm, which is described using the Chichewa phrase "champweteka n'chimanga," literally referring to the pounding of maize, but phonetically resembling the salient rhythm underlying the Manganje dance. This rhythm is played on the hi-

hat of the drum kit in commercial music settings (Ex. 1.2).[34] The other instruments typically play

in accordance with other popular styles, like reggae or house music.[35] Wambali, in contrast,

applies rhythms and phrasing from the many interlocking melodies and rhythms to each

instrument in the arrangement. Melodic instruments will often mimic the rhythm, melodic shape,

and the pitch descent at the end of phrases in the way the gourd kazoo (*penenga*) is played. His

approach to the melodic rhythm of all instruments in the ensemble contrasted to that of other

musicians who apply one rhythm to the hi-hat and employ the same vocal style as the dance they

are drawing from.[36] Saxophonist Dan Sibale performed extensively with Wambali in the early

2000s, and describes Wambali's musical approach in this way:

> With Wambali, I should say, to me it was a school. It's still, because I still learn
> so many skills from him. [He] is deep into a traditional kind of Malawi and with
> his guitar, what Wambali told me was like he listened to the rhythm. These are the
> Malawian rhythm kind of [things]. So he tries to bring that in a guitar. That's why
> his guitar rhythms, somehow they don't sound Western. They are like something
> only [he] himself can know. It's like he's trying to create something, a guitar
> sound, like the way the mbira guys [i.e. Thomas Mapfumo] have been doing their
> things (Interview Dan Sibale 19, Sept. 2013).

During that time, in the early 2000s, several new bands emerged on the Malawian scene

who were composing and performing music using techniques that Wambali was known for.

Arrangements, textures, melodic shapes, and rhythms were drawn more heavily from indigenous

genres. This mirrored the bourgeoning of music festivals and national contests around this time.

Nationwide contests sponsored by local beverage companies encouraged asserting some form of

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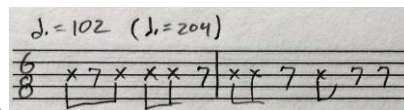
[34] **Example 1.2. Manganje Rhythm.**

[35] This technique was very popular during the late 1990s in Malawi and appeared less salient during my 2013 fieldwork, but the longevity of this technique is greater than I expected. While using the Internet to check my spelling I came across a December 2014 news article in which singer/producer Sonye describes this exact process with his recent song "Tsika" http://www.nyasashowbiz.com/can-better-sound-sonye/ (accessed Sept 9, 2015).

[36] Wambali was also a pioneer of promoting African fashion and would favor wearing colorful robes or loose-fitting tops with matching pants, as is often associated with West African countries and the Swahili coast. It is generally viewed as an assertion of African pride but was unusual for Malawian musicians until the 2000s.

Malawianness in the music as criteria. As the music market in Malawi began to diversify in the post-Banda era, new associations were made, whereby marking difference using local expressive practices was seen as positive and advantageous. Furthermore, there was an increase in West African artists touring in Malawi bringing with them certain aesthetic preferences and contributing to the sonic possibilities in the Malawian soundscape. Over time what was to be called Afro jazz emerged as a regular feature in Malawian musical practices.

Afro jazz is but one of several terms used to describe Malawian commercial music that features guitars, keyboards, bass, drums, percussion (frequently, but this aspect is the most inconsistently incorporated), lead and backing vocals, and horns (combinations of sax, trumpet, and in rare cases, trombone). The stylistic elements vary, but several indigenous styles will be incorporated into many of the compositions. More specifically, these compositions will usually be in compound quadruple meter (12/8) where the arrangement, including harmonies and song form, are strongly dictated by the vocal melodies. Up tempo songs intended for dancing tend to bear a strong resemblance to both Anglophone and Francophone West African musicians (i.e. Femi Kuti, Salif Keita). More lyrical songs performed at slower tempos may resemble North American soft rock, and may display characteristics of Christian hymns. Harmonic voicings may include major and minor seventh chords, plus sus4 chords, as well as added 9ths and 13ths (seconds and sixths). Less typical are the cyclic three- to four-chord dance styles derived from the Cuban *son*, originating in Congolese and related styles, and the Marabi influenced styles from South Africa (*kwela*, jive,[37] *mbaqanga*). Overall, Afro jazz in Malawi resonates with the sonic values of cosmopolitan audiences. The distinctive elements that situate songs in this genre

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[37] Stylistically, jive occupies the middle ground between *kwela* and *mbaqanga.* It features saxophone instead of pennywhistle or vocals, and contains the driving bass and drum sounds typical of *mbaqanga.*

as Malawian come from the melodic contours and rhythmic punctuation (in combination with other things, but these are perhaps the most notable).

Bands from the northern part of Malawi were often viewed as leaders in this genre. Many of the popular acts, such as Body Mind & Soul, Street Rat, Jah Family Band, and Lusubilo Band, come from the north and have won national and international awards for their music. Lilongwe, in the central region, hosts some strong talent as well in the likes of Peter Mawanga and the Amaravi Movement. Mawanga's band and Sam Mkandawire's band Mafilika have received critical acclaim for their incorporation of African and Malawian stylistic features. Wambali's association with the north, and years of singing exclusively in ChiTumbuka, may contribute to the association of this style with northern Malawi. The push to rework indigenous and international sounds has in fact permeated much of the major regions within Malawi.

Regional distinctions are not always present in the general discourse associated with Afro jazz, but this genre does incorporate practices from specific districts within Malawi more emphatically than perhaps other commercial genres.[38] As a result, musicians and individuals with whom I worked tended to have a strong sense of regional sentiment with their home areas (the areas in which they themselves, or their extended family, grew up). Some musicians with whom I worked quite a bit in South Africa strongly identified with the Sena ethnolinguistic group from Nsanje, the southern-most district in Malawi. It is also worth mentioning precedents to the current Afro Jazz sound that stem from other influential artists from Malawi's southern region (near Chileka for instance).

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[38] The *mbumba* music sung by women at political rallies draws heavily from specific districts as does the national dance troupe. I do not consider these to be a part of the broader set of commercial music practices, despite the fact that many of those musicians earn incomes from their music.

The rich tradition of acoustic guitarists from Malawi's southern region has contributed a great deal to the current Afro jazz styles. Black Paseli, Daniel Kachamba, and The Lucky Stars duo are all canonic figures representing the acoustic roots of this genre, and all hail from the southern region. The extent to which musicians relate to them in terms of region is unclear. Some older and late musicians are thought of as historical figures or generally just Malawian or in other cases simply traditional. Singer, composer, and guitarist Romeo Jani expressed excitement to me during a discussion about the Lucky Stars based in part on the fact they come from his home region. Agorosso is someone who expresses affinity with the southern region as well. I found his assertions similar to those of Wambali, where artists benefit from being true to their area of origin regarding musical practices so as not to sound overly or poorly imitative.

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A common thread tying Afro Jazz artists' music together is the often conscious and deliberate effort to reimagine (or just imagine?) what Malawian is. This was one of the dilemmas underlying the sentiment behind the National Cultural Policy as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The issue of branding and of determining and asserting what is endemic to Malawi is not isolated to musicians working in the world of Afro jazz, but to many in the urban music world, and indeed throughout the larger field of commercial music production.

In surveying and contextualizing these genres, it is apparent that social allegiance, in general, articulates with not only national concerns, but with the intersectionality of different social worlds as guided by conceptions of sacred, secular, gender, and politics, among others. To unpack this further within the Malawian and southern African context, several issues need to be addressed, including political borders, cultural nationalism, Christianity and missions, and

economic development. Moreover, and in keeping with the idea of negotiating social positioning

amidst translocal phenomena, a look at these complex interchanges over time is in order.

CHAPTER 2

COMMERCIAL MUSIC IN MALAWI:

NESTED SCALES AND HISTORICAL ROUTES

I have discussed several overarching musical genres in contemporary Malawi—urban music, reggae, and Afro jazz, along with Gospel music which draws stylistic inspiration from each. I find that among urban and Afro jazz musicians in particular, the idea of shaping and asserting a Malawian brand of music is salient, not just as a marketing tool, but as a measure of self-respect. Some of the difficulties in determining what is musically representative of Malawi involve the inherited political borders and various degrees of social interchange. Furthermore, there are challenges to musicians striving to assert a Malawian brand, which are rooted in a lack of leverage in an international marketplace. A look at historical events will contribute to a better understanding of these issues. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to outline key historical trajectories that speak to pan-regional circuits of interchange and the current political and economic climate in Malawi. Moreover, I discuss how those factors contribute to a diversity of subjective belonging and identity formation that articulate with multiple social and geographic scales.

Nested Scales

I have benefited from the idea of social and geographic scales as outlined by geographer Philip Kelly, who advocates for the consideration of various scales in order to get beyond the local-global dichotomy. He explains that these scales should be viewed in relation to one another and not as hierarchical, mutually exclusive, or necessarily distinct, but rather as coexisting

simultaneously as "nested loci where social processes are played out" (1999, 396). He is especially interested in the relational aspect of these scales and how various notions of space are socially constructed and resonate with people (ibid.).

I draw from Kelly's premise that various geographic scales, like local, national, and pan-regional, are not concrete vessels in which bounded action occurs. Instead, cultural production and social positioning grow out of relationships occurring across various scales, which are themselves ideas that are discursively bound. Malawian, southern African, African, and global are conceptual ideas, but they are understood based on tangible experiences and cumulative historical processes. So the notion of national identity, for instance, can be heightened or diminished, but the scale that is national in scope neither fully takes over, nor disappears, because of interchange across social and geographic boundaries of various expanse. One of the points I make with this chapter is how this is embedded in musical practices over time.

The Early Roots/Routes of Contemporary Musical Practices

In Malawi, several of the contemporary musical styles and genres, together with their associated performance practices and creative preferences, resulted from changes occurring after the second World War such as urbanization and technological developments. There are other factors, however, owed to events that occurred during the 19th century, involving the arrival of populations foreign to the area, and their subsequent long-term interactions with local communities. Those people foreign to the area include not only overseas cultural groups, but intra-continental migrants as well. Significant and longstanding changes to local music making occurred after the arrival of the British, as is often discussed, but the arrival of groups such as the

Ngoni and Yao, among others, also had a lasting impact on Malawian expressive practices and indeed how contemporary Malawianness is often understood.

Contemporary music in Malawi may exhibit any number of influences originating in centuries-old indigenous communities (Tumbuka, Chewa), comparatively recent indigenous communities (Ngoni, Yao, Lomwe, Sena), and other translocal and cosmopolitan intersections (British imperialism, Euro-American modernist capitalism, Christian evangelism). For instance, music may draw from harmonic approaches similar to those found in Scottish Christian hymnody and English children's music. Similarly, many musicians continue to employ rhythmic and melodic aspects from Ngoni *ingoma* and Tumbuka *vimbuza* repertoire, or use vocal timbres found in Yao and *Nyau gule wamkulu* (Chewa) musical practices. The current canon of musical styles and practices owes much of its existence to the long-term social changes that began in the 19th century.

Early Local Communities

Tumbuka, Chewa, and Related Groups

Prior to the mass migration of foreign groups from Africa and Europe there were several large communities and kingdoms already established in Malawi. The largest included the Tumbuka and related groups, such as the Tonga, Ngonde, and Nyakusa in the north. In the central and southern regions there was the Maravi confederation, and subsequent offshoots which included the Chewa, Nyanja, and Mang'anja, among others. These societies were themselves immigrants, in some sense, having arrived during the waves of Bantu migration occurring between 1200 and 1600. Of all the above mentioned indigenous groups the Chewa and Tumbuka have the largest representation within the population. The Tumbuka, however, are

smaller in number compared to the Lomwe, Yao, and Ngoni, all of whom were to arrive after the 1830s and continuing into the early 20th century.[39] Thus social interchange has been a consistent occurrence in this region with the major variation occurring in the compression of time, or rather an increase in the rate of change with notable acceleration beginning in the 19th century, and continuing in the early and late 20th century.

Given the recurring presence of tribalism (antagonistic relations based on ethnolinguistic identities) in Malawian politics and general public rhetoric, it is worth mentioning that ideas of ethnic identity have been tenacious despite the fact that none of these groups were so insular as to represent a homogenous ethnolinguistic cultural group (Kaspin 1997; McCracken 2012, 22). Cultural practices, perhaps more than ancestry, play a significant role in socialization and subjective belonging. Long-held traditions of music-dance events are associated with various cultural groups and places of origin within Malawi. Two exemplary traditions are *gule wamkulu*, an initiation dance ceremony among the Chewa, and more specifically among the *Nyau* secret brotherhood, and *vimbuza*, a healing dance found among the Tumbuka. *Gule wamkulu* and *vimbuza* illustrate social links that include pan-regional geographic scales, and have been viewed and used in various strategic ways over several generations.

Gule wamkulu is among various *Nyau* cultural practices that have long been mobilized in different musical contexts over the past 50 years, most recently by hip-hop artist Tay Grin (aka *Nyau* King). Itinerant acoustic guitar groups like the duo Lucky Stars Band have also drawn heavily from this style. During his administration, President Kamuzu Banda made use of various styles of Malawian song and dance, including *gule wamkulu*. On the one hand this dance and music are distinctly Malawian representing the central region and a vibrant history of resistance

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[39] Central Intelligence Agency. (2016). Malawi. *In The World Factbook*. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html

to power. On the other hand, they have contributed to the hegemon itself, through years of associations, along with other local traditional dances, with the oppressive dictatorship of the late President Banda. In 2008 *gule wamkulu* was recognized by UNESCO as an intangible heritage (along with *vimbuza* discussed below), and is classified as a multinational art form spanning from Malawi to Zambia and into western Mozambique.

Drumming in this context is similar to that found in *vimbuza*. *Gule wamkulu* uses three to four *ngoma* drums, and tempos are generally extremely fast with the interlocking relationship being extremely precise. The speed of subdivisions can be staggering, with a primary pulse at 110 bpm containing six subdivisions. The rhythmic interplay features accentuations that manipulate subdivisions into groups of three or four. Some of the most distinguishable audible features are the falsetto yelp of the male performers and related yodel-like exclamations, some of which are achieved by using one's hand to physically move the larynx by tapping the front of the neck.

Some other features which contribute to the spectacle of this song-dance complex are the costuming and acrobatics. Typically, the performers are dressed to resemble animals or mythical creatures and should not appear as human or exhibit humanlike features. The costumes are constructed with colorful strips of cloth taken from old t-shirts or other garments. These colorful strips are often woven together with large dried leaves or tall grass. Other fabrics and natural materials are used as well, and sometimes assembled in a collage-like fashion, contributing to an elaborate display of artistic costuming. Sometimes the costumes are enhanced by the wearing of stilts, elevating the dancers to over twice the height of an average human. The masks, however, are often the featured item in these costumes and come in numerous varieties, representing a host

of characters. Graphic representations of these masks serve as a strong index to this *Nyau* dance and are used by Tay Grin as part of the logo for his *Nyau* Unit clothing brand.

Another widely celebrated dance tradition is *vimbuza*. This dance event is likely a centuries old practice (Friedson 1996, 45 and 191). As a Tumbuka tradition, its presence in Malawi predates European as well as Ngoni and Yao incursions and is often viewed as one of several emblematic indigenous cultural traditions. As mentioned, it was recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage endemic to Malawi, although its practice is found in the eastern part of Zambia as well.

Vimbuza is a kinesthetic musical practice that is used to cure mental illness, usually among women. It has a fast rhythmic cycle in which the strong pulse occurs at approximately 160-170 bpm, which can be subdivided into three subdivisions roughly commensurate with 12/8 time, where the dotted quarter note = 170 bpm. It often features two to three drums, sometimes more. Many of these *ngoma* drums have a patch of tree sap in the shape of a ring or donut placed on the center of the animal skin drum head. The drum head is permanently fixed to the body of the drum with nails and brought to the appropriate tension by applying heat. The drums are each played by one person playing a repeating pattern, sometimes striking the drum on all subdivisions but using different emphases achieved through hand placement or velocity. The recurring pattern interlocks with the rest of the ensemble. The lead drummer plays comparatively independently using more rhythmic variation in response to the primary dancer, usually the person who is afflicted with the illness. Rhythmic accentuation emphasizes groupings of two and three subdivisions. Other people in attendance contribute using hand claps that also operate in an interlocking fashion with one another as well as the other percussion parts, usually striking on fewer of the recurring subdivisions, no doubt due to the physical difference in clapping and

drumming. There are also non-pitched bells fastened to a string strung around the waist and/or ankles. These can be played with one's hands as well. Some songs include a hoe blade struck with a metal striker, playing a longer syncopated repeated pattern that functions as a timeline. Vocals typically follow a call and response pattern and utilize pentatonic melodies. Melodic lines follow an overall descending shape and frequently end on the tonic.

Many of the sonic features of *vimbuza* are found in the rural musical traditions of this region. The use of multiple *ngoma* drums, the interlocking of smaller rhythmic units, and the 6 or 12 subdivision seem to be common across several styles, while clapping is common across all styles.

Subsequent African Immigration to Malawi

Ngoni

The first major power shift and socio-political transformation since the establishment of the Maravi Empire came in the 1830s with the Ngoni incursion. The Ngoni came to Malawi in two large groups, one under Zwangendaba, the other led by Maseko. Leaving South Africa in the 1820s, they arrived in Malawi in 1835. In the southeastern province of South Africa (now KwaZulu-Natal) King Shaka Zulu became increasingly powerful and expanded his kingdom through military might. Neighboring and nearby communities were either absorbed or driven north. Historically, the Zulu societies have been known for their military prowess, most especially under Shaka's leadership. Those that chose to move north were also well adept at warfare and tended to absorb individuals and communities as they traveled. Many Malawians identify as Ngoni; often Chichewa speakers from the central region of Ntcheu do so.

The story of the Ngoni in Malawi is not simply that of conquest and settlement, but one that offers an interesting lens into social interchange in southern Africa. On the surface, this migration illustrates the dissemination and influence of one African society across time and space within Africa. In this case, a notable segment of expressive practices within Malawi are derived from the somewhat distant Zulu kingdom, but localized to be uniquely Malawian. It is a notable case of transboundary exchange outside of the Western-African binary that predates colonialism (albeit not European contact in general due to the Portuguese presence). The nature of relations between the Ngoni and local Malawian kingdoms, chieftaincies, and communities included interchange of values and social position. The Tumbuka expressed some satisfaction with the governing structure that the centralized Ngoni imposed. The Ngoni as well instructed the younger men in warfare and military discipline as might be expected. The Ngoni also drew from Tumbuka customs as well, and eventually adopted the Tumbuka language, as did other Ngoni groups further south. This was not necessarily a reciprocal balance of power or of social exchanges, but it was slightly more nuanced than simply the subjugation of one community by another. The ongoing negotiation of power relations in the region should inform one's interpretation of how the introduction of missionaries, merchants, and British government representatives resonated with communities and individuals in this area.

Historian Jack Thompson (2007) offers a compelling take on relations among Scottish missionaries, Khosa missionaries, Ngoni, and British government representatives that disrupts the binary framework of Euro-African relations, rejects the homogenized view of individual communities and cohorts, and highlights the agency of various actors, notably African individuals and communities. His narrative about the Xhosa missionary William Koyi along with the Ngoni and Scottish missionaries with whom he worked is notable in this regard and for the

insight it provides regarding musical interchange during that time. Thompson provides details about Koyi's relationship with George Williams and Robert Laws, the Scottish missionaries of the Bandawe mission in Malawi, in contrast with Dr. Elmslie in terms of hierarchies and racial stereotypes. It should be noted that as insightful as Thompson's work is, he fails to offer much in the way of details regarding Ngoni individuals. It would seem that the nuance applied to others is lost here, relegating the Ngoni to a homogeneous archetype, albeit a relatively favorable one.

William Koyi's story also offers a look into music making and the South African-Malawian dialog. William Koyi was a close associate of John Knox Bokwe, the well-known South African composer (who was one of the original 14 volunteers to come to the Bandawe mission in Malawi). Koyi worked with the Tembo brothers, and Mawelera Tembo in particular, in the area of African Christian hymnody. Tembo's hymns were still being sung in the 2000s (Thompson 2007).

Christian hymnody permeates a great deal of music in Malawi, and is integrated in varying degrees with other indigenous practices, often in an effort to localize worship services, if not to facilitate conversion using more familiar cultural practices. It was actually through a gospel musician that I learned of the Ngoni dance *ingoma*. I found certain characteristics striking, particularly, the idiosyncratic series of three medium tempo thumps that, because of the slower and comparatively simple rhythm, stood out from the canon of rural music traditions such as those similar to *vimbuza* and *gule wamkulu*.

The *ingoma* dance, a tradition introduced to Malawi by the Ngoni, remains popular and widely adapted in popular music, continuing to be performed in its original configuration without the addition of instruments. It resembles the dance styles found among Zulu communities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), famous for their spectacular high kicking moves. *Ingoma*, as it has been

performed in Malawi, differs from the KZN dances with its slightly more subdued kicking, but the sentiment is similar, as is the costuming, which features animal hide headgear, usually leopard, and decorative arm and leg wear. It should also be noted that the dances in KZN vary substantially between villages and chieftaincies despite being labeled with the single term *ngoma*. Similar variations can be found in contemporary Malawi.

Ingoma typically uses no drums. The rhythmic force is directed by the use of ankle bells and the emphatic stomping of the male dancers. These versions of the dance, having their roots in Zulu *ingoma*, are comparatively understated in the spectacle and force of the kicking. The emphatic foot stomps mark off rhythmic groupings of three and two, creating a hemiola over a steady duple or triple meter rhythmic foundation. The vocals operate in a call and response format, but they are not strictly antiphonal; rather, the calls and responses occur with tighter overlap, sometimes employing shorter phrases. Melodic rhythms tend to be slower. Sometimes hand clapping, usually by the women, occurs in hocket or is otherwise interlocking. In my experience the most commonly borrowed aspect was the version of *ngoma* that is slower in tempo, emphasizing three primary pulses followed by an up-beat (Ex. 2.1).[40] The *ingoma* dance, sharing ties to a distant land in the south, is now woven into the fabric of Malawian music. Another long distance exchange, with links this time to the Swahili coast, came via the Yao, which ultimately yielded additional sonic threads in the Malawian music tapestry.

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[40] **Example 2.1. *Ingoma* rhythm.**

Yao

The Yao entered Malawi from the northeast via Mozambique in the mid-1800s. They had long ties with the Swahili Arabs and were especially involved in trade relations from the east African coast to the interior. Much of that trade was in ivory and slaves, and consequently was rather menacing to local residents, including both the Scottish missionaries and the Man'ganja. Yao travelers were among the first groups to use rifles in their conquest and settlement of the region. As a result of these influences, communities often forged alliances to protect against the Yao, who were also known to have presented the fiercest resistance to colonial rule. Thus the Yao represented another significant social group in the 19th-century settlement of what is now Malawi. The Yao, along with the Ngoni, were external forces in relation to the Man'ganja (and Tumbuka further north). This is an important detail when considering the arrival of European external forces around the same time. Scottish missionaries and later British imperialists (along with merchants, farmers, and hunters) were entering a region already containing dynamic political relations operating across multiple axes.

A diverse set of social groups existed in the region that is now Malawi prior to the arrival of Europeans, but these societies did not operate as monolithic entities. Confrontations, interchange, and absorption occurred on smaller social scales involving groups, families, and individuals. Unlike like the Man'ganja, the Yao were not known as agriculturalists, a fact perhaps related to their involvement in long distance trade. The Yao's lack of ties to local land tended to shape their integration into societies south of Lake Nyasa (Malawi), in which they operated as laborers, merchants, and employers (Boeder 1974, 26). The history of trade and interaction with the east African coast contributed to the growth of Islam among Yao people. This presented another variable in shaping socialization during the time of European Christian

missionaries' leveraging their beliefs and social values. Politics and religion often worked in tandem when it came to British imperialist expansion and evangelical Christianity in Malawi. Ultimately, the nation-state model became the organizing political structure, but Christianity and Islam coexisted within this structure and continues to inform individual and group socialization within a local Malawian context.

Yao speakers currently represent the third largest ethnolinguistic group in Malawi. Much of the country's musical practices are shaped by traditions such as *manganje* (as well as *beni*, discussed later) which grew out of the various Yao communities within Malawi over many generations. *Manganje* is performed in conjunction with initiation ceremonies of adolescent boys and features a similar compliment of *ngoma* drums, hand clapping, and singing, as well as previously mentioned dances. The most salient rhythmic figure is represented onomatopoetically by the phrase "champweteka n'chimanga" represented in a 12-division pattern as [x-x xx- xx- x--] (Ex. 2.2).[41]

The presence of the Yao and the Ngoni in Malawi marks a meeting of two coasts in a central territory, a process of long distance social interchange that began nearly two centuries ago. These groups are integral to the current canon of Malawian cultural practices, and to my mind contribute to the notion of social and geographic scale as a continuum. Geographic references are coded in sedimented expressive forms, bookending or circumscribing this region of southern Africa in its broadest sense. They mark relationships echoed by the current economic ties represented in the membership of South African Development Community (SADC), whose members include states from as far north as Tanzania and the D.R. Congo to South Africa in the

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[41] **Example 2.2. Manganje Rhythm.**
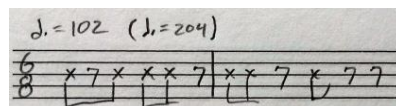
south. References to a smaller geographic scale come in the form of movement and interchange directly across the Malawian border, from neighboring Mozambique, manifested in the introduction of the Lomwe and later the Sena.

Lomwe (also Lhomwe)

The Lomwe people came to Malawi from northern Mozambique in the late 1800s and the early decades of the 1900s. The Lomwe, sometimes referred to as "Anguru,"[42] historically represented a collection of groups with associations via languages and dialects that included Chihavani and Chilomwe (Chirwa 1994). Their arrival in Malawi was caused by various factors over time, but included those from within Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa) such as war and the decline of fertile land. From within Malawi, there was active recruitment of outside labor for the tea estates in the southern part of the country (ibid.). This migratory pattern balanced a larger migration narrative in southern Africa, where individuals in this region moved primarily in a southerly direction following the mining circuit (Boeder 1974; Chirwa 1994).

The Lomwe currently represent the population group second in number only to the Chewa in Malawi.[43] Demographic majorities, however, do not always equate to social salience or "cultural visibility," as in this case (Kaspin 1997). Upon reading in the paper that *gule wamkulu* and *vimbuza* were included by UNESCO on their representative list of intangible heritage, Brighton Gwembere, chairman of the Tchopa (sometimes spelled Chopa)[44] society in Phalombe District (southern Malawi just north of Mt. Mulanje) began advocating that the Tchopa dance be

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[42] This is often considered a derogatory term that is context-dependent.

[43] CIA world factbook https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html

[44] The terms *tchopa* and *chopa* refer specifically to this music-dance genre and should not be confused with the nearby Chopi ethnic group.

similarly recognized.[45] In 2014 this dance of the Lomwe of southern Malawi was added to the

intangible cultural heritage list. It is a dance that is associated with ancestral spirits, but is

performed as entertainment as well. It generally features five relatively small drums of varying

sizes. Dancers wear bells around their ankles. There are also whistles played that punctuate the

music.

Landeg White states that the *tchopa* dance is the only one, among the dances brought

from Mozambique, to have survived (1996 [1987], 107). To what extent practitioners think about

its Mozambican origins is unknown to me. References to this tradition were always made in

conjunction with Mulanje district, perhaps a testament to its security within the Malawian canon.

Some of the traditions associated with the Sena, also of southern Malawi, and also with

Mozambican origins, stand in contrast to this.

Sena

Sena speakers came to Malawi from Mozambique beginning in the late 1800s and during

the first few decades of the 20th century as well (McCracken 2012). The *ulimba,* or sometimes

valimba, xylophone tradition can be found in the Nsanje district of southern Malawi as a result. It

is similar to the style of xylophone playing among the Chopi of southern Mozambique (Tracey

1991). It is a remarkable performance configuration where three musicians play on a single

xylophone each playing a designated range of the 21-25 keyed instrument. One of the keys has a

second slat placed on top of it to serve as a rattle key that is non-pitched. The ensemble is

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[45] Interview on the UNESCO website http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/tchopa-sacrificial-dance-of-the-lhomwe-people-of-southern-malawi-00999 (also available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4x3_UA02GuU) (Accessed 22 February 2016).

complemented by a small drum played with mallets and two rattles (*nkhocho*). The music is accompanied by men and women dancers moving clockwise in a circle (Strumpf 1999).[46]

The xylophone sound and occasionally the instrument itself can be heard in recent commercial music in Malawi. The instrument that is used tends to be modelled after the Zimbabwean version which is diatonic. This is a result of musicians' experiences in Zimbabwe, or the influence of Zimbabwean immigrants in Malawi. Despite this, the xylophone is still viewed as an index of Malawian indigeneity. In my experience, it was only with those musicians who had connections with the Nsanje area firsthand, or through family ties, that referenced *ulimba* specifically. In one of these instances it was mentioned that it is a tradition more popular just over the river in Mozambique.

There are several cultural groups, then, contributing to the Malawian canon of expressive art forms. Each exhibit social links to local, nearby, and distant lands. The histories of these groups and representative musical styles augment the narratives about culture contact and musical change, and moreover, add dimensionality to the oft-discussed binary of African and European contact underlying post-colonial commercial music in Africa. Thus far, I have focused on the African dimension of this binary construct. The overseas dimension, sometimes glossed as European, is one that exhibits important layers as well.

Overseas Immigration to Malawi

Beginning in the 1840s, Nkhotakota became a major trading center of enslaved Africans under the Jumbe, Salim bin Abdallah, the sultan of Zanzibar. His presence brought the extremely

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[46] In my experience in Nsanje and from viewing videos, the dancing seems to be dominated by women and the direction is not restricted to clockwise movement.

disruptive practice of commerce in slaves as well guns and ammunition. The Tonga and Chewa sought alliances with the sultan as protection from the Ngoni (Kalinga 2012).

The Portuguese presence, though long-established in the region, played a renewed role in the negotiation of political borders and regional control. British, German, and Portuguese interests in the region, especially after the 1880s, had severe and long-lasting consequences for what was to become Malawi. The British presence was unified only in the sense that the overall intent was to become a protectorate (Pachai 1973; McCracken 1977). British commercial and imperialist interests clashed between Sir Harry Johnston, and Cecil Rhodes, of the British South Africa Company, resulting in the western border of Malawi. The scramble for Africa fueled Portuguese expansion inland from the coast, while the German presence along the Swahili coast influenced the northern border as well as interchange in that region. Commercial interests shifted to the south (Boeder 1974) due to the swell of diamond and gold mines, but as well due in part to language problems presented by the German rule. It is also reasonable to suggest that German rule contributed to some degree in establishing the southward movement as a path of least resistance for commercial gain, and thus social interchange.

The Scottish medical missionary Dr. David Livingstone was a strong catalyst in the eventual presence and long-term settlement of Europeans in Malawi. He was known in the British empire for his exploration of southern Africa, particularly around the Zambezi river valley, in the mid-1800s. His knowledge and experience there were utilized as such by those with imperialist colonial interests. Livingstone came to the area near Malawi during the late 1850s, arriving in Nkhotakota on the coast of Lake Malawi in 1861. This was a significant center of activity in the trade of enslaved Africans, something Livingstone reportedly abhorred and put great effort into eradicating. In addition to his anti-slaving endeavors, Livingstone sought to

spread Christianity and commerce to the region. He believed that rather than convert individuals in Africa to Christianity, it would be better to integrate them collectively into the world economy (McCracken 1977, 17). This in turn would also serve to undermine the need for trade in slaves (ibid.; Macnair 1954, 39). This pairing of commerce and Christianity was dependent on forging a colonial relationship with the region and was one of the overarching principles motivating Livingstone in his mission.

Activities, institutions, and social structures associated with Christianity have had a tremendous impact on life in Malawi. The establishment of Christian missions in Livingstonia and Blantyre played a major role in the formation of the Protectorate of Nyasaland, which formed the geographical footprint that is now Malawi. These missions were integral to subsequent nationalist movements in the 1960s as well as the democratic transition in the 1990s (Ross 1996). The European fashioned educational institutions they created, particularly at Livingstonia and the northern region of Malawi, had an impact there and in the region of southern Africa more broadly, by creating a citizenry of skilled laborers that affected internal and external migration patterns in the country. Furthermore, the Christian expansion in the region contributed to the rise of new social elites in and around Malawi. In short, Livingstone's presence and the subsequent events put into motion were a part of a larger constellation of events and social interchanges taking place in Malawi during the 19th century.

Contemporary commercial music articulates with multiple social influences many of which have origins in these 19th century interchanges. The renegotiation of Africanness in an increasingly cosmopolitan context has its roots in various processes of indigenization of religious and cultural practices, many involving music. The obvious existing carryover of Christian influence is the sustained popularity of gospel music. The less obvious includes the conservative

behavioral norms of expressive practices rooted in notions of civilized versus heathen and uncivilized practices. There were multiple negotiations of this through syncretic religious practices and how music was performed and valued. Expressions of Malawian pride among contemporary musicians like rapper Tay Grin and Afro jazz guitarist Faith Mussa operate within a framework based in part on the historical intersections of Christian values and British imperial lifeways with various local practices.

Roots/Routes of Modernity and the African Elite: Circuits of Interchange during the Colonial Period (1891-1964)

The period beginning in the late nineteenth century with the "Scramble for Africa" by European imperialist powers and ending in the mid twentieth century with the emergence of newly independent African states was one in which radical transitions were solidified across much of the continent. In the case of Malawi, the formation of new geographic political borders began in 1891 with the ratification of the British Central Africa Protectorate (later Nyasaland in 1907) and the forging of an independent country within those inherited borders in 1964, forming the bookends of Malawi's colonial period. During this time span a number of events and changes occurred that would have lasting effects on music and music making in this region. There emerged an opportunity, and later a need, for a new scale of identity formation.

The division of ethnolinguistic groups and lack of large-scale cohesive communities, on the one hand, and the combining of different, and sometimes antagonistic groups, on the other, had numerous ramifications that are observable today. Splitting some of these large ethnolinguistic communities, such as the Chewa (in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia), caused music-dance traditions like *gule wamkulu*, once shared within a single large-scale community, to

exist across multiple contemporary political borders. This presents a potential challenge in

commercial music making, where marking distinction in a competitive field is important. For

example, Malawian musicians incorporating elements of *gule wamkulu* are not, through this

association alone, marking their music as uniquely Malawian for the simple fact that this music-

dance tradition is also found in neighboring Mozambique and Zambia.

It was these very types of associations, however, that would propel nationalist strategies

under the leadership of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda decades later. Before this could became a

large-scale agenda, however, a citizenry that embraced a synthesis of social values drawing from

overseas and continental intersections and operating within an emerging modernist capitalist

worldview needed to be established. The expanding missionary presence and mission

educational system created a growing class of individuals with certain types of skills useful for

incorporation within the colonial society. Missionaries also promoted Christian values and social

behaviors based in large part on models from the Victorian legacy.

As European settlement of colonial-era Malawi (Nyasaland) increased, new social worlds

emerged in which people of various backgrounds participated. Small nascent urban communities

provided novel sites for social interaction, including musical performance. The following

passage describing a tea party concert illustrates a convergence of various backgrounds based on

factors like country of origin, religion, education, and social class:

> A group of clerks, servants, printers, porters, and laborers who had been working
> in Salisbury for several years arranged a meeting with [Joseph] Casson [head of
> the Native Affairs Department]. They had been educated at Blantyre and
> Livingstonia Missions, but had been unable to find remunerative work at home.
> On the King's birthday, 9 November 1910, they had given a tea party and concert
> which was attended by over five hundred Malawians. The thirty-nine act program
> included "Home Sweet Home" sung by Mr. and Mrs. Peters C. Kuchiwamba, the
> hymn "Peace, Perfect Peace" performed by Mr. T. Gilbert Bwana-Isa of Zomba,
> and other songs by Mrs. Mary Zaberis and Mrs. Francis of Cape Colony. The

evening ended with an inspirational monologue entitled "Native View" by Mr.
Mwenye Kunpama of Blantyre (Boeder 1974, 75).

New sets of conditions resulted in new subjective positioning available to a growing number of

Malawians. Unequal power balances rooted in perceptions of race, however, subverted any

organic or matter-of-fact paths toward social inclusion.

John Chilembwe was a political martyr of heroic status whose story is well-documented

elsewhere (Shepperson and Price 1958). My interest in Chilembwe lies in how he seems to

function, even today, as a paradigmatic model of an African elite, one which resembles, if not

foreshadows, the more recent discourse related to Afropolitanism that I discuss in Chapter 4. For

the time being, Afropolitanism may be understood as a set of ideologies at the intersection of

cosmopolitan and African subjectivities. Chilembwe embraced an ethos inspired by European

and Christian values on his own terms, because he believed that Africans were as entitled to the

associated privileges of those lifeways as much as Europeans (ibid.). The uprising he led in 1915

was rooted in dissenting views about the participation of Africans in the first World War, a

participation which was unwarranted and undesirable. There were only three European casualties

resulting from this uprising, but the message it sent was far greater than these numbers suggest

because it was completely unexpected (Pachai 1973, 214-15). This event disrupted the

complacency of Nyasaland administrators and the image of the docile native. The lore of this

event served to bolster nationalist strategies decades later in the liberation struggle led by

Kamuzu Banda. Chilembwe was one of very few individuals celebrated by Banda, who was

more prone to vilify individuals who posed even the slightest threat to his leadership, as he

positioned himself as the great liberator of Malawi analogous to a messiah.

In my experience over the years, both Chilembwe and Banda typify an image of success,

as emblems of African modernity, for many Malawians. The somewhat pro-Western model they

represent contrasts with those that are associated with figures like Nelson Mandela, or the African renaissance of Thabo Mbeki to the south. This is perhaps one angle which distinguishes some Malawian expressive practices and perspectives from others in southern Africa. No doubt it is but one thread in a larger fabric, and likely more circumstantial than causative. The roles of Chilembwe, and of Kamuzu more recently, as models of behavior and presentation should not be underestimated. These two historical figures continue to be situated periodically in the minds and music of Malawians today, as in the case of Tay Grin, who has paid tribute to them in his music videos, and rapper Tendy Mak, similarly in his photo shoots.

Continuing after the turn of the century, the world wars brought new and expanded circuits of interchange and fostered new aspirations for a growing urban African citizenry. Individuals from different parts of Malawi came together in various settings that included urban centers, cash crop estates, and mining compounds and military service outside of Malawi. Popular music and work songs emerged in these new environments, resulting from contributions of individuals bringing influences from different regional backgrounds within Malawi which continue to have some resonance in the current Malawian commercial music scene (Lwanda 2008b).

Following WWI, there emerged a collection of dances that share the common features of costume and movements resembling the colonial military regimens. Various aspects of instrumentation are similar as well, in the use of large two-sided drums resembling marching band bass drums and the use of gourd instruments taking after military style bugles. A whistle was added to punctuate the music and direct the dance. There is a considerable literature about these dances, as beni *ngoma* in East Africa (Ranger 1975), as *kalela* (Mitchell 1956), and as *mganda* (Jones 1945). Shorter treatments about these dances in Malawi are have been written by

Kamlongera (1986), Lwanda (2008a), and McCrackin (2012), Mpata (2001), and Strumpf (1999), among others. *Beni* is generally understood to be the original dance coming from eastern Africa into central and southern Africa (Kamlongera 1986; Yoshikuni 2007).

In Malawi, *beni*, *mganda*, *malipenga*, and *chilimika* are part of this style complex in the southern, central, and northern regions respectively. The terms *mganda* and *malipenga* tend to be used interchangeably (Kamlongera 1986). They are performed in different areas of the country and exhibit slight stylistic differences (Strumpf 1999). Chilimika is closely related to Malipenga, but performed by women, whereas the other three mentioned dances are performed by men. My interest in these traditions lies in the relationship of these dances across districts and countries. They illustrate an interesting process of cultural interchange that is trans-local in character but that bridges urban and rural settings in a way not typically associated with cosmopolitanism. It serves as another reminder that the convergence of multiple value systems across distinct location, as in cosmopolitanism, is not confined strictly to urban environments. Similarly, Turino argues that centers of cosmopolitanism in Zimbabwe were also found in African purchase lands and rural missions (2000). Thus challenges to developing a distinct national identity as it pertains to musical practices extend beyond the spaces of urban centers, just as they extend beyond the time of the late 20th century.

Another notable circuit of interchange related to the wars occurred when Malawian men working as military porters brought with them song materials from initiation ceremonies. This content then contributed to the songs sung by these men in a context removed from the original (Lwanda 2008a). Furthermore, it has also been suggested that the absence of men during this period led to the strengthening of women's maize pounding songs, *pamtondo* (ibid). These songs later served as source material and inspiration for subsequent generations of commercial

musicians and represent an example of the rural-urban dialogue that was common (Lwanda 2008b).

After World War II, former Malawian soldiers like James Kachamba (father of famous *kwela* musicians Daniel and Donald Kachamba) helped to popularize guitar and banjo (the manufactured American style instrument) through public performance as well as teaching others to play (Kubik 1987). Contemporaries of the elder Kachamba during the late 1940s included Soza Molesi Chisale and Mofolo Chilimbwalo. These are lesser-known figures today, but the latter is credited with contributing to the growth of popular music in the Chileka/Blantyre area (Kubik 1987, 21). Indeed, Chileka, about a 25-minute journey ten miles outside of Blantyre, has been home to multiple generations of notable guitarists and musicians over the decades including, the Kachamba Brothers Band, Robert Fumulani, and the Black Missionaries (with Anjiru and Chizondi Fumulani).

While the guitar's popularity surged after the Second World War, its presence in Malawi goes back to at least the 1930s, when Black Paseli began learning guitar from his boss (Katundu 1986). Paseli's music featured guitar and banjo accompanied by various percussion instruments, such as a *maseche* (type of rattle), hoe blade, or drum (ibid.). The banjo played syncopated single-note melodic lines in addition to percussive chordal accompaniment, while the guitar played chords primarily. Strumming technique on the guitar included muting the strings on some strokes, thus also creating a percussive staccato accompaniment. Black Paseli is credited with being the first Malawian recording artist, and a founding figure in Malawian commercial music writ large. Paseli first recorded in 1947 when a businessman named Mr. Garton from South

Africa came to produce records (ibid.).[47] Paseli with his brother Barry, a banjo player, became especially popular during that era as the Paseli Brothers Band.

Thus the recording industry began in Malawi intertwined with, if not dependent on, international links with South Africa and nearby Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia). This was a relationship of influence among influential regional centers like Johannesburg and Harare that continued for decades. Harare in particular was a popular destination for musicians and laborers in general as a center for industry and a destination made easier, at least in some respects, by the connection of neighboring territories with the formation of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland: Emerging Structures of Commercial Music

During the period after World War II two major historical trajectories in Africa occurred in nationalist movements and urban development. While this was also the case in Malawi, the situation played out differently. In British West African colonies like Nigeria and the Gold Coast, for instance, there was an expectation that political authority would eventually be relinquished by Britain and taken over by African leadership (McCracken 2012, 238). Whereas in Nyasaland (Malawi) there were concerted efforts to move toward the building of a white minority-controlled federation of Northern and Southern Rhodesia together with Nyasaland (ibid.).

Beginning in the late 1920s there were various inquiries and efforts made by the white settler communities in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, in conjunction with the British

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[47] I suspect that the Mr. Garton mentioned is most likely a corruption of the company name Gallotone, the South African-based record company that published much of Hugh Tracey's field recordings. These include several by the Paseli Brothers, which were recorded in Harare and published in 1948 (ILAM Digital Sound Archives).

government to amalgamate the British territories in that region (Pachai 1973, 256-58). This idea

never really took off until after the 1940s, momentarily interrupted by World War II, but

ultimately leading to the formation of a federation of states, rather than an amalgamation, known

as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (also the Central African Federation, or simply the

Federation). This was met with much opposition by the African communities, particularly in

Malawi, and eventually failed in 1963, just ten years after its establishment. It is not completely

agreed upon by historians why Malawi was included in this, save for perhaps the alleviation of

the debt the colony had acquired at the time (McCracken 2012, 277). With no significant local

mineral deposits, and only minimal industrial and urban expansion, there were some advantages

from the Malawian perspective, but the benefits to the territories of Zimbabwe and Zambia seem

to be negligible. There were notable connections and interchanges, facilitated in part by the

existence of the Federation, but existing nevertheless due to proximity if nothing else. These

connections were in large part related to media, notions of modernity, and participation within

proliferating contexts understood as modern (Chikowero 2014; Tischler 2014).

During the Second World War and throughout the Federation period (1953-1963), the

locus for recording and radio broadcasting of local African content was in Lusaka. The Central

African Broadcasting Station was funded in part by the British government together with

Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.[48] Numerous African musicians recorded there, including

Malawian Wilson Makawa, whose song "Chitukutuku" is a Malawian standard. Alick Nkhata

was influential in this process having worked with Hugh Tracey and being a musician and

composer himself (Fraenkel 1959; Lwanda and Kanjo 2013; Turino 2000). Within the

Federation, the hubs of commercial music making were located in Lusaka and Harare, cities

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[48] C. Miller, 2007 "Zambian Broadcasting" http://www.oldradio.com/archives/international/zamb.htm accesses 10.14.2015

outside the Malawi (Nyasaland) territory. This invites the question as to how Malawian

commercial music was affected, particularly after the Federation was dissolved. No serious radio

station existed in Malawi until around the time of its exit from the Federation and independence

in 1964, two decades after its Zambian counterpart had been recording and broadcasting African

music and entertainment content. Veteran musician Wyndham Chechamba, who performed

throughout the Federation with the military band after WWII, had this to say about the recording

conditions around that time:

> We didn't have anyone recording here [Malawi]. As I said, the Barry Paseli's
> [together with his brother Black] and others were recorded by a company which
> was traveling all the way from South Africa, Gallo Africa. ... They used to travel
> and come and record, but we didn't have any [recording facilities]. Now having
> become an independent country these kind of things ceased to come about and the
> only recording we could do was not commercial. It was only for entertainment
> because they couldn't produce disks and that was the broadcasting center set up
> [where] bands went and recorded a piece for entertainment on the air. That's all
> that we could do. (Interview Chechamba 15 August 2013).

Malawi's commercial music infrastructure never seemed to take root in the decades

following independence. This appears to map onto Malawi's role in the Federation as a labor

reservoir and agrarian economy. The policies of the first president and eventual authoritarian

leader, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda likely contributed further to the underdevelopment of this

infrastructure. His role in mobilizing an expressly Malawian citizenry to rally against pro-

Federation authorities certainly made a tremendous impact on music-making in Malawi during

and after the Federation period.

The Banda Reign (1964-1994)

The span of time between Malawi's independence from Great Britain in 1964 to the transition to multiparty democratic governance in 1994 was a period of relative economic stability. At times there was modest economic growth, but the expansion of a national economy that began from such paltry beginnings yielded a peripheral territory amounting to an assemblage of small towns and country roads. A peaceful transition was had from colonial to indigenous rule, and national unity, again in relative terms, was strong. The elder leader, Kamuzu, was uncompromising and would be counted as one of Africa's several authoritarian dictators.

During the Federation period, the leadership of the Nyasaland African Congress party was striving towards Malawi's independence and sought an authoritative leader to lead the liberation movement against the white minority government. Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda was the person they recruited. He was a medical doctor who had studied in the United States and United Kingdom and at the time of the party's interest, Dr. Banda had a medical practice in Ghana. He was by that time a man in his 60s and thus commanded a different respect than the comparatively young minds running the liberation movement thus far.

Given the eventual secession from the Federation and transition to an independent republic, Banda proved to be a successful figure head. Not long after he became Prime Minister and eventually Malawi's first president, however, he shifted to more authoritarian methods. By 1971 Banda had declared himself the President for Life over the then single-party state. His role as a leader had clearly morphed into that of dictator. Expressive practices in Malawi were subsequently embedded in an environment of state regulation filled with propaganda and censorship. Before they were entrenched in political baggage and sometimes bitter associations,

indigenous music and dance served an important function in the construction of a unified Malawian citizenry.

Cultural Nationalism (Part 1)

During the mid-twentieth century, Malawi and other African territories were gaining their independence from foreign governance. The inherited territorial boundaries were drawn in order to suit the economic and political desires of the former colonial powers and did not follow the contours of indigenous communities. It was therefore necessary to construct and mobilize a heterogeneous indigenous population to identify as citizens of a novel political state. Cultural nationalism was an effective strategy in which indigenous expressive practices were featured during state-level political functions. Familiar songs and dances were adapted by altering the lyrical content to reflect political themes (Nurse 1964; Chimombo and Chimombo 1996; Turino 2000). Individuals were able to fully engage in these experiences by singing and moving along with familiar songs thereby reifying a sense of community associated with the state (*see* Turino 2000**,** 162; 170-77). In Malawi, indigenous songs from various regions within its borders were adapted as rallying songs for independence (Chimombo and Chimombo 1996), and then as praise songs after 1964 for the newly-elected president Banda (Nurse 1964). What began as something that could be understood as an organic relationship between leadership and populous soon became enmeshed in the autocratic leanings of Banda.

Prior to this during the colonial era, music making had historically been viewed as a powerful tool in cultural production and leveraging political power. Because of this, musical practices have been suppressed or mobilized accordingly, by both government administrations and the proletariat. There are three phases of this type of mobilization in Malawian history, and

the Banda era represents the height. The other two phases are the fight for independence (1958-1964) and the referendum period (1992-1994) (Chimombo and Chimombo 1996).[49] Political songs during the independence period often borrowed well-known traditional songs or hymns and substituted texts praising African political leadership (Nyasaland African Congress – NAC lead by Dr. Banda) or denouncing the white minority controlled Federation (Nurse 1964, Chimombo and Chimombo 1996, Turino 2000, 207). After independence had been established and Banda took on a more totalitarian role, national identity and party loyalty were maintained in part by cultural dances being performed (not always voluntarily) at state functions, at the airport upon the arrival of the President from overseas trips, during the annual presidential crop inspection tours, and during holidays. Party loyalty and Malawian unity were further regulated by severe censorship of broadcast and print media, nearly all of which was state-owned. Taken together this was a highly "top down" approach to maintaining national sentiment similar to the communist-inspired Nyerere policies in neighboring Tanzania (Askew 2002).

This use of indigenous dance and song was a common means of engendering national sentiment in many post-colonial African settings. Banda was especially successful in this through his use of the most notorious form of cultural nationalism, what became known as *mbumba* songs. *Mbumba* is a term referencing a particular relationship in local matrilineal societies (i.e. Chewa and Yao) whereby the elder brother or maternal uncle of a woman is the male authoritative figure, called *nkoswe*, and the woman is referred to as *mbumba* (Mitchell 1956b, 146 quoted in Gilman 2009, 47). The League of Malawi Women was an activist group during the fight for independence. This group was co-opted by Banda and the party leadership and referred to as Banda's *mbumba*, while he was "*Nkhoswe* number one" (Gilman 2009, 47).

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[49] Arguably, there is now a fourth period following that described in the Chimombos' 1996 work. The issue I am interested in is not so much the periodization, but the role and historical reverberation of the Banda administration and cultural production.

These *mbumbas* singing groups went from singing praises for independence leaders during the fight against the Federation to serving as a propaganda machine for the totalitarian rule of Banda and the Malawi Congress Party (Chimombo and Chimombo 1996, 105). The songs they sang were rooted in longstanding traditional dances from regions within Malawi, but having their texts reworked to serve various political needs (see also Nurse 1964, Chimombo and Chimombo 1996, Turino 2000). For instance, John Lwanda traces general changes to *mbumba* lyrics in 1979, 2001, and 2006, each praising the current leader—Presidents Kamuzu, Muluzi, and Mutharika respectively (Lwanda 2008a, 95).

Over the next decades these groups of women and the politicized songs they sang would accrue a variety of associations that snowballed over the years. A few of the musicians I worked with described how traditional songs had such a strong association with Banda-era oppression, that many of them avoided working indigenous elements into their own music for years after Banda's regime. This mirrors another sentiment described by John Fenn in his work with Malawian Rap and *Ragga* musicians in the early 2000s. He explains that musicians during the democratic transition and following were so thrilled to have access to international music that they were that much more driven to pursue Rap and related music exclusively (Fenn 2004).

The *mbumba* singers drew from various dances throughout Malawi, depending on the members of the group and where they were performing (Gilman 2009). Throughout the years during the Banda era, women performed these songs so much that the stylistic elements from each region became mutually influential, giving rise to broader genre of related songs known by many Malawians as *gule wa chipeni* (dance of politics) (Gilman 2009, 55, citing Kerr 1998). This is a notable characteristic and points to another example of pan-regional expressive practices similar to those of the *beni-ngoma* style complex, albeit on a smaller geographic scale

within Malawi. Thus there emerged a broad genre that lumped indigenous song and dance traditions together and tightly associated them with oppressive politics.

Authoritarian Rule

There were heavy restrictions on print and broadcast media during the Banda era. Any criticism of the government was outlawed and often carried the strictest of punishments (Chimombo and Chimombo 1996; Chirambo 2005). Local recording artists risked having their songs banned if the lyrical content was not approved. Foreign music was regulated and resulted in a narrow scope of influences from abroad. This political atmosphere resulted in a number of exiles leaving Malawi to live in other parts of Africa or abroad. Banda was also unusually strict in regulating social behavior that resembled Victorian-era norms. In an effort to combat "hippy influence," and mapping onto prevailing conservative Christian values, Banda outlawed bell-bottom pants, long hair on men, and required women to wear dresses, long skirts, or *chitenjes* (colorful sheets of rectangular cloth) wrapped around their lower body – women could not wear pants. In general, this created an environment that favored conformity.

No doubt there were ways around this. Music making still offered space to leverage opposing views and various social commentaries. Still, conservative practices were a safer bet all around. This may have been another factor in the popularization of gospel music among musicians and fans alike. Additionally, liberal social and political movements that were occurring elsewhere were less salient in Malawi due to the aforementioned legislation and general rhetoric pushed by government functionaries and media control. The absence of a white settler population is notable as well when paired with Banda's pro-European views, albeit inconsistent ones. The premier secondary school in the country was established by Banda and

per his directive only European or American teachers were hired. Similarly, Banda was one of the few African leaders who continued to work with apartheid South Africa (Kalinga and Crosby 2001). Thus, a strong Africanization movement in terms of music did not occur as in Zimbabwe and South Africa as a means to leverage resistance of a Black African citizenry against a White European settler government, since no such white government existed in Malawi after 1963.[50]

Furthermore, there were no major record companies other than the short lived existence of Nzeru Records in the 1970s (Lwanda and Kanjo, 2013). Access to manufactured musical instruments was limited as well, often due to import taxes treating musical instruments more like luxury goods than tools of working class musicians. Without a strong free market or a state-backed indigenization campaign like those in Zaire and Tanzania, commercial music was unable to flourish in ways commensurate to neighboring entertainment economies.

Despite political and economic woes, there was a reasonably strong commercial music scene in Malawi since around the 1940s. Music making within this commercial realm carried on throughout the liberation, Banda era, and referendum period, with notable contributions to the Malawian sound by jazz and acoustic musicians beginning in the late 1960s and continuing through the 1990s. Jazz in Malawi is understood differently than in North America in that it has become a far more inclusive term in the Malawian context. In the broadest sense, the term jazz may refer to any music that includes guitar (excluding reggae), or the use of saxophones or trumpets. The *kwela* music of Daniel and Donald Kachamba was certainly influenced by jazz via America and South Africa. During the 1970s, musicians like saxophonist Sydney Banda and

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[50] I am indebted to Felix Nyika for pointing this out and offering subsequent discussions regarding Malawian identity in music.

later bassist and singer Isaac Nkukupha performed jazz as it might be performed in the U.S. By most accounts this was rare.[51]

With the arrival of a state-run radio, a new and local venue for recording musicians from various regions of the newly independent Malawi emerged (Lwanda and Kanjo, 2013). The MBC Band (the house band for Malawi Broadcast Corporation radio) and other state-affiliated entities like Police Orchestra and the Malawi Army Strings—both amplified popular music bands despite what their names might suggest to North Americans—provided renewed avenues for music making. These were dance bands with horns, electric guitars, bass and drum set. As in other parts of Africa, the acoustic guitar gave way to its electric cousin (Kaye 2008).

The acoustic guitar certainly did not disappear entirely, but the electric guitar band instrumentation was, and would remain for some time, the seemingly preferred index for modern participation as reified by young professional musicians. Some of the exemplary bands during the 1970s and 80s were the aforementioned MBC Band, Army Strings, and Police Orchestra, together with Kalimba and its offshoots Makasu and Love Aquarious, Katenga Humming Bees, and Masaka (Lwanda 2008a). The position of guitar as an organological lingua franca has receded in the last several decades giving way to other electronic musical tools, beginning with keyboards and drum machines, to the music production software that now forms the primary basis of music making for many musicians in urban African environments. That said, the guitar has a strong history in Malawi and continues to bear many social and musical indexical references. With the arrival of inexpensive computer and other digital-based technologies, the role of the guitar shifted as electronic drum and keyboard sounds came to dominate in studio and

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[51] There are several musicians who know a handful of American jazz standards, but there is no jazz scene, per se, that draws from the American tradition.

live music production. This shift in sonic preferences articulated well with the changing social and political environment of the time.

Democracy, Liberalization, and Global Participation (1994 – present)

There was no denying the power of song and text in political campaigning and mobilizing public sentiment as Malawian society transitioned from authoritarian rule under Banda to multiparty democratic governance. New political parties sought the work of musicians in composing and/or rearranging campaign songs as well as providing public education regarding the novel democratic election process to a largely illiterate population. The role of the *mbumbas* as salient political entities has subsequently diminished in the years following the referendum that ushered in the democratic era. Similarly, the frequent paring of cultural dance troupes and state-related events has subsided as well. This is not a small consequence, as some twenty years later this was lamented by a number of acquaintances and friends, including those who once spoke out against many of the conditions and policies under the Banda regime.

That regime is a thing of the past now, and subject to memories and manipulations. Though many Malawians had to reckon with a history of authoritarianism, afterwards there was the optimism of the democratic movement that swept the southern Africa region in the mid-1990s. This would only be temporary, as enthusiasm disintegrated into bewilderment. It took some time before newly found political and economic freedoms became a matter of common practice. The comparatively stable social atmosphere that eventually came about into the first decade of the 2000s proved to be one in which creative choices were perhaps more deliberate than reactionary. Like running away after being stuck in one place for too long, there comes a time when walking in place is just fine.

CHAPTER 3:

FROM PLACE TO PLACELESSNESS: SONIC (DIS)ASSOCIATIONS[52]

For many individuals, musical sounds have strong associations to particular places, and listening to music in this way may instill strong emotional reactions. Indeed, it is for this reason that constructing national sentiment or creating feelings of nostalgia effectively includes utilization of musical practices and sounds. Alternatively, the absence of a reference to a particular place within musical works can be notable as well. This may occur as a result of uncritical participation in a practice that is viewed by its constituent actors as normal and thus unmarked. One example might include Canadian musicians who create popular dance music with English lyrics where the product is intended for radio broadcast and wide distribution. A sense of placelessness may also occur as the deliberate act of creating music that is geographically unmarked by someone prone to be viewed as an outsider in an attempt to be accepted as culturally competent. For instance, the Senegalese-American rapper Akon is one notable example of a musician who has achieved considerable success in the U.S. and international markets, and whose African roots are largely absent in his public image and music (Charry 2012, 20). A third sense of placelessness may occur as a result of omissions or obfuscations within the discourse associated with musical works. In this case, musicians and/or musical cues, even if representing a particular place, will not be understood as such because the index does not exist for the listening audience. For instance, Ray Phiri and John (Longwe)

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[52] Portions of this chapter benefitted from feedback from conference papers I delivered at Midwestern Graduate Music Consortium in Madison Wisconsin "Sounding Citizenship in Southern Africa: The Musical Terrain between Place and Placelessness," and at African Student's Association in Champaign, Illinois "Cultural Nationalism in a Trans-State of Affairs: Popular Music in and around Malawi" and unpublished paper "Cultural Nationalism in a Trans-state of Affairs: Navigating Nationality and Style in the 'Spirit of Africa' Music Video Awards"

Selolwane, guitarists with Paul Simon during the *Graceland* era, both have familial ties to Malawi which go largely unrecognized in musical contexts. In relation to musical sounds, the 2014 Billboard Top 10 single "Come With Me Now" by the group Kongos incorporates South African *maskanda* accordion playing and a *kwaito* drum beat.[53] The origins of these sounds may be unrecognized by American listeners, or they may have different indexical references (i.e. the accordion sound may be linked with Louisiana Cajun music rather than South African *maskanda*).[54] Because of these types of occurrences and strategies, it is important to engage in musical analysis that incorporates a spectrum of indexical references which includes the ideas of place and placelessness.

To be clear, my use of placelessness stems from working with Malawian musicians, and musicians from other African countries, who participate in an international, cosmopolitan, or otherwise translocal setting. For them, musical creation can be burdened by the imposition of a link between nationality and musical style, often by others, depending on the context and audience. Listeners' expectations, for instance, may urge African musicians to act as musical ambassadors for their respective countries. Therefore, placelessness should not be understood strictly as the absence of references to place. Whether a particular place is called to mind is largely dependent on the listener. Recession of place, obfuscation of place, and manipulation of references to place(s), as just mentioned, are perhaps better understood as strategies, mobilized because of social implications stemming from privileged positions and ideas of universalism. Efforts, deliberate or unintentional, to make place a non-issue are often employed in order to

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[53] "Q&A: Kongos Turn South African Success into a U.S. Radio Hit"
July 31, 2014 http://radio.com/2014/07/31/kongos-interview-come-with-me-now-south-africa/ accessed Oct 28, 2015
[54] This is an example brought to my attention by Jessica Hajek on her listening experience with this song.

focus on individual expression and personal style. It is within this framework that I utilize the notion of placelessness.

In this chapter, I discuss the ideas of place and placelessness as they relate to social allegiance as indexed in various musical works. My emphasis here is on media and mediated interchange. I look at the two poles that this spectrum represents by first revisiting the idea of national sentiment, but as it occurred in post-Banda democratic Malawi. In contrast to this, I address cosmopolitanism, in regard to ideas of universalism, at the other end of the spectrum. Within the discussion of the two poles of this continuum, I consider several case studies before focusing my analysis on several works by a particular artist, Tay Grin, in order to illustrate three things. First, multiple places and social milieus can be indexed in one recorded work, pointing to the role of multiple geographic and social scales, and disrupting binary frameworks for understanding musical production. What I am suggesting here is that the complex connections between musical practice and social conditions warrants musical analysis that is sensitive to such complexities. A recorded work consists of musical cues resulting from various choices and social conditions, each cue roughly similar to a particular identity within a constellation of identities representing a total individual. Second, musical genres and styles are dispersed and localized at various geographic scales, thus the idea of place to placelessness should be viewed as representing a continuum that includes national and cosmopolitan formations, but is not limited by them.[55] Third, power centers and discourses operate in various combinations and affect how musical cues are understood in ways that lie outside of a local-translocal binary that, in relation to expressive practices in Africa, are often presented as African versus Western.

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[55] See Tony Perman's work on Sungura (2012) and Bob White's on Congolese Rumba (2002) for instance.

Cultural Nationalism (Part 2): A New Era

I have discussed how in Malawi, mobilizing national sentiment was a process that occurred over several decades beginning at the struggle for independence in the early 1960s through the thirty-year dictatorship of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda and then continuing after the first democratic elections in 1994. During the years leading up to the multi-party elections of 1994, musicians, artists, and media personnel were called upon to educate the public in the logistics of the electoral process and the workings of multi-party politics, in a context of renewed national sentiment and optimism (Chimombo and Chimombo 1996).

In the several years following the elections, however, there was a period described as "post-Banda disillusionment," during which time the new democracy failed to become the panacea that had been advertised (Chirambo 2001). Musicians of various popular genres began to leverage their popularity among the people to critique the ruling administration. The lifting of censorship laws, an increase in media outlets, and proliferation of affordable recording technology further enabled musicians to advance their profiles and positions. Since the late 1990s there has been a history of popular musicians entering the realm of politics. Currently, several musicians serve as members of Parliament, while others look forward to the campaign season, during which they can earn respectable wages for their work for individual parties or voter education.

The association of musical with political practices, however, did not bring about a situation that fostered national sentiment, but rather of party affiliation. On the political front, the role of Malawi in the consciousness of its citizens was, and continues to be, rivaled by individual

political parties and their figure heads, no doubt a carry-over from the Banda era.[56] There have been instances of national sentiment related to political activity, however, as in the case in 2010 when Bingu Mutharika's government proposed to reinstate the controversial regional quota system for higher education. This would have raised issues of internal regionalism and ethnic prejudice to which people on social media responded by asserting that they were Malawian first, before a particular ethnicity. This was during the same year that Mutharika proposed and eventually passed a new design for the Malawian flag which was meant to "[symbolize] the development that has taken place" in Malawi (Reckford Thotho Feb 11, 2010 *Nyasa Times*). Ultimately this proved unpopular among many Malawians and the flag has since reverted to its original design. This situation led to one of the more noticeable examples of public discourses about Malawian identity and consciousness.

While music is still present in the political sphere, its role in relation to national sentiment is perhaps felt more strongly in discourses involving international entertainment. There is a keen awareness among many Malawians as to how Malawian music and the state of its music industry compares to that of other countries. While there in 2013, I was often asked how Malawian music could be improved or what Malawian musicians should do to "make it" on the international market. This is not surprising given Malawi's modest economy and compact physical size compared to its neighbors. Entertainment from the Congo region, southern Africa (Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa in particular), and overseas is regularly featured alongside local radio and television programming. Additionally, public rhetoric tends to perpetuate discourses associated with development and donor aid, further reinforcing Malawi's position in the public

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[56] In 2013 while traveling on the 4-5 hour bus ride between Blantyre and Lilongwe I counted over 90 flags flown on various points along the roadside. Of these flags less than five were of the national flag. The others represented three or four of the political parties in contention for the 2014 elections

eye as a developing country. Thus it is against this backdrop that the successes of Malawian artists abroad are measured.

One of the most celebrated early Malawian successes on the international market was the group Kalimba, with their 1983 LP *Make Friends with the World*. Over the next decade groups like New Scene A, Makasu, and Robert Fumulani were celebrated for record deals in Zimbabwe, and Wambali Mkandawire and Alleluya Band both garnered local accolades through their performances in Europe and South Africa. Kalimba's album set the standard at an international level in production and sound quality as well as song writing. It was recorded for Dephon Promotion and Publishing company, the label behind Yvonne Chaka Chaka's success. Attie van Wyk was the producer on the project, now the CEO of a Big Concerts, a major live entertainment company in South Africa.

The recording was essentially a roots reggae album sung entirely in English. Many of the guitar parts were just as one would hear on a Bob Marley record from that period, with staccato rhythms and signal processing effects like phase modulation or wah-wah pedal. The synthesizer and snare drum sounds were consistent with those heard on 1980s American and European recordings. In the January 7, 1983 *Malawi Daily Times* article announcing Kalimba's trip to South Africa, the top 3 listener picks for international artists were: 1) Burning Spear, 2) Bob Marley and the Wailers, and 3) Peter Tosh. Also in the top ten were Kool & the Gang and Abba. The choice of style was in line with the times. Interestingly though, the first single released, "Sometimes I Wonder," was the only song that was not a reggae tune and remained one of the mainstays in songs covered by Malawian bands for decades to come. This single featured a *kalimba* (a lamellophone similar to a Zimbabwean *mbira*) and shaker in the introduction

followed by the distinct punctuation of a horn section and vibra-slap[57] before launching into the

verse. The main guitar part is a single note, slightly muted melodic line that responds to the vocal

melody throughout the verses and choruses, a technique still used well into the 2000s in Malawi.

The keyboards, bass, and drum timbres are remarkably consistent with those heard on famed

South African vocalist Yvonne Chaka Chaka's records during that time, as they used the same

studio.

This single, now generations old, provided a model for future bands that lasted into the

late 1990s. The recording was intended for an international audience using international

industry-standard equipment and facilities and sung in English.[58] In this sense it was situated as a

participant in a perceived universal musical discourse. The *kalimba* sound likely indexed a

general set of African musical timbres regarded as traditional, following the Zimbabwean model

which would have been well-known by those involved.[59] Yet for me, listening decades later in

2013, one of the main indices operating was the set of timbres from the rhythm section, which I

strongly associated with Yvonne Chaka Chaka and thus South Africa. The single, for myself and

countless Malawians, indexes Malawi through association and knowledge about the individuals

who appear on the recording. My experience sharing this song and performing it with Americans

upon my return from fieldwork suggested that American audiences tended to be non-receptive of

audible cues suggesting any association with Malawi. So like the single by Kangos, an index to

place may exist, but which place? And to whom? This is an important question for many people

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[57] A vibra-slap is a percussion instrument first manufactured by the LP company (Latin Percussion) in the 1960s. The instrument was designed to replace the rattling horse jaw bone. It has a wooden ball, fastened by a stiff U-shaped metal wire, to a wooden resonating chamber in which there are metal teeth. The rattling sound it produces is achieved by holding the wire and striking the ball with an open palm. (http://www.lpmusic.com/about/)

[58] Felix Mponda. 1983. "Kalimba Has Sound of Gold." *Malawi Daily Times.* Wednesday 29, June 1983.

[59] The role of the *kalimba* in Malawi is comparatively understated than in Zimbabwe, almost to the point of being non-existent.

living in places that are not well-represented in a field of cultural production, which is tightly linked to a discourse of interconnectivity across the world.

International participation, let alone success, beyond southern Africa was relatively rare for Malawian musicians prior to the 2000s. Since then, however, Malawian entertainers have achieved a number of successes outside Malawi to the pleasure of its citizens, who tend to respond with statements of pride on Internet social media. This should come as no surprise as international experience for recording artists in Africa often translates to significant cultural capital. What is notable here is that from the Malawian vantage point the scope of the international field has changed since the 1980s to include the much more dynamic and salient participation of other Sub-Saharan African countries. In a relatively short span of time, Malawian media channels have gone from consisting of one highly regulated state-run radio station (and no television stations) during the early 1990s to multiple radio stations, a local television station, and diverse satellite television programming with considerable African-centered content.

In an increasingly competitive and international market, Malawian news coverage of local entertainment has often been highly critical of musicians and the state of the industry since at least the 1980s. To be sure, there was and is plenty of positive press, but a substantial amount of print media featured regular lamenting of what is lacking in the music and the music industry. Journalist Gregory Gondwe has written extensively about this on his Internet blog.[60] Sam Banda wrote about the lack Malawian representation at the Channel O awards since Tay Grin's success in 2009.[61] The documentary film entitled *Deep Roots Malawi*[62] features interviews with

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[60] https://gregorygondwe.wordpress.com/
[61] http://timesmediamw.com/malawi-misses-out-on-channel-o-awards-again/
[62] *Deep Roots Malawi* Promote Africa, Inc and Thuja Films Produced by Benjamin Cobb, Kenny Gilmore, Waliko Makhala, and Cedar Wolf

Malawian musicians, radio hosts, and other musical authorities repeatedly expressing a general concern over creating and developing music that is distinctly Malawian—and to have it known by international audiences. This is expressed in the following quote by a Malawian Radio DJ: "So what we want is Malawian musicians to come up with a brand that will identify Malawi but at the same time make it big on the international market" (*Deep Roots Malawi*, 2011). Similar sentiments can be observed in a newspaper article expressing the concern that "Zambian music is flooding the market in Malawi."[63] Costen Mapemba, a former chair of the Music Association of Malawi (MAM), attributes this market saturation and the popularity of foreign music to private radio and Malawian attitudes, saying that "We [Malawians] are not proud of our products."[64] Another former MAM chairman, expressing his concern for Malawian music, stated that, "When I became part of it [MAM] I felt that as a musician there was no way we could succeed unless musicians worked together with one voice to develop Malawi music."[65]

This juxtaposition of the state of Malawian entertainment with that of neighboring countries fosters an atmosphere for constructing and contesting Malawi's place in the world of entertainment media. Nationalist strategies have been historically salient in Malawi and other African countries in the years surrounding independence. This recent assertion of nationality as a brand within interstate markets stands in contrast to making nationality coterminous with the state. Strategies for uplifting national sentiment have involved both asserting distinctly Malawian characteristics and being of a quality or lifestyle commensurate with other sites of cosmopolitan social groups. In Malawi, rhetoric and imagery concerning Malawian creative representation on

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[63] "Malawi playing second fiddle to Zambian music, MAM blames radio stations" 11/09/2009 Nyasa Times (online accessed April 4, 2010)

[64] Ibid.

[65] Email correspondence April 20, 2010

local and international markets remain in the fore of everyday life, and are seen employed by musicians there.

The enduring concern with how local entertainers and their creative arts fare in an international market place is understandable in a context of neoliberal capitalism. It is notable, in this case, that national sentiment is operating outside of the political space occupied by the nationalist strategies of government officials. The multiparty era in Malawi brought with it a liberalized marketplace and increased dialogue with international cultural flows via expanded media outlets. This ethos of nonpolitical global participation resembles the South African context Tsitsi Ella Jaji mentions in relation to the popularity of publications like *Zonk!* Magazine. The nonpolitical bent of the magazine was one of its valued characteristics (Jaji 2014, 128). There was an appeal of participating in "global currents of modernity" through affirmation of a local Black South African modernity (129).

This is an example of positing a local mode of production as commensurate with international standards as perceived by participating individuals. There are other musicians, nevertheless, who seek similar insider status on the international market but without being tied to a particular locality. Instead, their desire is to participate as individuals in their own right, independent of country of origin, and in this sense, without place, thus resembling the placelessness of cosmopolitanism.

Placelessness and Cultural Competence

In 2013 I attended the Breathe Sunshine African Music Conference in Cape Town. While I was attending a panel focused on promoting African music for the international market, one person brought up his concern of not wanting to gear his music toward the "world music"

audience, but rather to have his music judged on its own merit as simply pop music. This sentiment was echoed across the room. After much discussion, it was posited that "world music," as a marketing category, was anachronistic. There has been a measurable decline in the presence of publications and record labels devoted to world music since 2008. Then again, this mirrors general trends in media and record industries during the same period resulting from changes based in the expanding digitization of music recording and distribution. It was pointed out by the representative from Putumayo World Music, however, that the original need of having a category of music for ethnic and more exotic music remains a reality, for which there is a viable market. Despite the suggested presence of market opportunities, the overall sentiment of the conversation that followed was that being a resident of South Africa, Nigeria, or Kenya, for instance, should not preclude those musicians from being musicians first and nationals of a particular country second.[66] The atmosphere was rather escalated and the emotional fervor suggested that people viewed participation within some sort of universal plane, socio-cultural lingua franca, or cosmopolitan ethos was a fundamental right. That is, why should they be responsible for providing the world with exotic art or cultural patina?[67] The rejection of Putumayo's assertion regarding economic opportunity in the world music market invites questions about the relationship between social and economic factors.

I understood this experience to be an example of how music plays a role in shaping subjective belonging. Music making is not just replicating sounds; it is participation in a set of cultural practices. The matter-of-fact sense of cosmopolitan participation exhibited by the attendees of the conference coincides with the near omnipresence of major musical genres like

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[66] I have encountered this countless times with African guitarists with whom I've studied, several of whom explicitly told me they did not want to be viewed as African guitarists, but as guitarists.

[67] For discussion on patina in world music see Erlmann 1996a.

R&B, rap, house music, and rock viewable on music television channels and radio programming available in South Africa. Extensive networks of localized practices tend to diminish the original geographic origins of genres like hip hop, jazz, rock, and house music. Large numbers of local recording industries have well-established traditions of local artists working within these genres that they are typically considered to be their own, and among many musicians I worked with, issues of authenticity or geographic origins regarding these genres seldom arise.

One desire of many of the participants at the above-mentioned conference panel were to have their music thought of as simply music, not as African music. Some of the musicians voicing this were performers of rock, house, and hip hop—genres which are common within the modernist-capitalist cultural formation. To them, markers of nationality or country of origin were undesirable. Having their music framed as South African or Nigerian, for instance, subverts their ability to participate in a cosmopolitan musical practice as true insiders. Participating in a dominant paradigm of cultural production is to play down markers of national difference and to not have a strong association to a place of production. This lack of geographic reference is associated with the discourse of cosmopolitanism described by Turino as emphasizing placelessness, universalism, and pan-historicism (2003: 61). Musicians articulate with this via musical sounds and expressions. The degree of resemblance to the dominant sonic paradigm associated with cosmopolitan expressive forms may be understood as a measure of success, as was the case with some of the musicians with whom I worked, who associated local with traditional, and foreign with progress.

Pan-historicism, universalism, and placelessness are useful characteristics that need to be considered. It remains true that people operate within local contexts and are thus intrinsically tied to those conditions. Individuals are aware of this, often intuitively, and they can work to subvert

this or use it to their advantage — usually both. It is useful then to think about place to placelessness as degrees or points along a spectrum. How strong or weak are the geographic associations? How particular or vague are they? These are important questions to ask, because they are sensitive to the agency of the individual subject and respond to fluid subjective positioning. Socio-musical analysis with these considerations in mind thus avoids binary rigidity and fosters a deeper understanding of individual subjectivities and identities.

To what extent an absolutely unmarked work exists is debatable. I would argue that placelessness, as representing something unmarked by local conditions, is a sonic ideal toward which musicians strive as a means to distinguish themselves as exceptional within their own local market and/or as being competent in a broader international one. Since even a single piece of recorded music contains a plethora of sonic cues whose interpretation is dependent on the background of the individual listener, the complete absence of a reference to place is unlikely. I do not see musicians' attempts at achieving a universal ideal as a way to simply imitate American or western aesthetic preferences, but rather to obfuscate their own locality, which in post-colonial territories tends to be burdened with associations of the subaltern. In what follows, I present brief analyses of Malawian musicians who represent what I am discussing here.

Tiwonge Mhango (R&B Gospel Musician)[68]

I would argue that many African and Malawian urban music artists are creating music whose aspects are practically indistinguishable from music produced in the United States or the UK. For some of them it is a matter of fact; it is how they grew up; it is the most appropriate way to engage the world around them (Fenn 2004). In other cases, this resemblance is necessary to

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[68] Not to be confused with Tiwonge Hango discussed in Chapter 5

compete within certain markets, particularly the United States. Eric Charry describes this in comparing hip hop musicians who are first-generation African immigrants in France versus the US. "Unlike in France," Charry states, "commercially successful American children of African immigrants, such as Akon, Chamillionaire, and Wale, have assimilated enough that their music and public identity bear little trace of Africa" (Charry 2012, 20).

To some extent Tiwonge Mhango represents one example of this. He is a Malawian musician who has worked extensively in Atlanta, Georgia as well as the American Midwest for over a decade. His 2011 album *Shine* contains a range of songs that draw primarily from stylistic features of urban dance music. The drum timbres, harmonic material, formal structures, and vocal stylings resemble any number of contemporary American R&B artists' work. Many of the songs are sung in English and use American colloquialisms, like the title for track 8, "Krank Dat Beat Up." The lyrical themes are rooted in Christian values and beliefs, but are frequently presented in a broader context of inspiring hope and catharsis to those in hard times. In this, the album blends R&B and gospel elements, and might be categorized as Christian R&B (also gospel R&B or rhythm and praise music/R&P).

The majority of the album fits stylistically within the Christian R&B genre with slow and medium tempo grooves in 4/4 time, electronic drum sounds, and English lyrics. The album also contains a reggae version of one of the songs, "I'm in Love," articulating with the enduring popularity of reggae music among a large portion of the Malawian diasporic and immigrant communities. The track includes bass and drums that have been altered to play a lilting shuffle feel common in roots reggae. The bass part sparsely arpeggiates the chords in rhythmic dialogue with the drums' emphasis on beats 2 and 4. The signature reggae off beat pattern is played in the piano part, and a Hammond organ sound provides embellishments for the lead vocals.

There is a traditional piano-based gospel interlude preceding the tune "Send Your Fire,"
arranged as a duet with the lead voice, and resembling practices found in a church service
setting. This segues into the main tune, which has a rhythm and chordal accompaniment that may
call to mind the music of South African gospel singer Brenda Malope. There are hints of
contemporary elements suggesting the influence of *kwaito,* heard in the syncopation and timbre
in the snare drum. The tempo is bright with the pulse at about 120 bpm, but the chords in the I-
IV-V7-I harmonic cycle change every 8 beats, creating the subdued feel of a slower tempo.

Three songs are sung in Malawian vernacular languages—two in Chichewa and one in
Tumbuka. A few tunes contain guitar parts, and of those a couple may index African guitar styles
to some listeners, primarily in the embellishments, and not in an obvious way. In sum, the
accompaniments draw from a wide range of stylistic devices commonly heard in African and
international radio programming.

Tiwonge is part of what many Malawians refer to as the community of diaspora
Malawians who permanently reside in the US or other countries outside the African continent.
They might also be described as belonging to an immigrant community. Either way, sonically
speaking, Tiwonge's album reflects his position as a Malawian living in the US, maintaining
connections to fellow Malawians but operating within the broader American social spectrum and
the English-speaking Christian community. The album does not resemble those recordings
situated in a world music market. Nor does it completely conform to American musical practices
due to the inclusion of vernacular lyrics and some musical references that could potentially be
understood as foreign. The overall sound strikes me as authentically representing Tiwonge.

With the exception of the elements described above, the vast majority of the sounds
conform to international practices. Musical cues that lie outside of this paradigm are subtle and

few in number. In this sense, Tiwonge and his music represent a classic example of cosmopolitanism. More interesting, however, is the complexity of his subjective positioning, as a member of the Malawian community, the African diaspora, and the Christian world—aspects which are strategically indexed within a broader sonic framework that subverts exoticism or foreignness in its adherence to widely-known cultural practices in a competent manner.

Sam Mjura Mkandawire

Sam Mkandawire is a multi-instrumentalist, recording engineer, and Christian gospel singer based in Lilongwe, Malawi. He is the 2015 winner of the national Airtel Trace Music Stars singing competition for Malawi. These awards were held by 13 countries throughout Africa. Winners from each country compete in a finale for a cash prize and recording contract, promotion, and mentorship program. Prior to this, Sam was the keyboardist for the Afro-jazz-rock-reggae group Mafilika, started in 2007. Mafilika won the Music Crossroads national competition for Malawi in 2008, advancing them to the inter-regional competition representing Malawi against bands from Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Tanzania. While they did not win the regional competition, their performance led to a concert tour of the Netherlands in 2009. The next year they participated in the World Bank Global Youth Anti-Corruption Forum in Belgium in 2010 as one of three winners of the World Bank-sponsored music video competition.

Sam comes from an extended family of musicians. His grandfather was Malawian composer and educator Mjura Mkandawire, who was a producer at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) at its inception in the 1960s, where he also managed the MBC band. Sam's uncle is famed gospel musician Wambali Mkandawire. Sam has also spent time working with musicians outside of Malawi while living in Kenya. He explained that being in an environment

with a strong music industry helped him as a musician (interview Sam Mkandawire Oct 2013). Indeed, his skills as an instrumentalist are exceptional, and his playing style on drums and keyboard demonstrate international influences that set him apart from most musicians I encountered in Malawi. This assessment is shared by others, as seen here, when Sam recalled details about his return from Kenya to Malawi in 2005:

> That's when I met a recording artist here, Lulu. When I met him, we were recording some songs with a friend of mine from Zambia, and he was recording at Lulu's studio. So when I went there, I played the piano [parts] for the guy, and Lulu was like, "Wow, I've never heard anyone playing piano this way. Are you from here?" I'm like, "Yea!" [laughter] you know? (Interview Sam Mkandwire Oct 2013).

Sam attributed his particular skill set in part to working with a jazz musician in Kenya, and another pastor who drew from a more progressive gospel repertoire, including African-American artists like Kirk Franklin, Fred Hammond, and Hezekiah Walker, whose music was not typically found in Malawian churches at the time (ibid). His assimilation of the African-American gospel style is impeccable and carries over into his R&B and jazz playing as well. When singing in English his accent displays little evidence of his Malawian heritage.

Sam is an extremely versatile musician, which no doubt benefits him as a session artist. His skill and versatility together, have helped him to be the award winning musician and band leader he is. For instance, his work with the group Mafilika is quite varied, and contrasts with his solo career in terms of musical style. Mafilika's repertoire included music that drew from indigenous Malawian dances along with rock and reggae.

The creative strategies, in terms of personal preferences, and audience or contextual considerations, are exemplified in the band's participation at the 2008 Musical Crossroads Competition (an international music competition in southern Africa, discussed further in Chapter 5), held that year in Malawi. The group was assembled for the express purpose of entering the

competition and winning international touring opportunities. They won at the national level and

ultimately placed third in the international southern African competition. They lost to two

Zimbabwean bands, and as a result, were not eligible for any prizes. What is interesting, if not

ironic, is that their strategy was well-intended, but ultimately fell short. Sam describes it here:

> During the competition [in its early stages], we had been advised to do more traditional music, because they were like ah, these judges [from southern African countries and the Netherlands] want to get a band that is very traditional based, you know? Because they can't be taking a band that is doing jazz, or you know, ah, and then exporting it to places where they're pros in that. But they want something that is new, so for the competition we didn't do any of our rock songs. We just did the traditional songs. It was mostly Afrofusion (Interview Sam Mkandawire Oct 2013).

It was through a strange twist of fate, however, that the band ultimately secured an

international touring opportunity as Sam explains here:

> And then at the gig after the competition, that's where we did the rock songs, ah, 'cuz it was like a gig, so you know, we were free to do whatever, you know? And there's no pressure at all. So when we performed there, one of the judges, she was a lady from the Netherlands. She got very interested in a Malawian band playing rock, and the rock is fused with, ah, like *manganje* rhythm, you know, then it goes from that, and goes to reggae in the same song. So, she met us and asked, "How come you guys didn't perform this way in the uh…[competition]," and we were like we did the traditional stuff, but we are also doing this kind of a sound. So she was like, "This is the sound I've been looking for. Would you guys be willing to tour the Netherlands next year." So we're like, "no doubt," you know?! (ibid.)

There are two familiar themes present here, both of which concern African music

circulating within a cosmopolitan ethos. One involves the approach of "modernizing"

indigenous African genres (see Turino 2000, 16 on modernist-reformism), seen here in

the first quoted example. The other is the desire for the inclusion of exotic elements in a

familiar musical package, illustrated by the judge just mentioned (See Turino 2000, 334-

49 regarding worldbeat). By contrast, the contest Sam won as a solo artist, the Airtel

Trace Music Star contest, featured singers performing their favorite renditions of

international songs, many in English. Thus, three contexts promoted various degrees of Africanization and internationalization of musical style, and serve to highlight the range of strategic choices facing musicians like Sam and others in the southern African region.

Commercial musicians regularly respond to external factors such as contest judges or market forces. Sam's skill set allows him to excel at this, which invites the question as to when imitation becomes authentic representation. Many musicians in this region achieve a degree of bi-musicality in order to succeed. Fluency in correct rendering of musical styles results in various degrees of representation of practices associated with core and periphery. Imitation of a sonic ideal may occur through control over the sounds via access to technology. Imitation of a dominant form of cultural production is a common part of the learning process. This has been discussed by Alex Perullo about Tanzanian hip hop musicians (Perullo 2012) and is a common pedagogical message in the discourse associated with jazz improvisation.[69]

Imitation, however, is not evidence of a deficit of individual agency. Many musicians respond to the circuits of cultural interchange in which they exist. The simultaneity of local and translocal values is not fixed, but rather is fluid and employed in strategic ways responding to various incentives. I turn now to the works and career of one particular musician to illustrate my point.

Tay Grin: Hip hop Artist and Entrepreneur

Tay Grin, born Limbani Kalilani in 1984, is a self-described entrepreneur and hip hop musician of considerable status beginning in his early 20s in Malawi. As a businessman, Kalilani

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[69] I have encountered a number of jazz educators and jazz education media referencing Clark Terry in describing the need for improvisers to go through a process whereby they imitate/emulate soloists, assimilate the musical material, and then innovate in order to represent their own authentic sound. Clark Terry mentions this in his 2011 autobiography *Clark*.

was the co-founder and Vice Chairman of the mobile network company G-mobile and founder of

Phone Yanu, a wireless mobile public payphone company. In an early version of his personal

website he explains that hard work, marketing, and a sense for the public demand are of

significant importance when compared to artistic talent alone. In line with this, Kalilani

established a record and promotion company called Black Rhyno Entertainment. Through this he

has organized concerts promoting Malawian acts alongside other African artists from Kenya,

Zambia, and South Africa. He has also created a clothing line that specifically represents his

vision of what a Malawian brand should be. In a 2008 interview he explained:

> I am trying to get the best designers because I would like to make an excellent tag
> that will purposely help in promoting Malawian culture. The name '*Nyau* Unit'
> signifies a collection of Malawian customs, especially dances, so I want to
> develop a tag that will depict many of the country's ethnicity [sic], for instance
> what is done by the Ngoni, Chewa, Lomwe and other ethnic groups.[70]

Grin's work as an entrepreneur places him in a variety of contexts that illustrate both domestic

and international concerns, as well as an overlap of economics with nationalist, or at least

patriotic, strategies.

In line with the ubiquity and advantages of hip hop as an expressive genre, the biography

on Tay's official website (ca. 2008) explicitly stated his rationale for choosing to work with hip

hop: "Impressed by the history and acuity of hip hop in poetic diction, musicality, message and

its influence on the world over the last 30 years, Tay knew he had found the appropriate medium

for self-expression and influence." Hip hop's appeal to the younger generation is another factor

that he considers. Grin states on his website, "My music targets the youth of Africa urging them

to take pride in their nations and culture. To take responsibility, utilize their God given talents

and find value in contributing to a positive and prosperous future. Whilst emphasizing the need

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[70] Hastings Loka "Tay Grin Dedicates Music Festival to Deceased Mutharika," *Nyasa Times* April 23, 2008.

to eradicate negativity and low self-esteem."[71] Several songs from his 2008 debut album entitled *Proudly African* exemplify this by incorporating indigenous Malawian song and dance styles into a hip hop musical framework, while others are more exclusively situated within the hip hop genre.

In what follows I will examine the idea of place to placelessness as it occurs in three of Tay Grins music videos. I will consider the strength of local references and the scale or specificity of those references. In so doing I will elucidate strategies of social alignment and the role of individual agency.

Music Video Analyses: "Stand Up," and "2 by 2"

Tay Grin's videos (circa 2008), entitled "Stand Up" and "2 by 2" exhibit a strong Malawian national sentiment in their images, sounds, and lyrics. This is in contrast to other videos, such as his, "My Type of Guy," which is exhibits associations to Malawian, southern African, and cosmopolitan expressive practices.

The video "Stand Up," features images of various urban and rural locations across Malawi displayed as scenery as well as backdrops for Tay's rapping and group choreography. Along with club-styled dancing performed by Tay and others, there are scenes featuring indigenous dancers dressed in their respective stylized attire, including a troupe of *beni* dancers in military garb, *Nyau* dancers in elaborate grass costumes and masks, and *ingoma* dancers sporting animal skins and shields. Early in the video, a Malawian flag is prominently featured as it is held up by enthusiastic youth.

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[71] www.taygrin.com as of April 21, 2010

The sonic material in the rhythm tracks is minimal, and prominently features a three-note synthesizer/keyboard riff (A, B, and F#) and a secondary melodic part (also three notes: G#, C#, and F#). This secondary part can also be heard in the keyboard part responding to the main hook. The main synthesizer motif is played in octaves, the lowest pitch providing the bass, and the upper pitches with timbres that are piercing like trumpets and violins. These motifs follow the same melody as the vocal hooks, and operate in call-and-response fashion, beginning with female voices and followed by the male voices. The drum parts feature a rather busy bass drum pattern accompanied by hand claps on 2 and 4, and punctuated by a composite sound having a metallic timbre coupled with electronic snare drum. The rhythm section background remains essentially the same throughout the duration of the song, similar to the recording technique mentioned in Chapter 1. It provides the backdrop for several verses of rapping and the call-and-response vocal hooks.

The text and lyrics highlight Malawi as well. The video opens with the printed text: "*Malawi's own* Tay-Grin in Stand Up (Across the Nation)." The lyrics mention several indigenous dance styles by name, such as *vimbuza, manganje, beni,* and *ingoma* and include the line proclaiming "*onse akoma*," meaning, all of them are sweet (good). The video closes with a black screen and the words "In memory of my heros (sic)," followed by "Dr. H Kamuzu Banda" and "John Chilembwe" both prominent Malawian historical figures. Banda, however, is notably placed in a positive light. During the years after the introduction of multiparty democracy, the expectations of what such a change could produce for the average Malawian have changed. The suppression of political and social commentary and human rights abuses prevalent during Banda's reign have been forgotten by many who yearn for the economic stability that was

present at the time. (It should be noted, however, that there remain plenty of individuals whose memories offer a different view.)

The video for "2 by 2" exhibits similar strategies of juxtaposition. Again, particular attention could be paid to the variety of strategic combinations that may resonate differently depending on the viewing audience. It also features costumed dancers of the *Nyau* and *ingoma* dances, dressed in their respective stylized attire. Tay himself, however, is dressed in urban attire of stylish jeans and dress shirt worn unbuttoned revealing a t-shirt featuring an image of Che Guevara in some scenes, while in others he wears his own "*Nyau* Unit" brand t-shirt featuring an image of the mask used in *Nyau* dancing accompanied by the brand name. Lyrics include phrases like, "I always love and am proud of my nation," and "My obligation is to maintain my heritage." In contrast with the "Stand Up" video, this entire video is shot in a rural village setting. Also, the rhythm track here incorporates a sonic bed of *ngoma* drums playing an indigenous dance rhythm coupled with drum machine claps, kick drum, and punctuated keyboard hits.

These *ngoma* drums, played in conjunction with the synthesizer and drum machine parts, make-up one of the distinguishing features of this song. The primary pulse is about 92 beats per minute, but the *ngoma* drums taken together play an interlocking pattern of 16th note triplets at this tempo, just as they would in the *gule wamkulu* dance they are meant to emulate. Given this juxtaposition, the groove may be understood as either a fast 12/8 (dotted quarter at 184 bpm) or a slow 6/8 at 92 bpm. Hand claps punctuate the rhythmic groove on the off beats. They function in the same fashion they would in American popular music accenting 2 and 4 (or the & of 1 and 2), but the second clap anticipates the pulse slightly, in order to conform to the composite rhythm track of drum machine and *ngoma* drums.

The synthesizer parts provide the harmony track which oscillates between E minor and C major with a D minor as a passing chord thusly (Ex. 3.1):

Example 3.1. "2 by 2" Harmonic Progression.

$$\lVert: \text{ E min} / / / \mid \text{E min} / / / \mid \text{E min} / / / \mid \text{E min} / \text{D min} / \mid$$
$$\mid \text{C Maj} / / / \mid \text{C Maj} / / / \mid \text{C Maj} / / / \mid \text{C Maj} / \text{D min} / :\rVert$$

There are conventional backing vocals singing "oh oh oh" combined with vocal yelps and sound effects, as is often heard in *Nyau* musical practices. There are also electronic sound effects and the presence of what sounds like a harpsichord or guitar, with a detuned character similar to those created by chorus and tremolo effects.

The nationalist strategy exhibited in these videos, through images, text, and sound, may illustrate push back mechanisms whereby a Malawian artistic vision is asserted, on the one hand, or ways in which to bolster the domestic entertainment industry to be commensurate with and compete against an international industry.

In the case of Tay Grin and urban music in Africa more broadly, one can see strong national and cosmopolitan dialogues in the expressive practices. Here the cosmopolitan social group is one that I would describe as Anglophone sub-Saharan African. It does articulate with the Diasporic formation, but with primary centers in Lagos, Nigeria; Accra, Ghana; Nairobi, Kenya; and Johannesburg, South Africa. To some extent there is a pan-African element. A cosmopolitanism localized within Africa, or national practices in a translocal interchange contributing to this social group.

Video Analysis: "My Type of Guy"

In 2009, Tay Grin became the first Malawian to win a Channel O "Spirit of Africa" Music Video Award for the video "My Type of Guy." He did so in the category "Best Duo or

Group" with a collaboration featuring Zimbabwean reggae/dancehall singer Buffalo Souljah, the Namibian female duo Gal Level, and Nigerian producer DJ Waxxy. Since then he has continued to earn critical acclaim. Most recently, in 2014 he won the award for the category Best International African Act at the 6th annual Black Entertainment Film Fashion and Arts (Beffta) Awards in London.

The video "My Type of Guy" was the 2009 winning music video in the category "Best Duo or Group," and features Tay Grin among other regional artists.[72] The video is set in a soccer stadium where Zimbabwean Dancehall/*Ragga* star Buffalo Souljah and Tay Grin are battling for the affection of Namibian duo Gal Level. Little reference to a specific named location is made. Soccer is the predominant sports metaphor in this scenario with basketball imagery appearing as well in a secondary role. The style of dress for the men consists of either sports attire, or jeans and polo shirts; and the women are featured mainly in jeans and bikini tops. Sunglasses and jewelry complement the outfits and are consistent with stylish cosmopolitan urban youth fashion. Dancing is featured but remains casual, and performed in a style typical of what one may find in an urban night club. The vocal melodies consist of a blend of American hip hop, R&B, and the Jamaican hip hop style, *ragga*, which is commensurate with each of the artists' individual singing styles. The lyrics, sung in English, express the qualities the ladies of R&B duo, including Gal Level, "are looking for in a guy." The guys respond with confident declarations of their favorable attributes. Soccer jersey color schemes may index teams and their geographic origins; however overt location reference is evident in the final lines sung, which state the countries of origin for each of the contributors: Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria.

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[72] Buffalo Souljah (Thabani Ndlovu) from Zimbabwe; Gal Level (Daphne Willibard and Frieda Haindaka) from Namibia; DJ Waxxy (Oluseye Abiodun Olayanju) from Nigeria

The rhythm track incorporates a deep bass, subtle marimba sounds, keyboard punctuation, and drum machine sounds. The drum timbres reference those found in *kwaito* music, a blend of South African pop, house music, and hip hop. In addition to the various marimba sounds, there sounds that resemble steel drums. There are also synthesizer sounds referencing horns, violins, and a distorted electric guitar, but not necessarily trying to duplicate any of those timbres. The entire tune remains in the key of E-flat minor for the duration of the track.

Each of these artists comes from a different country, yet all of them operate within a cosmopolitan cultural formation. Particularly relevant here is the notion that cosmopolitanism is a cohesive cultural formation that binds its constituents via "communication loops" through which ideas, actions, and materials are disseminated (Turino 2003; 62). Each of the musicians here has in their individual artistic works varying degrees of local influence, yet they also incorporate stylistic features that are pan-African in character. This reflects another aspect of Turino's concept of cosmopolitanism in that there are both influences stemming from power centers such as North America and local distinctions based on particular contextual conditions.

In the song "My Type of Guy," the three musical styles represented in each of the vocal parts reference genres that can be seen as situated within the African Diaspora. The rhythm tracks, expressed by the drums, percussion, keyboards, and bass, reference a comparatively local South African genre, *kwaito.* The resulting composite sound is of a cosmopolitan nature, and in a sense, augments the soccer imagery, which is quintessentially cosmopolitan. In the other two videos, Malawi was represented by indigenous dances at a more specific geographic scale. Traditions from region within Malawi were used to represent the country as a whole. Tay Grin's

musical cannon as whole, illustrates the idea of nested scales and the complexities of subjective positioning.

A key characteristic of cosmopolitanism is the way in which power centers and specific locations both contribute to shared habits among trans-local constituents. Popular musical styles similarly reflect varying degrees of localization operating along a continuum of geographic scales. The constellation of sonic stylistic variables is constructed and interrelated in a similar fashion that index the shared values within the cosmopolitan cultural formation.

From Place to Placelessness

Two strong discussions are present here. One of transnationalism and the other of nationalism, both with historical roots yielding pan-regional southern African particularities. Musical practice reflects these narratives in the following way: Localized themes are perceived in the music via references to particular practices and styles easily identified with a specific area or country. The notion of "place" is strong here. Translocal practices, on the other hand, are sounded with the use of widely-known cosmopolitan genres like jazz and hip hop, which are relatively unmarked by place, or rather concerns with place of production, due to their broad geographic diffusion. In this instance, I have shown the notion of "placelessness" is more apt. However, these two levels of geographic scale are insufficient on their own. In actual practice, there are multiple nested scales that are indexed within the process of musical creation and interaction. These are articulated through the use of a repertoire of expressive devices circulating among actual individuals and defining regional communities across borders.

Place, Placelessness, and Representation

Given the dominance of the entertainment industries in South Africa, Nigeria, and to a lesser extent of those countries neighboring Malawi, there is understandable reason for Malawian musicians to have concern about their own branding and representation in international markets. Unfortunately, some contributions made by individual Malawian artists are absorbed in the larger markets in which they participate. Thus, another aspect to placelessness is the silencing of one place through some sort of socio-geographic quantization. Put simply, Malawian musicians have contributed to popular music in the southern African region more broadly, but the music of Malawi is unrecognized by many outside of Malawi, and even within Malawi is seen as lacking an identity of its own compared to Zimbabwe, DRC, and South Africa. Malawian contributions to international popular music in this region have had varying degrees of impact with regard to uniquely Malawian characteristics. Music popularized in this region has benefitted from Malawian talent, but to what extent specifically indigenous Malawian stylistic features contributed to this is difficult to say. This is partly a logistical dilemma based in the history of arbitrary colonial borders and fluidity of expressive practices coupled with a comparatively underdeveloped media infrastructure and small economy.

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International contexts and trends are increasingly noticeable and highlight notions of Malawian identity through repeated juxtapositions while contributing to the ethos that might be described as an African cosmopolitanism. This sets up an environment in which artists must flexibly negotiate a balance between marking difference in a competitive field and exhibiting unmarked competence within the broader set of shared practices and values. Unsurprisingly, there is no one way to go about this. As a result, many individuals and groups in southern Africa,

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and Africa more broadly, develop various social strategies and actively contribute to the construction of larger social groups with which they may identify. One common theme involves the idea of reimagining what it is to be Malawian, or some other nationality, while also constructing new ideas of what African is. There seem to be added challenges at play here. One involves an expanding environment that tends to measure success in terms of financial gains, and another is related to increasing pressure to participate on geographic and social scales beyond local contexts.

CHAPTER 4:

AFROPOLITAN REMIX: CIRCUITS OF INTERCHANGE[73]

Afropolitanism is a term, popularized by political scientist Achille Mbembe and writer Taiye Selasi, which I define as a set of ideologies at the intersection of cosmopolitan and African subjectivities. Like cosmopolitanism, Afropolitanism, is shaped by tangible circuits of interchange, often assisted by different technologies, and comprised of various individuals and groups of people. As new networks facilitating social interaction emerge, new subjective positions arise. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the broadcast media industry in southern Africa and of some individuals who work within those networks. Drawing from this, I continue the discussion by explaining how Afropolitanism has come to be understood by different individuals, some of whom support it, others critical of its implications. Either way, both perspectives suggest a possible lack of adequate tropes within traditional translocal social theory. Music, and the arts more broadly, are frequently brought up within the discourse associated with Afropolitanism. Within my discussion explicating this social category, I briefly draw upon various musicians and their music to further elucidate this concept. Finally, using the concepts within this and the previous chapter about place and placelessness, I discuss the multinational musical group Mahube, followed by the South African-based Malawian jazz musician Erik Paliani, to reintroduce the notion of nested scales vis-à-vis the idea of a southern Afropolitan.

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[73] Portions of this chapter benefitted from feedback from a conference paper I delivered at the African Students Organization 11th Annual Forum, University of Illinois, April 19, 2014

Circuits of Interchange

One of my goals in this study is to reconsider notions of cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and other broadly inclusive tropes occurring in conjunction with globalization discourses that continue to resonate across disciplines. Discussions about globalization that occur in scholarship and in everyday life can be understood in too many ways to be useful as a unitary analytical concept, even when it is said to be two processes occurring simultaneously as in the process of 'glocalization' (Swyngedouw quoted in Kelly 1999). Indeed, global, transnational, national, and sub-national concerns are not likely to recede or disappear, but rather coexist in relation to one another in varying degrees. This simultaneous attention to the vast and particular is something I have described in terms of a continuum between place and placelessness. Similarly, the idea of Afropolitanism embraces this dual concern, ever so poignantly in the phrase "Afropolitan patriotism" (Skinner 2015, 162). There is, however, a need to unpack the multitude of points on a continuum of subjectivities. Hence, it is these degrees of relationality and the subsections within large-scale social and political organization that need to be examined.

Some scholars have made important contributions in arguing against ambiguity in these types of social phenomena. Paul Zeleza, in his discussion of international academic scholarship, uses a notion of flows and exchanges to address the nature of Africanist scholarship between Africa and the U.S. (Zeleza, 2002). He outlines three types of flows: the physical mobility of scholars, the networks of scholarship and libraries, and various types of collaborations. Similarly, Ronald Kassimir eschews the ambiguous use of typical globalization discourse as a heuristic device and takes measures to distinguish particular types of "transboundary formations" as analytical tools (Kassimir, 2007). He posits this in an effort to better understand the nature of power relations at the intersection of internal and external factors. Kassimir distinguishes

between three types of transboundary phenomena: actual international contexts dealing with international law and conventions affecting domestic affairs, networks that act as delivery methods of commodities, and external installations within territories, such as religious missions, refugee camps, and multinational corporate factories, which retain identities that largely reference that which is external to their locations. Thomas Turino (2000, 2003) and Fernando Rios (2008) in their discussions of cosmopolitanism refer to "communication loops" as the means by which ideas, practices, technologies, and people move and act as cohesive elements across specific sites of trans-state cultural formations. This degree of tangible specificity is crucial when handling matters of translocal phenomena otherwise referred to under the broad umbrella of globalist discourse. From this I glean four areas of focus: the movement of *people* and the resulting face-to-face interactions in particular contexts; the movement of *commodities*, including objects and ideas, across territories; the nature of the *conduits* through which these travel, such as types of broadcast media; and the nature of the actual *site* of social convergence and interchange.

Here, I am interested in the conduits, or communication loops, more broadly referred to as circuits of interchange, and the resulting set of shared habits of thought and practice that help define and bind translocal cultural groups. Circuits of interchange are utilized by actual individuals in particular places, and are points of origin for the creation and/or continuation of values that inform individuals' decisions as well as their habituated behaviors. So in the case of southern Africa, the nature and scope of broadcast media, long distance communication, and travel have changed in significant ways since the 1990s. This forms a substantial basis for the emergence of the discourse related to Afropolitanism and warrants some explication.

History and Overview of Media and Television in Southern Africa

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, translocal networks within the entertainment industry have expanded in southern African as well as sub-Saharan Africa more broadly. Broadcast media networks in South Africa and Nigeria have played the most notable roles in this expansion within Anglophone African countries, and operate in conjunction with notable contributions from Kenyan and Ghanaian entertainment markets. The increase in the number of media outlets includes state-run and private radio stations, broadcast and satellite television, mobile phone technologies, and access to the Internet—each of which have contributed to greater dissemination of music and music videos. Furthermore, these channels of communication help propagate notions of musical and presentational style, manners of dress, codes of conduct, and ideologies in a cosmopolitan environment that is directed toward and populated by a growing young middle-class African population.

The growth of the commercial music scenes in southern Africa, particularly after the 1980s, is perhaps most evident through the proliferation of music videos available through satellite television, Internet websites, and inexpensive DVDs. In keeping with my focus on individuals, I would point out that these media networks are populated by people who interact on location and who travel between major urban centers. Live performances and music festivals also contribute to the translocal circulation of musical values and socialization despite falling outside the typical mass media often discussed in popular literature. Pan-regional international music festivals such as Music Crossroads International, hosted on a rotating basis among Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, the Livingstone Cultural & Arts Festival in Zambia, the Lake of Stars Festival in Malawi, and the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown,

South Africa, also offer platforms for the movement and interaction of musicians between countries, and the construction of a shared canon of aesthetic preferences.

Many African musicians continue to tour internationally outside the festival circuit as well. To what extent there is a significant increase of internationally touring musicians in southern Africa is difficult to ascertain. I noticed an increased frequency of West African performers touring in Malawi beginning in the 2000s as evidenced by newspaper archives and corroborated through discussions with musician friends. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of Malawian musicians traveling internationally to a greater number of destinations for concert tours. In the last few decades there have been some improvements in the economies, infrastructure, and air travel in southern Africa and some West African countries (see Heinrich Bofinger 2011, for instance, on the growth of air travel in various African countries). It is notable that in the cases of South Africa and Malawi, there was a shift to more democratic governance after 1994 which occurred in conjunction with increased efforts to expand economic opportunities. It is for this reason that I place some emphasis on the history and nature of mass media, and television in particular, in this region.

The Electronic Media Network Ltd (M-Net) was founded in 1985 in South Africa. It was the first direct-broadcast satellite television service in South Africa and began its first broadcasts in October 1986. It was a project jointly initiated by four newspaper groups, two in English, and two in Afrikaans. Originally seen as a political move to compete with the state-run SABC's monopoly, it is now a commercially successful venture that broadcasts both local and international content to 1.6 million subscribers as of 2008 (*Financial Mail* Aug. 1, 2008). It has offices in South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya and broadcasts to forty-one countries across Africa.[74]

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[74] www.mnetcorporate.co.za/ArticleList.aspx?Id=33 (accessed May 6, 2010)

According to their corporate website, they seek to "create the best television entertainment in Africa and beyond." They have invested in the creation of local productions to situate Africa as "a significant player on [sic] the entertainment global arena."[75] In addition to creating local content that is filmed on site in different African countries, they also invest in cross-continental work and training exchanges. One such example involved the invitation of fifteen Nigerian TV interns (in all areas of expertise, including lighting, costuming, and sound engineering) to learn about the daily operations of soap opera production using two South African shows as educational sites and paradigmatic models. This served to benefit both the individuals as well as M-net as it embarked on its first production of a Nigerian soap opera in 2008.[76] Similarly, M-Net partnered with the Kenyan Film Commission to send ten Kenyan TV and film professionals to Nigeria to participate in a skills sharing initiative there.[77]

These types of exchange initiatives occur in other entertainment sectors as well, such as DJ Waxxy, a music and video producer who has worked with Malawian and other regional musicians. DJ Waxxy (Oluseye Abiodun Olayanju) participated in an exchange of affiliated radio stations between Nigeria and South Africa.[78] It is through these personal interactions within corporate institutions that an internationally influenced, yet African cosmopolitan ethos is fostered. Musical awards events celebrating and promoting albums and videos are key sites for reinforcing pan-regional social and musical values and aesthetic preferences.

The model event is the Kora All African Music Awards, itself based on the American Grammy Awards. Together with the MTV Africa Music Awards and the Channel O "Spirit of

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[75] www.mnetcorporate.co.za/ArticleList.aspx?Id=33 (accessed May 6, 2010)

[76] "M-Net's South African soap operas welcome Nigerian TV professionals!" Wed, 2 Apr, 2008 www.mnetcoroporate.co.za/ArticleDetail.aspx?Id=1163 (Accessed May 6, 2010)

[77] "East meets West…M-Net initiative sees Kenyan filmmakers head to Nigeria" Wed, 2 Apr, 2008 (http://www.mnetcorporate.co.za/ArticleDetail.aspx?Id=1164 – accessed May 6, 2010)

[78] Channel O website http://beta.mnet.co.za/channelo/ChannelArticle.aspx?AId=28443 (Accessed May 5, 2010)

Africa" Music Video Awards, these awards represent the three most salient and are structured around similar agendas and formats. Over the years they have each sought to position African musical contributions in a positive light in an international arena, and to promote a certain degree of African unity via music. The structural features of these events also demonstrate a degree of commonality: they all involve audience voting via cell phone or Internet access; they have a televised awards ceremony; they feature artists from across the continent; and they all have similar generalized award categories such as "Best Artist" and the pan-regional genre categories of R&B and hip hop. These events represent sites for personal interaction among musicians, producers, audience members, and production staff. In the time leading up to the events, fans also interact by casting votes in anticipation of the televised ceremony announcing the winners.

The Channel O 'Spirit of Africa' Music Video Awards is a commercially sponsored event held in or near Johannesburg in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Nominated videos are announced in July, and the awards presentations take place in late October. The winners are chosen by the public through a voting process via the Internet and cell-phones. Videos are broadcast on Channel O, which is available through M-Net satellite television. Electronic Media Network (M-net) is the corporate entity that manages Channel O.

Channel O does not limit its content to music videos, but broadcasts specifically African content that fosters intra-continental exchange within the content of shows such as *Survivor Africa* and *Big Brother: Africa.* These are reality TV series based on American and European models, but feature contestants from various African countries. *Big Brother Africa* is a reality television game show in which over two dozen individuals from twelve or more African countries live in a house isolated from its surroundings and current affairs; they compete against each other to remain the longest as contestants get voted off weekly with the participation of at-

home viewers, who vote online or via mobile phone SMS (text) messaging. Musical guests are sometimes featured from contestants' home countries. Many contestants are in the entertainment industry, but various occupations are represented. It is filmed in Johannesburg, but there are other specifically national versions that include *Big Brother Mzansi* (South Africa), *Big Brother Nigeria*, and *Big Brother Angola*.

Another show that has international African representation is the African Movie Academy Awards (AMAA), hosted annually in Nigeria. There are typical categories like Best Film or Best Leading Actress as well as Best Diaspora Feature, Best Film by a(n) African(s) Abroad, Achievement in Visual Effects, and Achievement in Soundtrack. Ideas about style, aesthetic preferences, and values spread through human interaction within a constellation of local contexts bound together via observable networks such as those just discussed.

The advent of African-centered channels and programming on subscription satellite television within Africa has elevated the profile of a cosmopolitan social group bound by emerging ideas of Africanness, and is described by some as Afropolitan. This social world tends to consist of fashionable and well-to-do young adults operating in urban lifestyles. In this case, the media tend to feature images and sounds resembling those of African Diasporic communities in Europe and North America together with sights and sounds of the African artists' home countries added in varying amounts. The artists' countries of origin are not always obvious, but are foregrounded in platforms like video awards contests that have categories based on African region as well as genre.[79]

The notable feature of events and shows like these is that they represent a context in which to assert national identity within a broader cohort of African professionals, many of whom

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[79] The country of origin seems to have been a higher profile on Channel O video awards' website in 2009 and 2010 compared to now (2014)

are associated with the entertainment industry. Media coverage in smaller markets can help

propel national sentiment by publishing favorably about local participants in international

forums. The works generated here are on the one hand growing out of a longtime interchange

between African with European and North American expressive practices. National

representation brings in another scale, but power centers like Lagos, Accra, Johannesburg, and

Nairobi contribute to different levels of translocalization and localization that I describe as pan-

regional. Within this realm, African and European-American negotiations occur in expressive

practices, yielding reinventions and localized versions of cosmopolitan cultural practices that

occur in these other power centers, hosted by South Africa and Nigeria among others, and

operating with varying impact on the local and pan-regional African network of communities.

In each of these settings there are various interchanges among participants, from direct

collaboration to simply an awareness of discursive practices. In Malawi, individuals who appear

on these shows or events are generally celebrated in print, broadcast, and Internet social media.

Of the three shows and events, the Big Brother Africa series receives the most attention in

Malawi as it is a regular weekly show with a substantial cash prize for the winner. The Channel

O video awards are comparatively less of a spectacle, but have a notable presence in the print

media when Malawians are involved, though this has not been frequent. I noticed that some

people blamed the lack of Malawian representation on a lack of initiative on the part of

musicians. This is really more a case of a lack of access to facilities. In order to be considered, a

musician's music video must be aired on Channel O after meeting a comprehensive set of

guidelines for quality assurance. These include not only technical specifications, but content-

specific guidelines such as for story line. Malawian musicians who get their videos aired have

made a notable achievement in that alone. Nominations for the awards are therefore that much

more competitive and prestigious. Winners are chosen by viewer choice. Finally, the AMAA

receives perhaps the least attention of the three in Malawi owing in part to the fact that the film

industry in Malawi is still rather young.[80][81]

In some ways, the burgeoning entertainment industries in southern Africa, and in Malawi

in particular, expand the realm of possibilities for socialization and enculturation. The social

world in which one is to be Malawian or African, if these media images and interactions are

taken as evidence, now includes elements of material and social success with equivalent

participation in settings commensurate with overseas international norms. In this way the

overused "imagined communities" trope fosters a useful discussion, not of a singular national

sentiment, but of a social sentiment that is variable in accordance with the desires of the

individual agent.

It should be kept in mind that in Malawi and South Africa, the divide between media

personality and common citizen is often breached in the city center of Blantyre or in the suburbs

of Johannesburg. To what degree there is a difference between Malawi or South Africa and the

US, in terms of celebrities' interaction with the public, is difficult to say. From my own

experience, I noticed it was perceived as unremarkable to have met Hugh Masekela or for my

housemate to have met Trevor Noah. Similarly, judging by the frequency with which I was asked

if I had ever met Madonna, or Michael Jackson in years past, it seems there is at least anecdotal

evidence suggesting a comparatively porous border around the world of celebrities as perceived

by some people in this region. This being the case, national and international entertainment that

is more accessible, via more sources, and illustrating local Malawian participation, has a way of

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[80] The film viewing audience and culture has changed in Malawi since the 1980s and suffered a decline in venues beginning in the 1990s. During my last visit there was a modest presence of movie theaters comparable to those in the US and South Africa

[81] It should also be noted that the context I describe is Anglophone and tends to exclude many Francophone and Lusophone individuals and countries/contexts.

influencing ideas of Malawianness and Africanness. There is a cosmopolitan ethos here, but one driven by African centers of power, primarily via South Africa and Nigeria. The influence of these particular centers distinguishes practices within this setting from a broader cosmopolitan ethos that is driven by North American and European centers of power (primarily via New York, Los Angeles, London, and Paris). In relative terms, this may be considered localization, but at such a large geographic and social scale, that it seems to invite the possibility for a comparable social group, as the name Afropolitan suggests.

In examining these circuits and processes of interchange, I have tried to consider them in relation to socialization and the resulting social groups. Turino outlines three types of trans-state cultural formations: immigrant, diaspora, and cosmopolitan. Each of these share the characteristic of being communities shaped by multiple non-contiguous geographic sites. They differ in how the sites of influence are operating in relation to each other. Immigrant communities are defined by bilateral relations between an original home and the new environment. Diaspora communities are constructed by multiple sites across space and time, but have a single notion of homeland, whether functioning symbolically or pragmatically. Cosmopolitan communities are also shaped by multiple geographic sites, but lack the concept of an original homeland (Turino 2003). All of these formations were relevant during my research in addition to social organization and allegiance at the level of country, smaller regions within countries, and the supranational.

A central concern in my research is the subjective position of the individual in relation to social groups. In his discussion of cosmopolitan formations, Turino describes features of cultural groups more broadly, stating that they are "defined by constellations of conceptions, ethics,

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practices, technologies, objects, and social style − habits and resources for living," and that "[m]embership is a subjective condition formed through on-going relations to particular environments and external conditions" (2003, 61). Drawing from the works of Michel Foucault and Kim Atkins, Sylvia Bruinders reminds us that subjectivity is "fragmentary, processual, and multiple" (2012, 23) as well as "relationally produced through collective experience" (24). With this under consideration, I examined language, fashion, material goods, and music as they contributed to a social world that is similar to a cosmopolitan cultural formation, but not exactly, and similar to an African diasporic cultural formation, but understood differently by various individual actors.

The Afropolitan

The genesis of the terms "Afropolitan" and "Afropolitanism" occurred in response to particular conditions as experienced by several key individuals in scholarly and popular media. In the early 2000s, Africanist Scholars Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe used the term Afropolitanism largely in response to dominating political-intellectual paradigms in order to reflect a more suitable African cosmopolitanism relevant to a post-Apartheid Johannesburg (Mbembe 2001, 2003; Nuttall 2004; Nuttall and Mbembe 2007, 2008). Around that same time, Taiye Selasi, a London-born author of Nigerian and Ghanaian descent who grew up in the U.S., wrote an essay in which she describes what it is to be an Afropolitan; she did so in an effort to grapple with the issue of her own heritage and upbringing (Selasi 2005, 2013). Many others have since embraced the concept because it represents an optimistic outlook accommodating multiple cultural influences that articulate with African heritage or community interests amid a context of late capitalism, urbanization, transboundary interchanges, and generational differences.

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My encounter with the term Afropolitan did not occur until shortly after I had arrived Johannesburg in December 2012. The first instance was when I was looking for music magazines and other local publications in a local bookstore, when a glossy cover featuring Zimbabwean singer-guitarist Oliver Mtukudzi caught my eye. It was a magazine titled *The Afropolitan* and it had a KAYA FM radio station logo prominently featured in the upper left-hand corner. Despite there being a well-known musician on the cover and large radio station logo, this was not a music publication, but a general lifestyle magazine catering to upwardly mobile, culturally savvy, 20 to 30-somethings in and around South Africa (Tutton 2012). Some weeks later I stumbled across an episode of the documentary series titled "Tutu's Children" that featured several young African leaders representing various fields and disciplines and hailing from various countries on the continent. One of the individuals identified herself as an "Afropolitan," and this struck me not only because of its apparent amendment to the cosmopolitan narrative, but the fact that she self-identified as such, which added more weight to what I thought an intriguing moniker.

As I continued conducting my research in the field, I kept the notion of Afropolitanism in mind. I found it to be a potentially useful conceptual tool that suggested the presence of nested social and geographic scales shaping cultural groups across conventional boundaries. Upon my return to the U.S. in December 2013, I examined ideas associated with Afropolitanism in scholarly and popular writings. Coincidentally, there appeared to be a heightened interest in the concept observable in various media beginning in 2012 and extending until early 2014. I believe the concept remains a useful tool when taken in conjunction with the debates and critiques surrounding it.

Afropolitan(ism): What Has It Come to Stand for, and for Whom?

Drawing from two key tropes, the term Afropolitan suggests a binary construct combining the terms African and cosmopolitan. My own sense is that it represents more than this, and it is this reason the concept resonates strongly among individuals who identify as such as well as those who have reservations about the idea. In the aforementioned article, "Bye-Bye Babar or 'What is an Afropolitan?'" Taiye Selasi describes Afropolitans using social and geographic associations that conspicuously avoid binaries. For instance, when describing a representative Afropolitan context she writes, "London meets Lagos meets Durban meets Dakar," and later speaks of a woman who "lives in London but was raised in Toronto and born in Accra." Selasi recounts various experiences and backgrounds that would typify those of Afropolitans, such as having a "funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic success" (Selasi, 2005). Although she speaks generally about a "cultural hybrid," at various points in the article she outlines key characteristics that also undermine a binary reduction, for example when she specifies that it is an identity construct formed along "at least three dimensions" that may include national, cultural, and racial aspects (ibid.).

Journalist Mark Tutton defines Afropolitans using multiple qualifiers in his CNN article titled, "Young, Urban and Culturally Savvy, Meet the Afropolitans" (2012). In a description of editor Brenda Nyakuda he writes, "A Zimbabwean based in Johannesburg, who has lived in London, she has the kind of international background that typifies an Afropolitan" (ibid.). About Minna Salami, the creator of the blog MsAfropolitan, Sutton writes, "[She] is a true global citizen. Born in Finland to a Nigerian father and a Finnish mother she has lived in Nigeria, Sweden and New York, and now lives in London" (ibid.). It is possible that these descriptions are written as such in order to be dazzling for readers of more mainstream media rather than to

function as a comment on social group delineation. These descriptions do, however, coincide with other sentiments expressed by readers via their online comments, often indicating their satisfaction with encountering a concept that addresses the liminal or in-between spaces many of them said they occupied.

The illustrations articulated above coincide with ideas and contexts addressed by scholars Achilles Mbembe and John Fenn III, who wrote about the regular international movement of citizens of African countries as representative of, or contributing to, something that is not quite captured by cosmopolitanism (Fenn 2004; Nuttall and Mbembe 2007). These descriptions and observations may call to mind a general theme concerning a new generation coming to terms with experiences that are at the nexus of African and Western societies, but I believe that would be missing Selasi's point, as seen in this extended quote:

> The acceptance of complexity common to most African cultures is not lost on her prodigals. Without that intrinsically multi-dimensional thinking, we could not make sense of ourselves. What distinguishes this lot [Afropolitans] and it's like (in the West and at home) is a willingness to complicate Africa – namely, to engage with, critique, and celebrate the parts of Africa that mean most to them. Perhaps what most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness is the refusal to oversimplify; the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa alongside the desire to honor what is wonderful, unique. Rather than essentialising the geographical entity, we seek to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honor the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain our parents' cultures (2005).

I would also argue that it is more than simply cosmopolitanism in Africa. It is not, in other words, cosmopolitanism as realized in local conditions in particular places on the African continent. The difference between Afropolitanism and cosmopolitanism in Africa lies in the role that the idea of Africa plays in the minds of those who identify as Afropolitan. Afropolitanism is positioned by some as a contrast to Diaspora, and cosmopolitanism as well, for that matter. In this sense, Afropolitanism encompasses or articulates with African, African Diaspora, and cosmopolitanism. Unpacking the discourse and debates surrounding these terms and what they

stand for reveals the importance and perhaps urgency to grapple with social belonging in translocal contexts, and the limitations of current models.

Like its constituent terms African and cosmopolitan, the word Afropolitan has come to stand for different things to different people. Many individuals have come to embrace the idea and it appears in various social groups and disciplines. The notion of Afropolitan as an identity construct and lifestyle became increasingly widespread after the publication of Mbembe's and Selasi's pieces. Although the cause of this cannot necessarily be attributed to these publications, it should be noted that Selasi's piece, in particular, gained substantial traction in the years following and is widely cited in popular and social media. Although, Mbembe's work is cited in scholarly literature, notably in the recent monograph *Bamako Sounds: The Afropolitan Ethics of Malian Music* (Skinner 2015), I find the responses to this notion in popular literature were considerably heightened, and driven by both scholars and journalists. Furthermore, the textual discourse and rhetoric seemed to parallel the sentiment of the musical interactions I had been witnessing in South Africa and Malawi around the same time.

The notion of an Afropolitan lifestyle was further advanced by two magazines beginning in 2007 and 2008 in *The Afropolitan* and *Arise* respectively. These magazines celebrate African heritage and expression together with economic empowerment and cultural competence that could be recognized internationally. Several other media began embracing the term as well, including the blog "Afropolitan Network" beginning in 2007, which changed to a retail site promoting Africa-centric products in 2012 under the name "The Afropolitan Shop." Other appearances have included The Afropolitan Legacy Theatre, The Afropolitan Experience, and The Afropolitan Collection, and MsAfropolitan.

It was not simply the co-occurrence of the term with associations of practices, ideas, and images that engendered its various meanings and understandings. A few individuals actively and publicly expressed what it is to be Afropolitan. Brenda Nyakudya, editor of *The Afropolitan* magazine, and writer Mina Salami, the voice behind the blog "MsAfropolitan," are two notable examples. Their particular positions within the media tend to provide them with leverage in contributing to what an Afropolitan is.

For Brenda Nyakuda, an Afropolitan is someone who maintains a relationship with Africa and has a history of substantial ties in and outside the continent, stating that "an Afropolitan is someone who has roots in Africa, raised by the world, but still has an interest in the continent and is making an impact, is feeding back into the continent and trying to better it" (Tutton 2012). She tends to place emphasis on the individual's outlook and personal commitment to Africa over their place of birth, cultural background, or having "the right record collection" (ibid). Mina Salami shares this sentiment, stating that "Afropolitans are a group of people who are either of African origin or influenced by African culture, who are emerging internationally using African cultures in creative ways to change perceptions about Africa" (ibid). In theory this is not unlike a member of the diaspora, however, the fact that some people identify as Afropolitan rather than diasporic may stem from a generational perception. In Selasi's original piece, she discusses Afropolitans as being young and expands the idea of this generational difference, comparing the career trajectories and values of the wave of post-independence African emigrants to those of the 1990s (Selasi 2005).

Minna Salami posits Afropolitanism as undoubtedly different from, albeit complementary to, pan-Africanism or the diaspora movement (Tutton 2012; Salami 2011—accessed 23 Dec. 2013). She later wrote a piece discussing multiple subcultures among Africans in which she

mentions a panel she put together titled "What is an Afropolitan?" She summarizes the issues, briefly outlining what an Afropolitan is and is not, stating, "whether Afropolitanism is a new description of an African (it is not), a pan-African (it is not that either), elitist (depends on the Afropolitan in question), apolitical (hardly), urban (mostly) or a sub-culture or lifestyle (absolutely!)" (Salami 2013). She goes on to describe how the term has been circulated and further defines it thusly: "[A]n Afropolitan sentience imbues many global and local African influences today. It is linked to a flourishing interest in African culture on an international scale and it has shaped public debate about African society" (ibid.). So in sum, Afropolitanism is a set of values and practices that infuse multiple African influences in contemporary contexts. It is linked to and informs public discourse about African societies.

As I continued to conduct my research in South Africa and Malawi, including side trips to bordering countries, I began to consider the associations linked to the term "Afropolitan" in the context of each research site. It proved to be a thought-provoking and potentially useful foil against which to write about social belonging and community ties, one that considered Africa (and African) as both multifaceted and emergent, but did not always seem to work in as many contexts as I had imagined. While combing through the many popular musings about Afropolitanism, I considered more carefully how musical references, along with other expressive practices, were frequently employed. The musicians cited within this discourse ranged from Fela Kuti as a classic paradigm to the more recent eclectic style of South African rapper Spoek Mathambo. Among the recent artists are others like D'Banj and Oskido, from Nigeria, who represent aesthetic preferences of young urban musicians fusing cosmopolitan and African elements in electronic dance music, hip hop, and Afro-soul, and who stand in contrast to older classic artists like Hugh Masekela, Meriam Makeba, and Oliver Mthukudzi. This seems to reflect

trends in the music industry over the last 15 years, which saw the exoticism of world music become overshadowed in part by a broader urban music style complex. Since the category of world beat faded in the early 2000s there is less of a platform for emerging artists playing local or indigenous styles outside the U.S. and Europe to gain international recognition. The artists that continue to thrive in genres that fall under the world music category were well established and continue to have longevity. Artists like Spoek Mathambo, on the other hand, tend to seek international recognition on their own terms and are less interested in appealing to the exoticism that still informs the values of the international music consumer. Rather, if they sound "African" so be it, but many artists question what that is exactly. This mirrors the concerns of a number of musicians present at the 2013 Breathe Sunshine African Music Conference in Cape Town, where one panel was assembled to strategize how to get South African and African music on the international market without being relegated to the world music category. They addressed questions like "What is African music today?" and "What does it mean to be a musician in Africa?" – questions whose implications represent similar concerns addressed in debates in Malawi over what Malawian music is, and in other international media outlets disputing what an Afropolitan is, and whether such a concept useful.

I witnessed two recent trends in Malawi regarding musical style and social values that map onto the Afropolitan discussion. One trajectory is represented by the urban music scene, exemplified by artists like Tay Grin. Many style choices in this genre are driven by Malawians and individuals from various African countries who currently live, or have lived, in large metropolitan centers like Johannesburg, London, or Atlanta. Signs and cues referencing African practices are often minimal or operate as accessories. Musically speaking, electronic sounds are favored over acoustic ones. The latter, however, may be referenced through digital sampling or

looping of a recorded excerpt. Visual cues in dress follow similar patterns and are sometimes reminiscent of Kamuzu Banda, often seen in a bowler hat, 3-piece suit, and a fly whisk. Another Malawian reference may be found in the likes of revolutionary hero John Chilembwe. Cues on both these areas suggest an internalization of values derived from European precedents, as well as evidence of financial well-being or even conspicuous consumption.

The other trajectory in music and style in Malawi is found in Afro jazz, exemplified by Wambali Mkandawire. Many of the Afro jazz artists I spoke with referenced Oliver Mtukudzi as a main source of inspiration as well. Musically, this genre is more accommodating of indigenous musical structures like 12/8 or triple sub-division. Acoustic sounds, especially guitar and percussion, are emphasized or foregrounded. Visual cues in dress favor natural textures in clothes, but evidence of organization or manipulation. Formal suits are often eschewed, following the example of Nelson Mandela, but designs are purposeful, perhaps analogous to a rock garden that is landscaped and not overgrown. There is a plethora of earth tones, primary colors, animal skin prints, nature imagery, hats, and abstract designs and shapes as trim. Indexical associations to the natural environment or rural living are tempered by aesthetic reforms and likely function, in part to downplay associations of poverty while retaining traditional social values.

These descriptions are not evidence of a social or cultural group distinct from a strictly cosmopolitan one. The worlds of urban music and Afro jazz do not necessarily contradict or challenge the parameters of a modernist-capitalist cultural formation. They do share a common tendency to renegotiate African references and representations within the modernist-capitalist ethos. There is not one result, but two contrasting representations or trajectories. The fact that there are two trajectories, or social worlds, suggests a possible critique of both a cosmopolitan

ideology glossed as universal, and an Afropolitan one. It also speaks to an underlying drive to consider subjective positioning in a field of expressive practices. Common to both of these is the assertion of Malawianness and African lifeways in a positive framework.

Critiques of Afropolitanism and Its Implications

One aspect that several have touched upon is how Afropolitanism can serve as a positive way to counter narratives of Africa as a place of despair or corruption. Music, art, fashion design, and literature are mentioned as sites for such counter narratives. Yet this is one of the areas that generates criticism as well. Writing for the website *Africa in Words*, Stephanie Bosch Santana states that Afropolitanism is, "a term that perhaps once held promise as a new theoretical lens and important counterweight to Afro-pessimism, but that has increasingly come to stand for empty style and culture commodification." Similarly, Emma Dabiri, in her January 2014 piece titled, "Why I'm Not an Afropolitan"[82] develops an extensive critique of the tendency of Afropolitanism to be too rooted in commodification and consumerism. She reads Salasi's original and subsequent works as dwelling too much on what it is to be "young, cool, and African." She also takes issue with the economic privilege that Selasi seems to gloss over. Dabiri asserts that while a privileged position in itself is not problematic, it is the perpetuation of a singular narrative as the only counter to Afropessimism that is of concern. She explains that entangled in the notion of privileged position and lifestyle is the fact that a small segment of the population is taking it upon themselves to "market their cultures" while offering little to mitigate economic problems across classes. She quotes Franz Fanon saying that "a dual economy is not a developed economy" (Fanon 2004 [1963]).

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[82] Dabiri, Emma. 2014. http://africasacountry.com/2014/01/why-im-not-an-afropolitan/ (Accessed Oct 12, 2015)

These problems are echoed by Ugandan writer Bwesigye bwa Mwesigire about the

African literary landscape. Mwesigire points out that literary critics who praise those writing for

Afropolitan audiences about Afropolitan issues miss the point: there still remain aspects of

African realities that are not pleasant; by not writing about them, one risks erasing the concerns

of a huge population (2013).

In a review of the *Flow* art exhibit held at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2008, which

featured African visual artists, Holland Cottier described the artists as being "Afropolitan"

(2008). It was apparent that he did so as a means to describe the artists in a complimentary way,

highlighting the African and cosmopolitan appeal. In response to Cottier's piece, however,

Okwunodu Ogbechie stressed that the artists were getting worthy praise, but lamented the failure

of Cottier and other critics to engage with the successful artists that earn critical acclaim *on the*

continent in Zimbabwe, Kenya, or Ghana. He asks, "why, in order for something to become

mainstream must it be on North America's or Europe's terms" (Ogbechie 2008). This is

precisely the underlying thread that pervades this negotiation of an African, or Malawian, social

positioning that is paradoxically embracing traditional cosmopolitan ideals and taking exception

to them for a lack of African relevance.

In slight contrast to this, Marta Tveit essentially rejects the term Afropolitan and its use,

situating her argument within the context of broader identity politics and universal participation.

Tveit criticizes Selasi's 2005 "What is an Afropolitan" piece as being reductive, and that it

serves to other both Selasi and those about whom she writes. Tveit quotes a paragraph in Selasi's

work, describing it as reminiscent of *National Geographic* in the way it conveys an exoticism to

a Western audience. Someone else might see the same description as a celebration of African

characteristics that were once looked upon negatively, asserting Africanness as a thing of beauty

about which to be proud. Tveit's reading of it, one the other hand, is reminiscent of attitudes that seek universal unmarked social standing.

Tveit goes on to say that Selasi's description is prejudiced, favoring certain people while excluding others. She rightly inquires about other Africans who do not fit the new dominant paradigm, asking, "But what about the non-affluent African diaspora? What about insanely hideous brown-skinned people? What about white African natives? What about Africans who despise jazz?" (2013). A number of strong points arise in Tveit's critique. Is Afropolitanism defined by economic class, skin tone, and aesthetic values? I doubt that Selasi intended to be this exclusionary, but it would seem that this is a risk if one is to define cultural groups. To what extent do some variables outweigh others? Can the economically privileged discuss concerns of marginalized people? And what about the issue of continuing the racialized narrative of skin tone and nationality? Tveit expresses resentment at the notion that the nationality of one's parents or physical features would suggest any affiliation to a homeland or suggest any particular set of values. In this, she is operating from a vantage point that is neither Afropolitan nor diasporic, but more generally cosmopolitan. Quoted at length here she states:

> I do not have a drum beating inside me. The motherland is not calling me home. "We" are not a one-love tribe, yearning for the distant shores of Africa, or indigo or whatever one imagines the African continent as these days. "We" are a random sample in a huge pool of disembedded, modernised, travelling global citizens who each carry with us a personal, unique jumble of cultural inputs and influences from a range of places. In other words, we are like most people. And the most equity-promoting, barrier-breaking, racism-fighting thing "we" can do is see ourselves as just that — part of the noble and most ancient tribe…of Most People (2013).

One way to look at this is a call to completely de-emphasize any markers of difference. It is the same stance as those musicians wanting to be appreciated for their musicianship rather than their country of origin, and thus to create and perform music unmarked by place. It is a plea

to be allowed to go about one's own business without the burden of categories and prejudice. At the same time, I wonder to what extent it perpetuates the very thing it tries to renounce. In a sense she is saying, "Do not define me by x or y, but by my membership in humanity." Is there not a sense of leveraging a new hegemon of universalism? Is it advocating in favor of a global citizenry of unique and individualistic wanderers?

Let me take this in the other direction. Instead of framing Tveit's position as an objection to being bound or compartmentalized by the idea of an African continent in favor of a disembedded unique global citizen, how about challenging the essentialization of a single African identity, even one that is multivalent, with one that is East African, West African, or of course, southern African? One of the components of Afropolitanism is simply the demarcation of a boundary of inclusion on one end and particularity on the other. It is a stance against the uncritical wielding of a universalism rooted in European socialization with one rooted in an African one that has been historically excluded from the process of constructing notions of the universal. These are issues reminiscent of the sentiment behind Thabo Mbeki's African renaissance, but what about perspectives that are comparatively less agenda-driven or politically oriented? In essence, is there some sort of geographic and ideological middle ground, as in a de facto southern Afropolitan?

Mahube: *Music from Southern Africa*[83]

Steve Dyer is a South African saxophonist who started the musical group Mahube, which was active between 1997 and 2004. Dyer described and advertised their music as being from southern Africa, not South Africa or Africa. The group was comprised of twelve musicians,

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[83] The title of Mahube's 1998 album on Gallo/Shear Sound SSCD 036

including Oliver Mtukudzi from Zimbabwe, George Phiri from Malawi, and the rest from different parts of South Africa. Later Tlale Makhene, who grew up in Swaziland, was added to the ensemble. The backgrounds of the individual members contribute to the overall sound. There are original compositions as well as arrangements of traditional songs that draw from various styles of the region—*maskanda*,[84] *mbira*, *jit*,[85] Malawian rumba, Cape jazz, plus crossover international pop and Coltrane-esque jazz, among other styles. The group represented an ethos of inclusion rooted in southern African nationalities. Yet, the music they recorded would probably appeal to contemporary cosmopolitan audiences from different parts of the world, audiences who will likely be able to relate to it with little additional background.

One interesting aspect of the group is that the members all come from within southern Africa, not just one country, and yet not from any country north of Malawi. Multinational bands are not so unusual, but what is notable about Mahube is that the combination of regional repertoire with the way individuals are featured from song to song presents a de facto southern African sonic palette and listening experience. The rhetoric used in describing their music and social positioning further foregrounds southern Africa and interstitial relations. On his website Dyer describes Mahube as "the first ever substantive Southern African musical collaboration."[86] He is cited here commenting on what one might describe as the genuine nature of the group: "Dyer does not want to call Mahube a form of African renaissance. 'African renaissance is fashionable. Mahube is reality. It was not created for the market but for real and meaningful

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[84] *Maskanda* is a musical genre popularized by Zulu migrant workers. It usually features acoustic guitar played in either a finger picking or strumming style over a two to three chord repeating harmonic cycle. Lyrical content often includes social commentary and topical subjects. Other instruments may include concertina and violin. A full ensemble will include electric bass and drum set as well.

[85] *Jit* is a Zimbabwean musical genre that features interlocking electric guitar parts, as well as incorporating characteristics of indigenous music of Zimbabwe, including triple meter, fast tempos, and cyclic chord progressions. It also draws heavily from popular South African musical styles.

[86] http://www.stevedyer.co.za/about/ accessed 12/4/2014

interaction. Our music is reflective of the societal changes at large,' he says."[87] Gwen Ansell also mentions the group's salient use of pan-regional interchange, stating that "*Mahube* makes explicit the rhythmic and structural links between the musics of this region, across nations and between city and countryside."[88] Like with Afropolitanism, the discourse related to southern African allegiance places importance on multiple geographic and social contributions. The result is a discursively understood cultural formation, made particular by the selection process—what it includes and what it excludes.

This type of reflexive musical interchange between southern African countries was perhaps unusual for the time. Clearly musical interchange among musicians in this region had been occurring for a very long period, but within the realm of commercial music, South African music and musicians have a strong presence in the neighboring and nearby countries. In a sense Dyer, in creating Mahube, was reacting to this lopsided exchange as suggested in the Ramotena Mabote article previously quoted. The discourse associated with Mahube does assert their southern African sound and personnel, but the egalitarian way in which the front persons of the group share the spotlight puts in practice what is suggested in rhetoric. Oliver Mtukudzi, George Phiri, Suthukazi Arosi, and Phinda Mtya are each featured as vocalists several times on different songs, thus representing Zimbabwe, Malawi, and South Africa respectively. This is not surprising considering Dyer's work prior to this.[89]

For a little more than a decade beginning in 1981, Dyer was based in Botswana and then Zimbabwe before returning to South Africa in 1993. During this time, he was firmly rooted in the music scene touring with South African trombone legend Jonas Gwangwa and later taking in

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[87] Ramotena Mabote "Magic in Mahube's Mix" *Mail & Guardian* Johannesburg, RSA Jan 29-Feb 4 1999
[88] "'Mahube' triumphs" *The Star* July 14 1998
[89] Granted he is a saxophone player thus making it perhaps impractical to occupy the spotlight as a singer, but then one might also consider Manu Dibango and Fela Kuti as a counter to that argument.

the sounds of various Shona and Ndebele musical practices. Toward the end of his self-imposed exile, Dyer formed a group called Southern Freeway composed of Zimbabwean and South African musicians. It is interesting to note that in the biography on allmusic.com for this band, it is specified that some of the musicians are from Bulawayo and Harare, Zimbabwe, thus avoiding a homogeneous representation of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the styles listed for the band are "African traditions," *mbaqanga*, and southern African.[90]

Mahube Musical Analysis

Mahube's 1998 Sheer Sounds release *Music from Southern Africa* contains an assortment of songs composed by several members of the 12-piece band among others. As mentioned, composer-performers featured on the record hail from Zimbabwe, Malawi, and South Africa. As such, there is a sonic element that collectively indexes traditions from the region of southern Africa. In some cases, the language choice in the lyrics indicates an obvious country association, but there are distinct elements in the musical sounds and arrangements with equally strong references.

The Oliver Mtukudzi songs "Ziwere" and "Tangira Poi" demonstrate a clear association to Zimbabwean music in the harmonic progression and guitar line. "Ziwere" in particular opens with a lead electric guitar playing a solo introduction employing an interval of a perfect 4th followed by arpeggiated chords that played in syncopated triplets, typical of Zimbabwean guitar band music. The overall harmony follows this pattern: I / IV / | I / V7 / | with arpeggios in the guitar and bass that allude to other diatonically related sonorities, including the iii and ii chords.

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[90] http://www.allmusic.com/artist/southern-freeway-mn0002338631/biography

The drum pattern is dominated by the sound of the bass drum on all four beats, with steady triplets being played on the hi hat.

There are two songs with strong South African musical characteristics, namely in "U Snuze U Looze" by Steve Dyer and Bongani Mokhitli and "Ilanga Selishonile" credited as composed by A. Nyandu.[91] The first of these has a strong *mbaqanga* and saxophone jive feel to it as played in the guitar and alto saxophone parts respectively. The lead electric guitar plays a riff consisting of two phrases forming a high-tessitura melody harmonized in thirds.

The saxophone solo is stylistically congruent with much of West Nkosi's saxophone work, which is strongly grounded in the *mbaqanga* idiom. The other song, "Ilanga Selishonile" has obvious roots in *maskanda* guitar playing in its two-chord ostinato between D and C major triads, in a slow tempo, and able to rendered as something akin to a shuffle or a 12/8 rhythmic feel. The vocal melody hangs on the fifth of the key as is often the case in this and other South African musical styles.

Representing the Malawian contribution to the album is George Phiri's "Kolo Kolo" performed in a medium tempo in 12/8 time signature. The vocal and horn melodies in the intro and hook follow a stepwise descending pattern in two phrases in which the second phrase draws from the second part of the first, resulting in what sounds like a melodic tag, characteristic of vocal melodies within and near Malawi.

The cue that is operating strongly as an index to indigenous Malawian music is the accent on the snare drum in the first eighth note triplet following the second and fourth pulses. In general, this resembles the accentuated hits of the lead drummer in many of the canonic music-dance complexes from the Kamuzu-era assemblies. One group of Malawians upon hearing this

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[91] I think this should be Alpheus Mnyandu, composer of "African Sunset" (a rough translation of Ilanga Selishonile) from the 1989 Italian release of Miriam Makeba's album *Welela*. The chords and words are the same with variations in the arrangement.

remarked that it was immediately identifiable as Malawian, and that it was probably based on the *mganda* dance (related to the *beni* and *malipenga* traditions). The *ngoma* dance has a similar accentuation that occurs after the primary pulse.

These particular songs are almost formulaic in their adherence to stylistic norms. Other songs on the album contain various regional stylistic cues, but less overt; or are operating within a constellation of cues lacking strong indices, according to my ear. Several songs have what might be described as a generic world beat sound, represented by cyclic harmonic progressions favoring major triadic sonorities and timbres like lamellophone, flute (acoustic and keyboard-based), and percussion popular during the era of this recording. There are other cues that are congruent with the crossover sounds of South African bubblegum and other *mbaqanga* offshoots as well.

The repertoire of expressive devices (i.e. song forms, rhythms, melodic contours) is understood differently by various musicians, thus forming the boundaries of different social worlds. Presentational world music is understood by most people in the modernist-capitalist cosmopolitan formation and African jazz by a smaller cohort. A collection of *mbira*, *jit*, Malawian rumba, and *mbaqanga* musical elements constitute a southern African musical ethos and are understood and internalized through habituation by musicians from this region. Specific songs or stylistic idiosyncrasies particular to individuals' home villages may not be shared equally by all members, but are circulated among them with seemingly few obstacles. Thus, in similar fashion to Selasi's composite Afropolitan archetype, Mahube, through musicalsound and practice, construct a southern African one.

Erik Paliani: Self-Described Nomad and Southern African Citizen

Erik Paliani is a guitarist, songwriter, and producer, born in Malawi, now living in South Africa. His career has been characterized by frequent travel to and participation in diverse musical contexts throughout southern Africa and Europe. He began his music career under the tutelage of his father, and by his early 20s was a key figure in one of Malawi's most popular dance bands, "The Acacias." Groups of this type in Malawi had to cater to a broad range of audiences in order to sustain themselves in a music industry that lacks sizable niche markets. Erik has periodically cited this diverse background as one of the keys to his success as an in-demand studio personality in the more diverse South African music scene, to which he moved shortly when I last worked with him in 1998.

It was August 2009 and Erik pulled into the driveway with his 500 series BMW after greeting the guard, a fellow Malawian also making his way in the land of gold, *Egoli*, or more specifically in this case, a northside suburb of Johannesburg. It had been just over ten years since I had last seen Erik. It seemed a lifetime ago that we were together in Malawi, playing with the Acacias Band and doing occasional studio session work. Now in his 30s, he sported long dreadlocks that were a stark contrast to the short cropped hair of the youthful guitarist I had once worked with. Solid handshakes were exchanged in the midst of much laughter. He mentioned that he had heard about my recent conversation with Hugh Masekela. Evidently they were on speaking terms again.

 A few days prior to our meeting, I was wandering the shopping centers in Rosebank and stopped at a café for a rest. In the corner sat "Brah Hugh," as my friend referred to him, pointing him out to me. I approached and introduced myself. I mentioned that we had a mutual friend in Erik Paliani, who had just produced Hugh's latest album and played guitar for him on their

European tour. Hugh pealed his eyes away from his morning paper, focused them fiercely on mine, and said, "So, you know Erik?" "Yes sir," I replied. He adjusted his paper and his piercing gaze and responded, "Well tell *Erik*, to return my *fucking* phone calls!"

The blood drained from my face as I contemplated my escape route, but the exchange between Masekela and I improved markedly once he burst into laughter. As I reflect back on this, a story which never fails to elicit surprise and laughter, it is rather more than a humorous anecdote. Hugh Masekela is a legendary figure in South African jazz, and in jazz writ large. His life and career represent something of a paradigmatic model exemplifying the relationship between African jazz and the struggle for social justice among South Africans at home and abroad. The decades including and just after the 1960s marked a period of time when pan-African unity was mobilized against colonial and racial power structures that pre-dated the Afropolitan discourse. Since my run-in with Masekela, I have heard numerous stories highlighting the rough side of his personality—jaded and at times vitriolic—but somehow admired and respected, like one would respect the idiosyncrasies of a former combat vet. Erik relayed a story to me where someone complimented Hugh on his "saxophone" playing, to which Hugh (a trumpet player) snorted and simply replied, "fuck you." The CEO of CAPASSO (Composer, Authors, Publishers Association of South Africa) similarly shared a story with me where Hugh berated a young lady for having no self-respect because she wore a weave instead of her natural hair. For Hugh, it would seem, jazz and African heritage are matters of utmost seriousness forged in the kilns of racial oppression and political struggle experienced by a South African exile.

I am reminded of a conversation with the owner and engineer of Yebo! recording studio, who expressed some regret with the current jazz and music scene in post-1994 South Africa,

describing it as having lost its edge. It was not an isolated conversational theme, and one that was frequently linked with discussions about political versus financial opportunities for different South Africans. To my mind, this is typical of the juncture between multiple values and lifeways over time. It is a continuation of the story about individuals negotiating the details of their social positioning in a dynamic translocal setting, which is at the core of Afropolitanism. So for me, the stories of Hugh and Erik are quite telling and shed some light on the antagonism between privilege and struggle in shaping a positivist narrative for 21st-century Afropolitans.

After exchanging pleasantries in the suburban driveway, Erik and I got in his car and proceeded to drive into town wearing shades on a fine summer day in South Africa. Our conversations segued from the pragmatics of catching up after many years to in-depth reflections on the role of artists in a changing world. I had read of Erik's successes in music and even film over the years. Because of this recent success, I was actually hesitant to contact him just before my trip to South Africa in 2009, for fear of appearing opportunistic or a fair weather friend. These concerns quickly dissipated after our initial phone conversation, also long ago at this point, but now that we were finally in the same place at the same time, I came to better appreciate the complexity of this southern African nomad, "just a boy from Blantyre [Malawi]," a master of subtlety and humility in his art and his life.

For as long as I have known Erik, he has been at once humble and hardworking, and in this he is somehow emblematic of the values propagated as typically Malawian. The "warm heart of Africa," as Malawi is often described in tourist literature and other media, is a reference to the hospitality of Malawians and to an implied humility. The Malawian work ethic, in its idyllic form, is so eloquently conveyed by the rationale behind the preference of a whisk broom or

small-handled hoe over ones with handles allowing you to stand and work. The reasoning

described to me was simply that handles are for lazy people. I have heard former housemates

recount how Erik practiced his guitar in the middle of the night, and others comment on his soft-

spoken voice, character traits that articulate with Malawian social values. It is interesting then

that his music reflects these aspects as well. By no means, however, is he or his music so easily

reduced.

As a foreigner in South Africa, Erik is acutely aware of his country of origin. Our

conversations never revealed any conflict resulting from the waves of xenophobia often reported

in the South African and international print media, but I never fully explored this issue with him

either. He does have a specialized skill set and thus works outside the labor economy that is rife

with conflict, spurred from antagonism between local and foreign workers competing for jobs.

After spending time with him in Johannesburg and again after he relocated some four hours

north, it was evident that Erik did not conduct himself in the same way that I had come to know

other Malawian immigrants in both South Africa and the US. This is yet another story of

itinerancy in 21st-century southern Africa and is evidenced in the music, career, and life of this

musician.

When I met up with Erik again in December 2012, it was in the city of Polokwane, an

unexpected place from my perspective of having known him as being at the heart of the

entertainment industry in Johannesburg. Polokwane, a Sotho word meaning "place of safety" and

hailed as "naturally progressive" on the city government's website, is the capital city of the

Limpopo province.[92] Limpopo is the northernmost province in South Africa and Polokwane the

last major urban center before crossing over the border due North to Zimbabwe or to Botswana

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[92] http://www.polokwane.gov.za/ (accessed April 9, 2016)

just to the northwest. Erik had recently resettled in this city 200 miles away from Johannesburg. The cost of living is lower and the sense of safety much better. It took quite a while, however, before I fully appreciated Erik's move.

Polokwane is metropolitan yet subdued. The juxtapositions of lifestyles are more compressed than Johannesburg; that is, one does not need to traverse multiple suburbs or downtown districts to experience a variety of foods, sounds, and social interaction. There was a time when Erik and I walked from his flat to get carryout and stopped at a filling station for drinks. His exchange with the teller was in a language I did not recognize. We could experience a lavish shopping mall and a cassette tape vendor blasting local beats out of boomboxes within a short span of time. It is an intersection of networks, swollen with the richness of contemporary Africa, but understated and matter-of-fact. During our excursions, friends would greet Erik. No one gave him a demo tape to listen to.

The urban archetype of the Afropolitan is one seemingly derived from the bustle of Johannesburg, Lagos, and Nairobi. As an idea of negotiation and reinvention, Afropolitanism offers a range of subjective vantage points. Since he began as a professional musician, Erik's career has taken him through a constellation of social worlds intersecting myriad social and geographic scales. His career trajectory escalated to increasingly broader international settings. What I find interesting in his case is that each phase is a lateral move, and not strictly hierarchical. That is, he embraces grassroots projects and lifestyles as well as high profile ones.

Back during the mid-1990s, Erik was at the top of what Malawian commercial music could offer. He was based in the commercial center of Blantyre, in one of the most popular bands, the Acacias Band, a top session player commanding fees few other musicians could, due in large part to a skill set that put him out of reach of those same musicians. He began making

trips to South Africa, each of a longer duration until relocating there full time in the early 2000s. There he met fellow Malawian George Phiri, one of the heavy-hitting guitarists on the jazz and commercial music scene in Johannesburg. He recalled to me how George encouraged him to keep developing his skills as a guitarist and musician, and to never be complacent.

Erik's rise in the South African music scene was first elevated when he joined the praise band of Pastor Benjamin Dube, a well-known pastor and gospel artist in Johannesburg. While working and performing in the praise team, Erik met the then unknown choir singer Zamajobe Sithole. In 2003, Zamajobe competed on *Idols: South Africa*, a television show airing on the M-Net television network, and like *American Idol*, also modelled after the British precedent. Although she did not win, she went on to the final 10, and with her heightened public profile forged an opportunity to record her debut album. She did so with the help of Erik who worked as collaborator and producer. The resulting 2004 release, *Ndawo Yami* (My Place)*,* was recorded on the Sony BMG/Giant Steps label and in the following two years received distinguished awards and nominations, including from the South African Music Awards (SAMA) and MTV Europe Music Awards.

If a turning point in Erik's career is to be acknowledged, it would be this one, but the story that is of interest is not found in a single turning point. Still, the highlights of his career need to addressed in order to begin to understand the multiplicity of subjective positioning. In the years following the release of *Ndawo Yami*, Erik appeared (with Zamajobe) as a musician in the film *Catch a Fire* in 2006, shortly after which he produced three tracks for American jazz guitarist Lee Ritenour. After that, Erik went on to work with Hugh Masekela, touring internationally and producing Masekela's 2008 record *Phola* as well as producing for Mavo

Solomon, an emerging solo artist who sings in Xhosa. Finally, in 2010, Erik released his first album as a band leader, and it is in this snapshot in time that the story is perhaps better told.

Erik has worked with numerous people of varying backgrounds, himself often excelling most from behind the scenes. So a solo album is a great mouthpiece through which to tell the story of a dynamic individual who was previously understated in the public eye. Prior to this, his musical choices and creative works have appeared in contexts dominated by the images and reputations of others. More interestingly, or importantly, is that in these settings various negotiations have taken place between individual musicians and creative specialists all existing within a larger cosmopolitan ethos. The resulting works, however, exhibit degrees of distinction based not only in individual aesthetic preferences but as a result of sedimented backgrounds of musical experiences that are able to be shared in a meaningful way. Each negotiation is an Afropolitan remix highlighting sounds and musical concepts that articulate to varying degrees with South Africa, Malawi, southern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, North America, Johannesburg, Polokwane, Blantyre, jazz, pop, crossover, English, Zulu, Chewa, Xhosa, and the list continues.

Chitukutuku

In 2010, Erik released his first solo album on Sony Music Entertainment, entitled *Chitukutuku*, which he describes as being about "how I understand Africa and the different worlds that are to be found here."[93] The title track was first recorded in the 1950s by another Malawian, Wilson Makawa, who was then working in the copper mines of Zambia. The song gained regional popularity, resonating in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, and remains in the standard repertoire of many Malawian dance bands. The term *Chitukutuku* refers to a type of

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[93] Erik Paliani Press kit

bird. In this song, the bird serves as a reminder of Makawa's home in Zomba, Malawi and for many, calls to mind a sense of hope and the possibility of returning to their homeland. Paliani identifies with this imagery as a self-described nomad and *southern* African citizen. This is perhaps most poignant in Percy Zvomuya's article in the South African *Mail & Guardian* titled "We're All Southerners" in which he describes the album as "a recording that presents a vision of a united southern Africa."[94] The choice of the composition *Chitukutuku* encapsulates the theme of itinerant travel and the type of lived experience often found in this region.

Analysis: *Chitukutuku*

Erik's produced this debut 10-track solo album, and released it in 2010 on Sony Music Africa. He is featured on guitar and vocals, and also performed the bass tracks for the album. He is accompanied by Randaal Skippers (keyboards), Tlale Makhene (percussion), David Klassen (drums), Neil Engel (flugelhorn, trumpet), Percy Mbonani (tenor sax), Speedy Kobak (trombone), and Garrick Van Der Tuin (Engineer), an ensemble whose membership might harken, once again, Afropolitanism, and more particularly, southern African collectivity in its make-up.

The album opens with the title track, which begins with what sounds like a field recording from the beach in which the listener can hear bird sounds and the splashing of waves. This sets the scene for a song whose title is the Yao word for a type of water bird. The entire song features nothing but voice and overdubbed guitars, including bass, and the final chord is played using keyboard string sounds.

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[94] Percy Zvomuya, "We're all southerners" *Mail & Guardian*. July 12, 2010. http://mg.co.za/article/2010-07-12-were-all-southerners (accessed April 11, 2014)

In this track, the song's history from the 1950s together with Paliani's reworking of it reflect his particular experiences. It should also be noted that the album was marketed for a regional audience particular to southern Africa, not a world beat market. Some changes Erik made include a slower tempo; a change that he believes enhances the emotional impact of the tune. There is a short rubato guitar intro, which then leads into a rhythmic strumming, followed by arpeggiated guitar chords in an embellished fashion. The first 'A' section has no drums; they enter in the second A, but only cymbals, and gradually adding more sounds as the song progresses. There is a strong 6 feel with emphasis on the 1 and 4 like a ballad-like jazz waltz. The solo section in the middle of the tune is a unique addition in the harmonic treatment which is a vamp between Emaj7 and Cmaj7. In sum, it is a markedly different approach to stylistic reform than I have encountered among Erik's predecessors and contemporaries.

The second song, "Dr. Nico" pays tribute to the Congolese guitar legend Nicolas Kasanda. It is useful as a comparison to the track just discussed. The song is arranged for full band including guitars, bass, percussion, drums, and horns. The drum part in this song resembles the "one-drop" beat common in roots reggae where the bass drum is played on 2 and 4. There is also considerable emphasis on the hi-hats, common in older Malawian and other recordings of African commercial music. The guitar work here is the point of interest, as is expected given Nico's role as an influential guitarist. Moreover, it is not simply the guitar performance that is notable, but the production aspects behind recording the guitar. Specifically, there is a slight distortion in some of the lead parts that is reminiscent of an older and smaller single-speaker guitar amplifier, that contrasts sharply against the other pristinely recorded instruments.

This is the type of subtlety of manipulation that permeates the recording as a whole. Attention must be made to this very subtlety, in order to glean meaningful associations,

otherwise the work risks being strikingly ambiguous. This is especially so when compared to the Mahube album mentioned earlier in its almost formulaic, albeit adeptly executed, approach to pan-regional stylistic inclusion.

The overall orchestration and production on *Chitukutuku* are consistent with Erik's other recorded works with R&B and Afro jazz musicians, with whom he emphasizes live instrumentation with the precision of the studio environment. In general, the dynamics and rhythmic grooves are often understated, and cyclic harmonic formulas, common to the guitar-based genres of this region, have yielded slightly to reflect a formal and harmonic structure more congruent with those of jazz circles in the urban centers of South Africa and neighboring countries. This album, and Erik's body of recorded works as a whole, illustrate influences from a range of sources that are predicated on regional interchange specific to southern Africa, driven in this case by Zambian, Malawian, Zimbabwean, and South African contexts and historical trends. It suggests that, for Erik and others like him, the idea of southern Africa is not just a conceptual abstraction, but a lived experience.

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African Localization, Pan-Regional Cosmopolitanism, or Southern Afropolitan?

My interest in Afropolitanism is that it is associated with a renegotiation of subjectivity. Despite the fact that the term is in essence a portmanteau, the ideas behind the concept suggest something beyond a simple binary. It invites the notion of nested scales. Circuits of social interchange, mediated and face-to-face, facilitate the connection of non-contiguous places and the sharing of ideas and habits. These circuits, rooted in tangible contexts and populated by actual individuals, also facilitate the process of localization, where local is a relative term referring to a degree of local specificity vis-à-vis a European-American ideological canon. Thus

when power centers outside of North America and Europe come into the fore, like those in Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya, a set of conditions specific to sub-Saharan Africa yield an ethos that has been described as Afropolitan. Taking the idea of remix in conjunction with power centers and circuits of interchange, it stands to reason that versions of Afropolitanism of more specificity, such as that of southern Africa, are valid subjectivities as well. Social belonging and expressive practices work hand-in-hand to realize these de facto social positions as exemplified by the lives and careers of artists like Erik Paliani or the members of Mahube.

CHAPTER 5:

MANYASA REMIX: SITES OF CONVERGENCE[95][96]

Manyasa is the collective noun referring to Malawians. The term is derived from the colonial-era name "Nyasaland." It is thought to be derogatory in South African contexts as it is a designation used by South Africans with contempt toward foreign workers from Malawi. Wambali Mkandawire re-appropriated the word in a positive light with the formation of the Manyasa Band in the early 2000s, recording an album titled *Up and down the Shire*. Again, the idea of renegotiation emerges, but the remixing occurs at a comparatively specific geographic scale compared to Africa or southern Africa. The phrase "sites of convergence" refers essentially to the particular locales that are bound together by circuits of interchange. Translocal phenomena are products of networks of locales that contribute to a shared set of habits and practices that may be considered translocal. Thus I move the discussion from circuits to sites.

I have selected three types of musical contexts that I will discuss as sites of convergence: recording studios, education centers, and performance venues. Each of these settings offers useful insight into translocal phenomena partly because they involve the interaction of individuals assuming various roles, but also as a product of the sites' specialized intents. For instance, the primary function of a recording studio is to create recorded works able to be reproduced and distributed. As a result, the studio as a social environment operates as a point of origin for broader cycles of socialization and circulation of cultural production. Similarly, music education centers have as a main objective the creation of repeated practices via acquisition of

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specific ideas and skills. These are contexts of explicit value formation achieved through

education, an important and increasingly translocal process in this region. Finally, performance

venues share some of the characteristics of recording studios and music education centers, but

differ because their role in public interaction is more immediate. One of my goals then is to

approach these sites of musical interaction in order to focus on the agency of the individual

actors informing the broader circulation of musical signs, cues, and expressive devices.

I am using the phrase "sites of convergence" to refer in part to the smallest unit of

geographic social space in which human interaction occurs. These sites are typically

characterized as having face-to-face interaction, but may also include various types of mediated

interchange, such as the Internet or cell phone. In one sense these sites occupy the most

particular point along the continuum between local and global, but it is important to recognize

that multiple geographic and social scales come into play through the interactive process of

music making in these sites by the individual actors populating them. The stock of background

knowledge, communication channels, and musical associations, all may reference different

geographic scales and social milieus. These sites are tangible places in which translocal

influences converge via individual actors who react to and shape the canon of ideas and value

systems held by the musicians and other people.

Examining sites of convergence and the interaction that takes place within them provides

a lens through which to view music making in a manner similar to that of Ruth Stone's concept

of music as event. In her model, Stone (2010) takes into consideration the roles of each actor,

their expectations, background knowledge, and means of communicating to understand how

music is made meaningful during a particular event. Similarly, I suggest that one also considers

the physical setting and technologies present as they contribute to the type of event and how it is

understood by the individual actors. In this way, different categories of ethnomusicological analysis can be utilized (i.e. ethnography of recording studios, concert halls, music schools; see also Small 1987, Nettl 1995, Meintjies 2003, Green and Porcello 2005). I find this especially useful in contexts rich in translocal phenomena or simply where there is the presence of multiple variables, as in urban environments.

Contexts of musical creation such as these mentioned each illustrate how the actors that populate them form, utilize, and perpetuate stocks of knowledge that they have accumulated through life experience. In these settings individuals come together having experience in different musical contexts and must maximize shared knowledge while negotiating differences in order to succeed in each of these sites. Examining three different categories of musical sites serves to illustrate how multiple experiences and influences converge to shape or reinforce musical canons and their social connections across different geographic scales and social milieus.

I begin this chapter with a discussion that examines the recording studio as a prime site for ethnographic inquiry of translocal phenomena. Here, I detail the events surrounding the recording of several songs with Romeo Jani, a Malawian guitarist and songwriter based just outside of Johannesburg, South Africa. The recording process took place in several studios in Malawi and South Africa and involved several individuals of different backgrounds and places of origin. I then pursue a similar discussion about some of the music education facilities that have emerged since the early 2000s, placing particular emphasis on the Lusubilo Music Center in Karonga, northern Malawi. Finally, I focus on two performance venues in Blantyre, Malawi, the country's industrial hub, located in the southern region. In this discussion I detail the events of a concert series of Afro jazz and acoustic music during October and November 2013, in which I

participated along with four other musical artists and accompanying musicians. These three sites of ethnographic study each represent important centers hosting musical interaction and creative decision making. I am placing emphasis on the places of cultural production in order to illustrate their importance in socio-musical analysis, and to emphasize the role of actual and identifiable physical settings, technologies, and individual actors occupying these settings and their roles in the production and reception of translocal cultural flows and interchange.

Recording Studios

Of the three settings covered in this chapter, recording studios are perhaps the most intriguing environment for examining translocal cultural production on account of factors related to the studio's function and capabilities. Cutting an album is more than documenting a live performance with musicians and other individuals present. There is a myriad of source materials outside what the musicians bring with their recorded performance. There is prerecorded audio material from drum beats and synthesized sounds to sound effects and field recordings. Another characteristic of studios is the ability to stop the process and deliberate, and the option to manipulate what has been recorded thus far at any given point during a recording session. It is also worth considering the awareness of the participating actors of the permanence and potential audience for the resulting recorded work.

As such, the studio is often a place for negotiations over what to include or avoid, and how best to do so, thereby situating the studio recording process as a remarkable lens into this socially-informed decision-making process. The recording studio as a concept is one born of the cosmopolitan cultural ethos, but it is also where the idea of local conditions resonates on different levels from the room itself, to the neighborhood, and extending to the particular city and beyond. Interestingly, the physical environment of studios is often subject to manipulation in

order to enhance isolation due to concerns about acoustics (not to mention to create a neutral space, albeit more typical of larger commercial studios). The acoustic concerns are perhaps more interesting in that they have the potential to encourage one to radically reduce perceptible signs of local conditions to the point of being somewhat schizospatial. Consider the underlying factors in casino designs devoid of windows and clocks, and often having an interior decorated in contrast to the community in which it rests. Additionally, the temporal manipulation within a recording studio is notable. Multi-track recording allows for asynchronous performances of individuals that contribute to a single synchronous recorded performance. Here, I am reminded of the work of Steven Feld (1996) and the idea of schizophonia in bringing to mind the ramifications of these sites and their role in the potential distribution of sounds and (re)aligned associations into the public sphere. In short, the recording studio is a rich location for socio-musical construction.

Thus there is notable potential for cultural production here, but whatever insular bubble is ultimately created in the form of a recording studio, it is one that must be populated by human beings interacting. It is this fact that must be considered, together with the potential of the site as a theoretical construct plus the array of specialized tools for capturing, assembling, and manipulating sound. Therefore, it is the sum of setting, technologies, and actors that form this convergence and hence – sites of convergence.

Levels of Localization

The emergence of the personal computer as a powerful recording tool, and one that plays a key role in many studios, has contributed to several shifts in local and international recording industries over recent decades. Affordable hardware and software have allowed the commercial

recording process to become accessible to more people in more places. Today's musicians recording an album for commercial distribution no longer require a record contract in quite the same way that they would have 20 years ago, let alone 50. Similarly, aspiring studio owners have relatively low start-up costs in order to begin operating viable commercial facilities. These advantages resonate differently depending on various contexts. Despite the increasing reach of technologies, it is important not to lose sight of local conditions and power relations.

In South Africa and Malawi, modest recording facilities are quite prolific in cities like Johannesburg and Blantyre, as well as in the surrounding townships and rural areas. No longer do musicians have to rely on a hand full of radio stations, church facilities, or record companies to record competitive sounding recordings as they did not long ago. Because of this greater availability of studio equipment and space, the actors filling the roles in studio work tend to hail from a more diverse cross-section of society, but this shift does not always translate to improved internal relations, such as between artist and engineer or producer. The array of available roles to be played within the recording process is another interesting set of variables contributing to the studio context as a site of convergence. These roles may include engineer, producer, manager, arranger, session musician (work-for-hire instrumentalist), among others. How these roles are filled, if at all, offers one of several axes along which localization is realized. In southern Africa, economics play a large factor in this process.

Even though studios are more widely available due to lower costs than in years past, the economies of South Africa and Malawi yield very disparate economic realities from one musician to the next, and thus different social realities and creative perspectives. If a musician does not have the money to hire session musicians or a supervising producer, the studio owner acts as engineer, producer, and session musician. This conflation of roles can translate to a

consolidation of power, an undesirable situation if the person wielding the power does not share the views or creative vision of the artist. Another instance where economics come into play is in the case of the "home" studio and how it is perceived and utilized. Is it a supplemental tool for preproduction mock-ups, a composition tool, an outlet for a hobbyist, or the established and often only way of recording songs for radio play? It comes down to the studio as a site of convergence where the agency of individual actors is at work to achieve the final recorded sound. How an individual takes advantage of the recording studio depends on several social factors intertwined in this creative process.

Recording with Romeo Jani

"Field Recordings"

In January 2013 during my fieldwork in Johannesburg, I met for the second time Romeo Jani, a musician with whom I first worked while living in Malawi in 1998. I knew him as a singer-songwriter who composed socially conscious lyrics in a musical style that resembled Euro-American pop music of an eclectic nature as performed by the likes of Peter Gabriel or Sting. It was around February 1998 that Romeo, together with his brother and another singer, came to my small recording studio located in the township of Chilobwe outside the main commercial city of Blantyre. They had been approaching several music promoters and area businessmen in an effort to secure sponsorship for a recording project, and had thus far been turned away by everyone, including a prominent radio station owner with whom I had previously worked. This was actually a point of interest to me and piqued my curiosity. This station owner had at one point sent a singer to my studio in order to re-record a demo eventually to be aired on the radio. The demo he provided was a recording of a rehearsal and featured a singer with a

beautiful voice singing in a high tenor range over a great reggae groove. I learned, recreated, and tracked the instrumental parts after which I had the singer come in to record his vocals. Unfortunately, his singing simply was not good, to the extent that I could only deduce that he was not the singer featured on the rehearsal recording. His voice was not in the same range at all, nor did it appear to be accustomed to singing. So when Romeo and his friends approached me having been turned away by this same promoter, I was rather pessimistic as to what was in store. They were an unknown act trying to break into the music scene in Malawi, as so many individuals have done and continue to try to do. They had heard of me through word of mouth as being a foreign musician living in the community who owned a recording studio. They brought enough money to record a single song so they could have something tangible to present to promoters and radio presenters. This was certainly fine with me, so we began tracking. It quickly became clear that in Malawi, as with other places in the world, there often is a fundamental disconnect between promoters and musicians. The quality of musicianship and artistry displayed by these individuals was very respectable.

I left Malawi later that year (1998) to return to the U.S. and had not been in contact with Romeo until well after the advent of social media, when during spring 2010 we were able to communicate via the Internet on Facebook. He sent me a recording of a song he had made with his brother, and asked me to critique it. I commented on the arrangement, use of reverb and other effects, and Romeo's vocal performance. It had some intriguing elements, but still needed some changes if it was to be well received by the audiences with which I had some familiarity. We remained in communication only periodically until closer to the time I arrived in Johannesburg and ultimately met up with Romeo about a month into my fieldwork in January 2013. It took a few meetings to get reacquainted and soon we began talking about, and making, music.

I arrived at his top-floor flat in a south suburb of Johannesburg. We browsed his CD collection and listened to some recent recordings he had made. The quality of production and arrangement were notable. The eclectic pop-rock sound with some elements akin to Salif Keita's music were agreeable to my ears. I had brought my guitar and saxophone and so I prompted him to grab his guitar, resting nearby, to play. The overall character of his performance as a solo singer with guitar, and the versions of his songs sung in that moment, were noticeably different than the demos he had just played for me, and to my ear, so much richer to listen to. This is likely due in part to my own affinity toward acoustic African music and jazz, which Romeo's live sound resembled. His style of playing solo acoustic guitar, however, was of a caliber and individuality of exceptional quality and I imagine it would elicit favorable responses from many cosmopolitans. What is notable, though, is that his live playing characteristics were not well-represented in the recordings he played for me. His vocal style was rather understated in live performance, as that of someone who played primarily for their personal enjoyment. It left me thinking a great deal about how the recording studio had come to be used, not only by Romeo, but by musicians in general as a standard practice in their habits as creative artists.

The fact that there was a difference in how Romeo's music sounded as a solo performer in his apartment flat is not unique to this incident, and it suggests a set of habits and conceptualized possibilities that are centered on the recording studio. The studio is viewed by many musicians I met as a tool to contribute to and manipulate one's musical compositions. I suspect this is in part an unreflective participation in normative modernist practices, but it could be a function of pragmatics as in the economic advantage of using drum machines and prerecorded drum loops and samples. Recording music as part of a musician's creative process is not restricted to the studio. Several artists with whom I worked while in South Africa would

make use of their smart phones to record themselves for individual assessment, posterity, a memory aid, sharing with others, or as Romeo did, for compositional purposes to work out backing vocals and accompanying instrumental parts. For many Malawian musicians I encountered, the recording process is not just a creative exercise but an essential entree into the world of commercial music. This was a recurring theme among musicians I came across, and suggested that many believed that a musician who only performs live would likely not be considered a serious musician by fans. This may not be unusual, but it did stand in contrast to a great many professional musicians I worked with in Chicago who could earn a good living through live performances alone (e.g. downtown musical circuit, wedding and corporate work).

The recordings that Romeo and I made that day with my portable recorder would function not only as field recordings, but as pre-production tools for work we would later engage with in the studio. After listening to these initial recordings for a few weeks, I scheduled a day when Romeo would come up to the northern suburbs where I was staying and record videos of several individual songs. In February, about month after making the first recordings, we recorded five songs ("Zomanyozana," "Mulendo," "Kwathu," "Kudikira," and "Ndimakukonda"). These recordings and these particular songs became the basis for future recording in the studio. The recordings allowed me to become more familiar with these songs and Romeo's guitar and compositional style more generally. For Romeo, they provided a means to assess his singing and practice singing the backing vocals. As a result of these processes, they began to function as fixed texts and directed future performances of these songs, which would otherwise be flexible and rendered with slight variations each time they were performed.

Pre-Production

Pre-production is a process during which the musician records a mock-up of a song or an album. This process varies with each musician or producer and may be accomplished by a producer and engineer or by one's self in a personal recording studio. The process functions much the same way as creating a rough draft of a written work or a dress rehearsal of a show in order to see how things will actually sound in recorded context. The pre-production stage may reveal issues in sound selections, drum parts, horn arrangements, which backing vocalist to use, and other technical or logistical issues. The process itself is not universally used and thus reveals the ways that recording studios and the recording process is localized. During my time in Johannesburg, the Malawian musicians with whom I worked were familiar with and utilized this process to varying degrees. Whereas in Malawi, the practical and economic aspects of working as a commercial musician tended to favor skipping this process and record an album as efficiently and timely as possible. This occurs in South Africa as well and is hinted at in Louise Meintjes' work (2003) with Zulu musicians and *mbaqanga* music in Johannesburg.

To be in a position to worry about the pre-production process at all is to occupy a position of some privilege that affords access to both knowledge and money. The difference in backgrounds also reinforced in my mind just how integral the recording studio was for the creation of their music. For instance, Peter Mawanga, based in Lilongwe, Malawi records all of his rehearsals and uses his studio to compose his songs. The moment he has composed the song on his guitar, he records it and begins adding other instrumental and vocal parts either himself or played by other musicians. Erik Paliani frequently spoke with me about the pre-production process. For him it is a significant part of any project and can take several months. It was after I stayed with Erik in December 2012 that I came to better appreciate this process. Erik has worked

with well-known musicians in South Africa and has had a great deal of experience with musicians from other African countries and the US. During my visit with him, he showed me a book he had read many times over titled *The South African Music Business* by Jonathan Shaw. It was dog eared and well-worn in the chapter on music production. When it came time to try tracking some of Romeo's songs, we booked the small recording suite at Jonathan Shaw's studio.

Jonathan Shaw's studio in a southwest suburb of Johannesburg offers two recording facilities—studios A and B. Studio A is the main recording suite and features a small isolation room and a control room in which there is also an electronic drum kit and assorted basses and guitars. Studio B is a single room in which there is a desktop computer, a keyboard as a midi controller, monitor speakers, and assorted microphones. This studio is intended for do-it-yourself projects or for people to learn how to work with various music recording software products at a low cost. The rates are reasonable, and for those without home studio set-ups it is perfect for pre-production work. For Romeo's project, we solicited the help of another Malawian musician and producer, Chris Kele.

Chris Kele hails from the same region as Romeo—Nsanje district. Though they both grew up in Blantyre, they identify with Nsanje as their home based on having extended family there. The origin of one's family is generally understood as home more so than their current place of residence. Chris and Romeo had worked together previously in Chris's studio in the south suburbs of Johannesburg. Chris is a skilled musician who had recently moved to South Africa after establishing himself in Malawi as one of the leading R&B singers, and later a reputation as a jazz musician comparable to the likes of American guitarist Earl Klugh. He is an accomplished bassist and guitarist and is especially skilled at drum programming and creating live sounding rhythm tracks. In the studio, he values getting a live feel out of all the instruments

even if using electronic drum parts, as he considers this to be a sign of maturity (personal conversation 23 Feb. 2013). His musical background is rooted in jazz, and he describes his own music as "Africulture jazz" (Interview June 2013). Thus working in the studio with him tended to complement the experiences of Romeo as an acoustic musician and myself as a jazz musician.

At Shaw's studio we recorded two songs. The environment was conducive to efficient work as we were left uninterrupted and the space was generally cozy, with pleasant scenery of a landscaped yard just outside the window. If we needed assistance, we needed only to ask the manager Amiel or the owner Jonathan, be it for technical assistance or to pick up our energy with a cup of tea or coffee. Despite the good experience we had at that studio, we moved our next session to Chris's studio. In many ways this was due simply to a matter of logistics, since Chris was more familiar with his particular set-up of computer software and hardware. The change in environment, however, had a number of tangential effects on the process. Chris's studio was a smaller windowless room, with walls lined with black felt and soundproofing. It was easy to forget where we were on account of being isolated in a converted guest quarters behind the main house. Chris was co-owner of the studio, which eliminated the neutrality of Shaw's studio. His familiarity with the studio set-up made some things more efficient, while other recording techniques were marked by his personality, such as sound selection and drum programming style. Shaw's studio was set up for public use and included a wide range of popular recording software. Chris tailored his studio to meet his own needs. For the most part, this worked in Romeo's favor, but occasionally created tension and a difficulty in getting the exact sound or stylistic effect that Romeo wanted. Sometimes communication was hampered by conflicting views of music making, as evidenced in this interchange:

Engineer: "Tamveretseni (listen to) [the] click. [He sings a rhythm in time with the pulse] eh eh eeeh eh eeeeh"
Singer: "Ayi….ayi….ayi" (No….no….no) [indicating that the rhythm sung was incorrect]
E: "Aaaaaaaaaah" [He shakes his head and hands dismissively]
Author: "I think you're wanting to hear a different tempo."
E: [He plays the keyboard with one hand while conducting the tempo with the other]
S: [He plays his guitar in a deliberate manner indicating the rhythm he feels is best]
E: "Ok, ok?"
S: "Eeee" (Yes) [He plays the pattern on the guitar again]
E: [Turns to the author with a scrunched facial expression] "That's the one?"
A and S: "Yes!"[97]

In his work on language and communicative practice, linguistic anthropologist William Hanks states that a shared grammar is neither necessary nor sufficient for two or more people to communicate. "What they must share, to a variable degree, is the ability to orient themselves verbally, perceptually, and physically to each other and to their social worlds" (1996, 229). This was evident here when Chris's background in jazz and Romeo's in itinerant guitar music clashed. Chris's social position shifted with the change in studio as well, where he possessed more social and symbolic capital in his role as studio owner, plus having some formal music education, and being an established and well-known singer back in his (and Romeo's) home of Malawi (Bourdieu 1991). I was functioning as producer for this session and was able to counteract any imbalances or misunderstandings because of my symbolic capital of being a white middle-aged university-educated foreigner but also as an 'elder' performing musician acquainted with them since the 1990s. Additionally, I had been listening to the field recordings of Romeo and mapping that onto my knowledge of itinerant guitar music from central, east, and southern Africa, which afforded me some confidence in any assertions I felt necessary to make. To be sure, the vast majority of the time spent at these sessions was very productive and enriched

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[97] Field recording MVI_0574 26 April, 2013

the camaraderie among us. Accomplishing tasks in the recording studio, however, does involve

regular assessment and negotiation of the situation using the stock knowledge that is available

and shared among the participating actors.

Tracking

As we finished working at the pre-production process, Romeo and I alternated working

with Chris in his studio and Jonathan in his. We had gotten a reasonable feel for how things were

going to fit together, but my stay in South Africa was drawing to a close. With time working

against us, we needed to transition quickly to tracking (recording) some vocals and instrumental

parts that would be used in the final mix. In order to do this, we hired Chris to record the

electronic drums using the keyboard as a midi controller to record them in real time rather than

sequencing beat by beat. He also recorded the electric bass parts. These tracks were then taken to

Shaw's main Studio A via flashdrives so that Romeo could record the acoustic guitar and the

lead vocals in the isolation booth there. The technology available at Shaw's was of a better

quality than Chris's with regard to microphone selection, an important component for voice and

acoustic guitar recording. We also benefited from Shaw's multiple software programs, which

allowed us to save the session in different formats, facilitating the addition of more instrumental

parts at the other studios I would be traveling to in Malawi.

The physical setting at Studio A had the intended effect of providing an environment free

of external sounds and having minimal reverberation so as to be able to artificially manipulate

the room sound during the mixing process. The physical separation between the vocalist and the

engineer is mediated through a double glass window. This allows for communication using body

language, if necessary, and vocals if the talkback mic is enabled. The physical isolation of the

vocalist tends to enable them to avoid external distractions and encourage a deep focus on the task at hand. In other instances, it may serve as a distraction in and of itself, as it could represent an unusual surrounding or one that indexes a level of specialization or seriousness that may induce anxiety. It took several minutes for Romeo to become comfortable, for whatever reason. In the end, the tracks were successfully recorded and some weeks later were in Malawi awaiting further tracking.

It took quite some time to tend to this project while in Malawi. Some studios were just ill-suited for this project or they were of exceptional quality, but operated by producer-engineers better versed in other genres like hip-hop and reggae, or in some cases specialized primarily in advertisement and jingle production. Given the proliferation of recording studios in Malawi, it was surprising how difficult it was to get this project underway. In my mind, this was in part due to how the notion of recording studios had been localized in Malawi, often established as more utilitarian than creative in scope. The pragmatic aspect underlying commercial music in an economy that is struggling in many sectors overpowers many of the values associated with studio recording in other parts of the world. Fortunately, I crossed paths with a talented singer-guitarist and businessman, Peter Mawanga. His perspective on music making and the style in which he played was very similar to that of Romeo's. Peter also had a recording studio built with international standards in mind. Thus, a convergence of factors presented themselves in a recording space that consisted of a control room, an isolation booth, and a main room in a dedicated facility, though not expressly built to be a recording studio, remained with few domestic attributes as former living quarters. The technologies used were of exceptional quality and updated regularly. The individual actors involved included Peter along with his cohort of band mates and like-minded musicians from other Afro-conscious bands that incorporated

Malawian characteristics together with influences from Zimbabwe in the use of marimba and the way of incorporating minor tonalities, central African inspired itinerant guitar techniques, African-American gospel keyboard voicings, and mixing techniques reminiscent of European record labels like ECM and Real World Records. Over several sessions spread across a couple months time we tracked piano, organ, and saxophone, after which we rerecorded the bass and replaced the electronic drums with conventional drum kit and awaited the week for mixing.

Rough Mix

Weeks later, finally meeting with Peter to listen to the rough mixes he had finished, he commented about how people who regularly come through his studio had grown to admire Romeo's music. This led into a discussion about the market for local music in Malawi. Peter said the songs had a strong international flavor to them and that it would require a good strategy for them to be successful in Malawi. Somehow, Romeo's music had become internationalized in various local processes that were now evidenced by different sonic markers. Some of these markers point to the various aspects of the recording process – the blending of direct outputs with microphone signals on the bass, or recording room ambience to add to the shimmer of the drum cymbals. Others involved a certain lilt in the attack of a note or a fleeting melodic phrase in the saxophone part and keyboard embellishments. How these cues are perceived will obviously depend on the audience, but people of similar backgrounds will overlap in opinions and share common sentiments. This mix will not likely register with the local reggae promotors, but may be favored by some jazz aficionados. Either way, the resulting sounds are extremely dense in information, but ultimately they are the records of aftershocks resulting from countless encounters and negotiations, and similar to those in other contexts of musical interaction.

Music Education Facilities

Music education facilities represent another important site for socialization and articulate with the public differently than recording studios. They play an influential part in contributing to general stocks of knowledge regarding how music is perceived and understood by both practitioners and spectators alike. In so doing they contribute and respond to the larger social contexts in which they are situated, doing so in an often dialogic manner across multiple discourses of practice. Because of this, they serve as useful lenses into the broader, often translocal, circulation of musical ideals and habits. The convergence of people, ideas, and things in these types of specialized environments produces a context rich for ethnomusicological inquiry, just as recording studios mentioned above. A key characteristic of music education facilities is their specialized nature, having the specific intent of disseminating information and facilitating skill development in the area of musical knowledge and practice. With this in mind, they may be understood as hosting a category of social practices, placing emphasis on human interaction in addition to musical styles and genres.

My initial interest in the relationship between educational institutions and musical practices was in the area of musical improvisation in university settings, especially in relation to value formation and social cohesion. In a paper I wrote for a graduate seminar ("Improvisation in World Cultures," taught by Prof. Nettl) I investigated how improvisation was understood and utilized by music students and faculty within the University of Illinois music school. One of the findings was that jazz students and faculty had a profoundly different understanding of improvisation, one which seemed to form the foundation of a basic set of assumptions about not only what they did, but how they defined themselves as individuals. Many jazz musicians in this study viewed the ability to improvise as a valued marker of difference, and most of them viewed

it in terms of self-expression rather than a musical skill, as did their classically-trained

counterparts. The role of the institution itself, both physically and symbolically, was another

factor that appeared. The physical separation of the jazz and musicology departments, for

instance, mapped onto occasional animosity and misunderstanding between the two disciplines,

which though largely circumstantial, was intersecting nevertheless. Similar findings occur in

other works such as Nettl's *Heartland Excursions* (1995), in which he examines the Midwestern

university music school as category describing, among other things, tensions, allegiances, and

hierarchies (see also Kingsbury 1988 about a specific school on the east coast). John Murphy

offers useful insight in response to debates assessing the merits and shortcomings of learning

jazz in the academy versus at jam sessions and gigs. He points out the importance of viewing a

jazz program as more than what occurs in the classroom and to account for the broader

experience of students who come together to interact in curricular and extracurricular settings

bound together by their shared participation in a university program.

Even though I have not focused on a single genre in this study, various genres and styles

of music still come into play. In this case, jazz is a useful point of entry because of its role as a

diasporic and cosmopolitan genre. The manner in which it is understood in different regions

speaks to the multi-layered and dialogic nature of localization. For this reason, I will briefly

describe my encounters with jazz education in the US, South Africa, and Malawi as a lead-in to

my focus on music education in Malawi and the specific case studies.

Drawing from my own experience at several Midwestern institutions I might make a

number of generalizations about jazz education: There is a strong emphasis on bebop as a

fundamental starting point that must be mastered, often prior to studying other styles. There is a

wide acceptance that knowledge of chord-scale relationships is a foundational theoretical

approach to improvisation. Improvising is a vehicle for individual self-expression, yet there is a shared understanding of good and bad improvising. The ability to play your instrument well is valued above being able to express your ideas in writing. Smooth jazz is not a respected genre. Harmonic sophistication measured by controlled use of dissonances is highly valued. These ideas may be perpetuated or contested in other institutions based on local conditions, participating individuals, and the circuits of interchange that link them.[98] The university jazz program is a gravitational center around which music making is structured and influenced, and there are layers of relationships among people within their particular environment.

My visits to the University of Cape Town (UCT) and University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) in 2013, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in 2009 revealed to me similar relationships and layers of influence. At jam sessions and performances populated by students and faculty at each of these sites, I heard an assortment of jazz standards, local tunes, and original compositions. I interacted with people who shared with me their views on music making as well as the dynamics of their respective programs, and observed the idiosyncrasies of each site and the various communities they hosted. Of these experiences, it was my trips to UCT that rejuvenated my thoughts about music communities and values associated with universities.

In February 2013 I attended a jam session at Swingers Pub, Restaurant & Lounge in Cape Town at which there were several students and a faculty member from UCT participating. One of the things that struck me was the predominance of American jazz standards (e.g. "Chameleon," "Little Sunflower," "St. Thomas," "Tenor Madness," "All Blues," and others), with but one exception being "Mannenberg," the Abdullah Ibrahim classic which was described to me as

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[98] In the US, I have noticed differences in urban versus rural settings of universities, or Midwestern versus coastal locations, or college versus conservatory environments. Reputations of jazz programs are assessed by many students prior to attending or auditioning. Often the atmosphere of the program is driven by key individuals whose influence may vary depending on internal politics and local relationships.

catering to the tourist audience. This contrasted with my experiences at a jam session in Johannesburg at Zoo Lake Bowling Club (named after the British Game lawn bowls, not American bowling) hosted by WITS jazz faculty and attended by students and the general public. At the Zoo Lake session there was a greater diversity of repertoire which did include some jazz standards but had a considerable variety of songs and styles. This was in part due to the direction taken by the host of the session, who was more interested in providing a space for musical self-expression of all genres. The house band, led by the host, favored original avant-garde jazz composed by its members. What I found interesting about the contrast between the Cape Town and Johannesburg sessions was not that it existed, but the saliency of interplay between university and public sectors via music making.

To posit any concrete findings, more intensive study of the respective jazz programs is necessary, but anecdotal evidence suggests some possible lines of inquiry. The educational and career backgrounds of jazz faculty members in these programs differs. These particular differences invite the question as to what extent do American approaches to jazz education influence those at UCT, versus how European and South African approaches influence the program at WITS?[99] At the very least, there are multiple intersections of educational and professional backgrounds in various international contexts that complicated the simplified model featuring the local scholar educated abroad and teaching at home. In getting to know some of the faculty in these departments, it was impressed upon me that these were key sites operating dialogically with international and translocal canons of ideas and values. Since one of the major

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[99] I suggest these associations based on conversations with some faculty, biographical information from the departments' websites, and the entrance requirements for jazz at UCT. The influence of South African guitarist Johnnie Fourie on some of the WITS music faculty is noteworthy as well.

intents of music education is creating habituated practices and expanding stocks of knowledge, it is important to consider canon formation and dissemination.

For many young musicians, a place for music education is often a site where they experience a new social world in which they discover new sounds and ideas and negotiate how to incorporate them into their own set of skills and practices. In addition to gaining knowledge through formal instruction, students learn a great deal from how their teachers and peers talk about, respond to, create, and reproduce music. For younger participating musicians, this socialization process can have a substantial impact on their value formation if it occurs during a time of transition, such as toward adulthood or independence (Levitin 2008). By examining these settings more comprehensively as sites of socialization and convergence, the binary oppositions such as local and foreign become less stark and the subtle differences more meaningful.

Music Education in Malawi

It is important to recognize that music education is not a foreign concept in Malawi, as musical activities were central to an array of community matters—notably initiation ceremonies involving rites of passage of youth into adults and the necessary social preparations (Chanunkha 2005; Strumpf 2001). These contexts were in essence educational in nature and should be framed as such lest people perpetuate the notion that Europeans brought education to Africa. That said, it is equally important to acknowledge that there was a radical shift in how music making was understood in Malawi with the introduction of mission-based education. The most dramatic shift was perhaps a devaluation of indigenous musical practices, labeling them as pagan and "backwards" following the ethos of progress and social Darwinism popular in the late 19th century when missions began expanding in central Africa. The emergence of factors external to

Africa should also not be understood as a unified phenomenon. As mentioned in Chapter 2 these influences included Muslim influence from the East, and European incursions led by different groups and agendas that were business-related, government-related, or Christian mission-related.

Robert Chanunkha is one of few who have conducted in-depth studies of music education in Malawi. His work is insightful in many areas and includes studies of Muslim Yao communities in Malawi's southern region and broader Christian contexts as well. In his dissertation there is an overarching theme that deals with how indigenous music is treated in music education over the course of the 20th century. Indeed, it is somewhat oppositional in character, where indigenous music is pitted against European music writ large. This is a reasonable framework, but I suggest that caution be used here in how far to let the binary influence one's understanding. On a macro level this is accurate to some measure, but I find it important to specify what types or categories of European and indigenous practices are being leveraged and for what purpose.

Chanunkha mentions a few strategies employed by Malawians in music education: an acceptance of European church, folk, and art music; resistance to such music; and the revisionist approach. This last one can be ambiguous and warrants closer scrutiny to unpack which specific variables are being altered and by whom. Turino offers an excellent discussion of modernist-revisionist strategies and the shift between participatory to presentational settings in Zimbabwe (2000, 106), and Bode Omojola explores the creative agency leveraged in similar contexts among Yoruba musicians in Nigeria (2012, 135). These two analytical perspectives partially apply to the situation in Malawi as well.

Music education was a part of mission school curricula beginning just prior to the turn of the twentieth century. Emphasis was on knowledge to perform various Catholic and other

Christian church songs, general Christian hymns, and other European traditions (i.e. children's songs like "Frère Jaque"). Educational environments and quality tended to be racialized and segregated (Chanunkha 2005). Indigenous music was taken as familiar and common sense compared to European music, which was taught in school and understood as serious (Chanunkha 2-8). The association of European educational systems, and indeed society, with quality and seriousness continued after independence, manifesting themselves in the form of St. Andrews Secondary School and Kamuzu Academy. They offered education to mixed student bodies, but in the case of Kamuzu Academy teaching positions were granted to foreign citizens only from its inception in 1981 until the end of Kamuzu's rule in the early 1990s.

The arrival of a democratically elected government ushered in a plethora of social reforms, not all successfully implemented. There was the introduction of government music educational policy that favored inclusion of indigenous content, but there was a disconnect between policy and practice due to absence of suitable structures and resources. Much of the rhetoric was clearly informed by the same modernist-reformist strategies found in the Zimbabwe context described by Turino in which musicians strategically blend European and African forms and aesthetic preferences (2000, 108).

Music Crossroads and Trends in Malawi after 2000s

Beginning in the early 2000s there was a rise in popularity of music competitions that included Kuche Kuche, Chibuku Road to Fame (both beer companies), and The Music Crossroads Competitions. The latter is a part of the network of Music Crossroads schools in southern Africa and represents another interesting example of cultural interchange through arts education. This description comes from their promotional profile:

Music Crossroads (MC) was initiated in 1995 by the world's largest youth-music network, Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI), organising annual festivals, international band tours, and training many young talents in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, with established independent Music Crossroads entities. One of the biggest and most exciting cultural development initiatives in Africa, the Music Crossroads program has involved more than 150,000 young musicians and reached more than a million audiences in Southern Africa. (http://www.linkedin.com/company/music-crossroads-international?trk=company_logo)

Competitors are encouraged to incorporate their local music traditions into their performances.

The emphasis on the dissemination of knowledge makes these sites especially interesting when considering translocal cultural flows. With these contexts in mind it is useful to recall Paul Zeleza's work on international Africanist scholarship, which he breaks down into three areas: the physical mobility of scholars, the networks of scholarship and libraries, and various types of collaborations (2002).

Lusubilo Music Center

In the town of Karonga, located some twenty minutes from the Tanzanian border in the northern part of Malawi, sits Lusubilo music center. Approaching the center on my first visit, I was struck by the serenity of the courtyard which doubles as an outdoor performance space. It is situated in the middle of the compound surrounded by a 'U' shaped building such that when facing the outdoor stage one can see rooms to their left and right and in front as if the building is welcoming you with open arms instilling a sense of warmth and comfort. Equally welcoming is the center's founder, Agnes Kim a retired opera singer from Korea, described below in an excerpt from my field notes:

Professor Kim is a humble, well-organized, level-headed, and very disciplined individual. She is eloquent in her mannerisms, as if she never left the opera stage, or her cohort of aficionados and professionals. Prior to coming to Malawi, she knew nothing of amplifiers,

speakers, and other similar gear, but made it a priority to understand the workings of musical styles that interested the kids. Now the musicians focus on three genres: jazz, classical, and what they call "Afro," referring to a genre that incorporates indigenous songs and characteristics similar to Afrofusion, Afro-beat, Afropop, etc.) She has the students practice 6 hours per day and is shooting for 8. She's hard core like that, but matter-of-fact about it. She says there are a lot of great musicians out there, and the only way you can succeed is with a lot of practice (Notes Lusubilo – August 2013).

The center includes a large kitchen and dining area that is able to accommodate roughly two dozen people but still offers a cozy environment in which individuals come together to share in the cooking and eating experience in a cordial social gathering. It is fitting, then, that the kitchen is the central point at the base of the 'U'. Immediately to the left sits Professor Kim's office and continuing left from there you can find the library and other rooms for meetings and the like. The library has an assortment of music books, DVDs, and CDs, including one DVD I noticed sitting on the table titled *Essential Afropop*.[100] Opposite the library and across the courtyard is the main hall, in which band rehearsals and indoor performances may take place. There is a stage and open area beneath a high ceiling for audience seating. This reminded me of my elementary school, where the stage was situated within the gymnasium. In the corner behind the main hall and to the right of the kitchen are eight practice rooms and a number of storage lockers. Next to these is a small seating area just at the corner of the courtyard, allowing the breeze to come through, and yet a covered corridor leading to the rest of the practice rooms provides protection from the elements. It is at once pragmatic and comfortable, somehow commensurate with the aura of discipline and well-being that seemed to circulate there.

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[100] Sheer Sounds 2007

During my visit the students, ranging in age from mid-teens to twenties, appeared eager. Some were shy; many were smiling, and there was a strong sense of camaraderie evident during meals shared in the communal kitchen, and Christian values and prayers were present. They are led by Agnes Kim, to whom they look as a motherly figure. She is assisted by Manaseh and Chris, as manager and head tutor respectively. The center was established in 2012 by Professor Kim in conjunction with the preexisting Lusubilo Orphan Care Project, which partnered with Catholic Relief Services in 2005. Lusubilo music center as a space and institution creates an influential environment. It supplies both the necessary tools, facilities, and social support with which to utilize them.

The center is populated by students of modest backgrounds who attend with scholarship assistance based on an audition process. The students are encouraged to work on fundamentals and repertoire. In addition to the regular staff, guest instructors come in from within Malawi as well as Germany and South Korea. Two of the top students are selected each year to attend Korea National University of Arts on scholarship.

Several members of the band sing and play more than one instrument, so they rotate among different roles within the ensemble. The band instrumentation consists of drum set, hand percussion (usually bongos), electric bass, 1-2 keyboards, acoustic guitar, trumpet, plus alto and/or tenor saxophone. Their repertoire is described as jazz and Afro Music. "Jazz" in this instance includes pop and soul music performed with and without vocals. What they refer to as Afro Music or sometimes Afrobeat draws from local genres of indigenous dance music primarily from the northern region of Malawi, arranged for a presentational commercial band context.[101] Harmonic patterns are typically diatonic and include major and minor tonalities, a departure from

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[101] There is little consensus among Malawian musicians and related professionals as to the name of this and similar genres that incorporate indigenous dance repertoire or stylistic elements into a pop music format and arrangement.

the cyclic use of various combinations of I, IV and V chords. They use both triple and duple meters. The arrangements may include a cappella voices, unison melodic rhythmic figures, brass arrangements, and percussion interludes. The lyrics of the songs are typically in Kiyangonde, a minority language spoken in northern Malawi and parts of Tanzania. Some songs are adaptations of indigenous songs from the region, several are original compositions and of those some contain Christian themes and messages. In addition to the sonic elements of the performances and arrangements considerable emphasis is placed on choreographed dancing as well as dramatic showmanship during and in between songs.

In August 2013 I conducted a workshop on improvisation and composition at Lusubilo. This was my first time interacting directly with the students in a formal setting. I had first come to know of them through their DVD and made plans to spend some time at the center and work with them based on what I saw. I recall being smitten by their recorded performance and was not disappointed when I finally heard them live my first day there. So many things struck me as exceptional compared to groups I had seen in years past and during my current fieldwork in Blantyre—the way the horn parts were arranged, how the drum set was played, the charismatic singing, the choreography, and the costuming. The horn section played punctuated rhythmic lines rather than melodious scalar ones. More of the drum kit was utilized in playing the underlying grooves in contrast to a dominant hi-hat rhythm. The charismatic singing included exaggerated arm movements, kneeling down, and a range of facial expressions that marked a departure from the suave gestures of smartly dressed soukous singers or gospel singers who maintained a measured composure congruent with mission church etiquette.

The day after seeing them perform live I began my two-part workshop. The way the students performed the particular repertoire demonstrated a degree of maturity which I associated

with professional musicians. In actuality many of the students had only been playing their instruments for one or two years. Their knowledge of chords and scales was in its early stages and they lacked the abilities apply these fundamentals to create melodies, riffs, and accompaniment grooves in the moment. The workshop was well-received and productive nevertheless. What I later found out was that each of the songs they learned was taught to them phrase by phrase for each instrument, similar to how it would be accomplished in a master-apprentice relationship. In retrospect this is not entirely surprising. I am well aware that jazz is not understood in the same way in many African countries as it is in the US. Similarly, I understand that spontaneous composition and improvisation are things that are learned over time, and often later within the educational career of a music student. In these students' performances, I had perceived cues like the complexity of the arrangements, the timbres the students achieved, their ability to execute phrases, and body movements as signs that they had synthesized several musical fundamentals and possessed the ability to manipulate stylistic elements within a genre.

I was interpreting signs and cues produced by these students using experiential models that were based in American academic settings that I experienced. My imagined paradigmatic models of student ensembles suggested training in technique and music literacy often to the detriment of performance savvy. Student ensembles are rare in Malawi, leaving only professional performances as models.[102] This was further reinforced by the mentor-mentee method and professional background of guest instructor Tiwonge Hango. This breakdown in my understanding of signs reminded me of the importance to consider the process of localization at a particular point, and to work empirically from there so as to avoid base assumptions. It also

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[102] This performance-minded approach bears resemblance to my experience working with African-American Gospel musicians and the learning practice they underwent. This was performance intensive, whereby much learning was accomplished on the performance stage, almost like an understudy, and when the learner knew a song they might sit in during the church service subject to the demands and criticisms of the pastor and congregation.

further demonstrated the need to examine the roles of individual actors in processes of socialization and enculturation.

Tiwonge Hango

Guest musical director Tiwonge Hango played a large role in providing the training which led to their winning the 2013 "Chibuku Road to Fame" music competition and the subsequent production of the concert DVD. Four of the five songs that appear on the DVD were composed by him, the fifth being a traditional adaptation. He taught the songs aurally phrase by phrase to each performer, and he accompanied the band on their 2013 concert tour of Malawi. Tiwonge's participation at Lusubilo had a significant impact on the overall trajectory of the program in relation to learning and performing jazz and Afro-fusion styles.

Tiwonge began his career as a dynamic young lead singer with the group Tikhu Vibrations, which he formed with his elder brother Khumbo. This group, whose name is derived from the brothers' first names, began performing in 1999 as a church and wedding band. In 2003 Tikhu Vibrations became the first Malawian band to win the international Music Crossroads competition, beating out bands from southern Africa, including Zimbabwe and Tanzania, and earning them performances in England, Scotland, and Sweden. Three years later Tiwonge left Malawi to study at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts. He went on to forge a successful solo career that included performing and recording in Malawi and South Africa. He credits Salif Keita, Oliver Mtukudzi, and Wambali Mkandawire as inspiring his own music, which incorporates indigenous music from Malawi such as *chilimika* and *gule wamkulu*. Wambali is one of the forefathers of fusions of this nature in Malawi and produced Tiwonge's debut album *Chinyengo*. Tiwonge brings with him this stock of knowledge and experience to the curriculum

at Lusubilo. The performances of the band during their 2013 tour and on the DVD reflect Tiwonge's influence and fit within a larger set of cosmopolitan values regarding popularized forms of world music.

Rebecca Mwalwenje

Rebecca Mwalwenje is from Karonga, and was one of the lead singers for Lusubilo Band between 2012 and 2014. She grew up playing music and found her passion in singing at a young age while attending church. Her performances with Lusubilo are marked by a charismatic stage presence rivaling that of Hango's. She is emotive and animated in a way that is not typical of women performers in Malawi. Christianity is a strong presence in her life, as evidenced by her rhetoric on stage and in the print media, where in both instances she frequently expresses thanks to God. Interacting with her offstage, I was struck by her demeanor as one that captures an aura of strength, discipline, and humility.

About a year after graduating from Lusubilo she traveled to Norway to participate in a year-long exchange program at Trondertun Folkeshogsskole affiliated with the Music Crossroads program. Trondertun is a performing arts school. With Lusubilo she traveled to South Korea as well. Prior to her work with Lusubilo she participated in an international competition in Mozambique earning second place in 2009. She pushes the paradigm of Malawian singers, and female singers in particular. She grew up outside of the dominant urban centers of Lilongwe and Blantyre, yet has international travel experience. Even her international travel is somehow outside of the typical UK and South Africa destinations, traveled by many Malawians in the music business. In this way her experience somehow Afropolitan in character.

Now in her late 20s she has recorded a couple singles and continues to compose her own music in anticipation of recording an album. In her compositions, she speaks of social issues and worldly themes, as she embraces Malawian cultural aspects. Her music is influenced by producer and mentor Tiwonge Hango as well as the young rising South African singer-guitarist Zahara, another dynamic female performer.

Analysis: "Africa Inuka"

The title and lyrics are in Kiyangonde, a minority language from northern Malawi. The title "Afrika Inuka" means Africa wake up, and features Rebecca Mwalwenje on lead vocals. She brings to the performance a commanding voice and stage presence fueled by her dynamic movements, that are driven more by dramatic expression rather than seductive dancing. Her pitch is unwavering, and her timbre robust without being strained. Her voice projects well in the lower register, similar to Miriam Makeba later in her career, or Angelique Kidjo, from Benin. Her command over an intricately arranged tune is exceptional.

One interesting feature of the arrangement is the interplay between primary pulses. In the kick drum and bass part, the emphasis is clearly on every other eighth note that may be interpreted as implying a 3/4 time signature. The dance choreography and clapping during the breakdowns, later in the song, are placed on every third eighth note implying a 12/8 time signature. The hi-hat and keyboard parts are more rhythmically active, and are subject to interpretation regarding the primary pulse. This juxtaposition of rhythmic emphasis is common in indigenous Malawian music, and indeed music of many parts of Africa, but is less common as it is arranged here, particularly among commercial music bands. The starkness of the musical

contrast in this arrangement may be a result of the contrasting roles of the instruments, together with the different timbres.

The harmonic progression oscillates between G major and A minor. The vocals follow a call-and-response pattern, while the harmonic material remains consistent throughout the tune. The rate and pattern of change in the chords, however, varies depending on the section of the song. There is a rhythmic breakdown like a stop-time section, where the band changes between G and A minor twice as fast. The horn section parts are woven into the arrangement with this rhythmic interplay in mind, very much like west African Afrobeat groups. It is arrangements like these that situate Lusubilo band in contrast to older paradigmatic models in Malawi, once driven by the legacy of Kalimba band and similar models from South Africa.

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The process of socialization at Lusubilo represents several influences layered by levels of localization and dissemination of values. Students at Lusubilo Music Center learn and create what is understood as Malawian music, using traditions from the northern region of the country, and following West African performance models. When I spoke with him about his musical influences, he cited Femi and Fela Kuti as inspirations along with Salif Keita and others. The west African influence on the music of Lusubilo Music Center Band was rooted in part to Tionge's own experience and aesthetics. He was also regarded as an authority figure, similar to Professor Kim, because he had gained international recognition. Thus, I began to see how education centers like these were hosts to a convergence of values that articulated with different geographic scales and social milieus. Lusubilo Music Center is a site where overseas connections are made through face-to-face interaction, albeit intermittently, with teachers from Germany and

South Korea, connections that lie outside of the typical British and American ones. Christian values permeate practices here and represent yet another translocal thread.

Individuals like Professor Kim and Tionge bring with them international perspectives with layered multinational constellations of values sedimented over time. Tionge's experience is shaped by his roots in northern Malawi, has been successful in panregional competitions, and has studied in the UK. Models for how to synthesize multicultural expressive practices have been shaped in each of these areas where, Zimbabwe is a strong model in southern Africa and Nigeria in pan-African and European contexts. These individuals, furthermore, are coming together in a site where the dissemination of knowledge is a central focus. They are doing so in a place that provides physical structures, technologies, social, and economic capital working together to build onto stocks of knowledge that articulate with various geographic scales.

Performance Venues

I am taking performance venues to be public spaces in which musical performance takes place with the intent of commercial gain or adheres to performance practices consonant with those established via the commercial music industry. The public nature of performance events is one key component, and together with the immediacy of the public interaction make up notable distinctions from recording studios and education centers, in which the interaction with the public sphere typically exists as an anticipated future endeavor. These factors influence how music making in these spaces is conducted and contribute to the formation and circulation of values associated with music making and socialization in general.

In Blantyre, there are several venues commonly used for musical performances, including cafes and pubs, outdoor theaters, a larger hall like Robin's Park that resembles a gymnasium,

with floor and balcony seating for about 1500 people, and for even larger audiences Chichiri Stadium offers a large capacity in an unembellished setting. Most places are of modest size, as would be expected given the humble urban setting that is Blantyre. The character of spaces varies depending on whether they were originally intended for musical performance or retrofitted after the fact. Typically, the further from the city center you travel, the more modest the performance setting, but this is not without exception. At any rate, the character of the performance venue is not fully realized until it is populated, and often in collaboration with the intent and expectations of club owners and promoters. Over time, a set of expectations is shared among participants – concert goers, musicians, club management – that help bind these cohorts and form associations between social cues and practices regarding musical style, repertoire, economic class, education level, and so forth. Indeed, there is an element of common sense to this; it is how spectators choose which venue to patronize, and how musicians choose which one to solicit their sound. An acoustic musician, for example, will not likely approach a night club known for electronic music in order to get a gig. I find that taking stock of the constituent parts allows one to dig a little deeper into seeing how core values and canons are maintained, or how and why they change. This is one of the fundamental elements informing analysis of sites of convergence. Though they may exist within a larger cosmopolitan formation, the information that is uncovered should be less prone to be forced into binary categories or generally inclusive flows. This is achieved by looking at these musical sites as hosting a convergence of ideas and social backgrounds grounded by particular contexts and individual actors.

"Kupeza Chambo Presents: A Night of Afrobeat, Nyasavibes, and World Fusion"

Nearing the end of my stay in Malawi, I partnered with a cultural heritage and media company, called Kupeza Chambo, to organize a series of shows in which I and others would participate from October to November 2013. Our idea was to feature a collection of artists—Waliko Makhala, Faith Mussa, Agorosso (Lloyd Phaundi), and myself—that would play a combination of Afrofusion and jazz highlighting elements of acoustic music. Michael Phoya, President and founder of Kupeza Chambo, and I had developed a rapport which began with our mutual interest and work with the late guitar legend, Stonard Lungu. I had first worked with Stonard in the late 90s on his first studio album and Mike had completed a short documentary on Stonard in 2010. Our paths frequently crossed as our interests in Malawian expressive practices were both informed by a cosmopolitan background and a strong sentiment for all things Malawian.

I proposed this particular line-up of artists drawing from my acquaintances and knowing Mike's interests and background. Both Mike and I had worked with Waliko. Indeed, anyone who has had any serious interest in Malawian music, has likely met the acquaintance of Waliko Makhala as I had some twenty years ago. Waliko boasts a 30-year career intersecting Malawian expressive practices from many angles. He began in theater and transitioned into choreography and music direction for Malawi's national dance troupe. He also maintained a presence in journalism, writing on arts and culture for one of the national newspapers. Taking a few years off to earn a degree in ethnomusicology from University of Zimbabwe, he returned to rise as one of Malawi's leading authorities on indigenous music and arts. Over the last decade and a half, he has been a fixture at Malawi Broadcast Company, first as a television producer and later as the chief researcher for the radio branch of the company. He is well-traveled in and outside Africa

and frequently accompanied Malawi's president on several television assignments. Though he is at ease in cosmopolitan spaces, he is regarded as a traditionalist by many, and a pan-Africanist by others. He is sometimes more of one than the other, sometimes neither, often more.

I had only just met Faith Mussa during this latest trip to Malawi. I was to begin rehearsing with Peter Mawanga, a leader in both Gospel and Afrofusion, or Afro-vibes as he calls it, with a sound similar to that of Oliver Mtukudzi. The band consisted of Peter on vocals and acoustic guitar, Marlyn on backing vocals, Mavuto on marimba, Alfred on bass, Dryson on drums, and Faith on lead electric and acoustic guitars. Faith grew up in a musical family that were popular on the gospel circuit in Malawi. He is of slight build and wears a smile that will cure a rainy day. My first impression of him began with him slinging his guitar onto the chair as he walked into rehearsal at which time he shook my hand energetically and said, "I remember listening to you when I was a kid!" (referring to the album I did with Nathaniel Chalamanda entitled *Hometown Stranger*). It was meant as a compliment and felt as such just after the "am I that old?" internal dialog dissipated. At any rate, his guitar playing was uncharacteristically "jazzy" in that it actually resembled the likes of Mike Stern and Bill Frisell, two exceptional American guitarists, who he had never heard of. Faith has a knack for making everything look cool and suave and completely void of any condescension. One of his hit songs entitled "Desperate," is a love song centered on the love of Jesus, which musically would be right at home on a Jackson 5 remake, and another of his hit songs discusses rural life as he plays an oil can guitar, exquisitely produced.

Agorosso was someone I had an interest in meeting even before I had arrived in Malawi to conduct the fieldwork for this project. His bio appeared on a Malawian music site on the Internet and struck me as someone with a rock & roll attitude on acoustic guitar. [quote] It was a

few months before our paths managed to cross. He doesn't perform at a regular spot and I finally spotted a festival in which he was performing nearby. Mike Phoya had worked with him previously and introduced me at the show. Small talk was a bit sterile and uneventful until more of our respected pasts became shared knowledge. It turned out that I had met him in 1998 when he came in to my studio to record with Romeo. He was the third person of the trio of Romeo, his brother Yohanne, and Agorosso. Agorosso composed and recorded the soundtrack to the Malawian film *The Last Fishing Boat* (for which Mike wrote the screenplay). It won best soundtrack at the 2013 Africa Movie Academy Awards, who flew him out to Lagos to accept the award, but to his disappointment, not to perform. His reception at home was similarly fraught. He described to me with some vitriol and much dismay how large corporations put on big parties for the Malawian contestants who appeared on Big Brother Africa, a reality game show filmed in Johannesburg. He exclaimed, "Nobody threw me a party, and I actually *won*!"

Maky's

In many ways, the "Kupeza Chambo Presents" concert series was inspired by my time spent at Cafe Chez Maky, the guest lodge where I resided, owned and operated by the charismatic and discerning George Maky, or simply Maky, as he is better known. I have always been inclined to compare Maky's to Rick's Café Américain from the film *Cassablanca* for the particular blend of clientele it attracted and how the host was such an integral fixture of the establishment. Maky's was somehow neither touristy nor local, but rather both; maybe it just depends on what you are looking for. In any case, while it does cater to a variety of clientele it exudes a certain air of sophistication aptly indexed by the constant ringing of jazz and world

music on the sound system or emanating from the house band rehearsing by the pool—out of sight, but surely present.

The current location is the fourth incarnation of Cafe Chez Maky which has been a fixture of the Blantyre creative scene since 1997. Maky, a Cameroonian visual artist who had resided for many years in Washington D.C., arrived in Malawi and soon established an eatery in which to display his and other local artists' works. From its inception, the cafe was host to relatively eclectic live music reflecting a cosmopolitanism informed by American and West African currents. This type of atmosphere has remained consistent over the years, and has been influential in how local entertainment is featured at the venue and in turn how the venue has been situated within the creative arts scene in Blantyre.

I made the acquaintance of Maky during his first year of business in 1997, when his cafe-gallery was located in downtown Blantyre above the Royal Taj Indian restaurant in the building that once contained the Apollo Theater. He often wore African print clothing and abhorred the idea of wearing a suit, a common practice in Malawi following the lead of former President Kamuzu Banda, who was never seen wearing anything but a three-piece suit usually complemented by a hat, cane, and fly whisk. Maky was and is an advocate of rational thought and creative freedom; he was often critical of authoritarian dogma he saw in both African and Western political and religious leadership. But mostly, Maky was good humored and charismatic, greeting virtually everyone who entered his place with a smile and salutation. Upon entering, people could see his slightly abstract art tastefully displayed, often bright in color, and occasionally socially critical. At the time his was one of the few places you could go to get brewed coffee, "real coffee," Maky would boast, served in French presses and artistic mugs. The crepes were also fantastic and in general the food was comparable, if not better than, that offered

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in the nearby resort hotels. His menu has always been competitively priced, still reflecting a superior quality, yet not offensively opportunistic as said hotels. This aspect, together with the general atmosphere, seemed consistent with the clientele who frequented Maky's — not exclusively elite, but neither average working class; it was rather a collection of local professionals, foreign tourists, expatriate residents, and government heavyweights.

I had the pleasure of performing at three of the four versions of Maky's, playing either American jazz or a fusion of local popular styles in an acoustic format. During this latest trip I was able to gain a different perspective on account of residing there. The gallery function was no longer, and it had expanded into a restaurant lodge situated on Kabula Hill at the Northwest corner of town about a 20-minute walk to city center. Maky now employed a house band of four musicians who I came to know fairly well and with whom I performed on several occasions. Their repertoire was a result of what seemed to be ongoing negotiations between the band and Maky, an avid aficionado of jazz and African popular music. He is particularly fond of music from his home country of Cameroon and the surrounding West African region. Having some musical knowledge himself, evidenced by his acoustic guitar playing and penchant for sitting in as a percussionist with visiting bands, his authority in creative matters held a bit more weight than some of his counterparts managing other venues. Ermine and Watson, the house guitarists, expressed both appreciation and frustration at Maky's repertoire suggestions. It seemed they would spend hours of rehearsals learning unfamiliar songs at Maky's request only to be told to liven up the audience with local songs. They did appreciate learning songs from artists they might otherwise not know, such as Cameroonian jazz bassist Etienne Bappe. He actually flew in to perform at Maky's in conjunction with the Blantyre Arts Festival at Maky's invitation. Maky was one of the directors of the festival but has since withdrawn from participating, citing

conflicts in creative interests among fellow organizers. To be sure, he has a strong vision of what music he wants to be involved with, particularly at his establishment. Musical preference here, it would seem, resonates more deeply than simply a matter of taste or opinion.

During my stay I sat in with the house band, who performed every other weekend. After a couple months Maky suggested I headline a show of "strictly jazz." I was not too keen on this as I would rather perform more crossover material, but I understood that he was wanting to offer something different than other venues. I assembled some musicians I knew from years past, one of whom I met in the US – a Malawian keyboardist who I performed gospel music with, the other a Zimbabwean percussionist and marimba player Maky suggested. We chose American jazz standards we all knew plus a few South African jazz tunes. After several rehearsals it was clear that there was still a pretty big disconnect among each of us as to performance practice and expectations with an international jazz repertoire. When I suggested a simple blues standard like Charlie Parker's "Now's the Time," I finally had to write out the chord changes, because the keyboardist kept playing a Chicago-style blues shuffle, oblivious of how the blues form was incorporated in bebop. In another instance, I tried to "tag" the ending of the final melody by repeating the last phrase three times to finish. The rhythm section would stop after one or two, but not three. This still confounds me, and I wonder if was a joke. Part of me hopes so.

The show was well received, but in my mind it was a mess, with missed cues, fumbled endings, and awkward solos, despite conversations had during rehearsals. For subsequent shows I insisted on a more collaborative approach with members of the house band together with these musicians. It took several performances, and some negotiation on my part, to put together an ensemble and repertoire that worked for me, the musicians, the audience, and Maky. This materialized as the first performance of the "Kupeza Chambo Presents" concert series, which

included Faith Mussa and Agorosso on this show. The disjunctures between the individuals involved were many and did not occur as merely conflicts between Western and African, or local and cosmopolitan perspectives. Rather it was a complex interactive and communicative process articulating with several varying backgrounds that were navigated in order to put on a show that could be understood social worlds within Malawi. This process of negotiating social backgrounds was further evident in the shows to come.

Mibawa

Mibawa Cafe is not a cafe per se, but it does have an intimate feel and decor that allows it to stand out from other music venues of similar capacities. The club is situated at the west end of the CBD, not far from the two major hotels in Blantyre and directly across from the filling station in which there is also a pizza parlor, a burger joint, and behind which lies a working class food garden that serves local cuisine at modest prices. A two-story building sits in a small courtyard behind a tall painted cement wall. The doorway-sized entrance is right off the street. After entering the courtyard, you will see a covered area and a bar in the corner. As you walk toward the club entrance past the bar and again on your left is an enclosed kitchen the size of a large food truck with an awning that when closed covers the counter where you order local style food. Once you pass that, you climb several stairs to reach the entrance of the club itself. A small corridor with two restrooms on your left and an order window leading to the bar on your right. Walk through the second door to see the stage at the back of the room about 30 feet from where you stand. Above to your right is a balcony that lines the right hand side of the club with a bamboo railing and small tree trunks for supports. Under the balcony is seating ins wicker chairs and couches. A small dance floor immediately in front of the stage is cordoned off, providing

some separation between the audience seating and the would-be dancers. Behind and above you are the sound board and engineer station, along with an office that is not visible to the general public. The bar sits beneath that and to your right if you are facing the stage. The stage itself is elevated about three feet and has large speakers on either side. The drum kit is further elevated on a riser in the middle of the stage. Overall there is at once an earthy theme of trees, bamboo, and wicker together with colored lights, amplified sound, and elevated stage full with keyboards, drums, guitars hanging on the wall, and all the trimmings for a dance club.

During my 2013 stay, the club employed two house bands, Mibawa Band I and Mibawa Band II. These two bands alternated performance days during the week. Live music was featured Wednesday through Saturday. (At some point in its history it provided live music seven nights a week.) The clientele tends to be slightly older professionals in their 30s and 40s. The music would start around 8pm and continue until 2 am. The music consisted of mostly covers of American pop tunes, country, and R&B; Jamaican and international reggae; South African pop tunes, and Malawian classics from the 1970s to the 1990s. The progression of the evening remained fairly consistent each night, with slight variations on the weekends. The first set featured instrumentals and some jazz tunes (Earl Klugh, Louis Armstrong). The singer came on stage beginning with the second set to offer several soft R&B and light rock tunes. The later sets featured more up tempo songs for dancing. Each set had a sprinkling of Malawian, Zimbabwean, and South African songs. This model of performance was common at some similar venues and was popularized in the 1980s and 1990s by Bright Nkhata's groups, Kalimba and Makasu. At Mibawa, it was a strategy favored by the club owner, a middle-aged businessman.

The band members represent some of Malawi's top musicians – veterans and newcomers alike. Several people with whom I spoke casually during and after the shows mentioned the

quality of the band and the sound. Visiting foreigners, resident expatriates, and local aficionados would often remark that these groups were of an international or exceptional standard. Many of these same people would also comment, or lament, the bands' reliance on covers or dated material. When I approached various band members they said they were complying with the club owner's requests.

The dynamics between the club owner and resident band involves some degree of diplomacy and can at times be conflicted when economic and creative concerns are at odds. In Malawi this relationship is perhaps more authoritarian than typically found in the US. Many times there is a single individual who handles the finances. He or she will likely own all of the equipment, which likely includes a PA system, drum kit, keyboards, guitars, and bass. Musicians who join the band do so as salaried employees who have a set schedule for rehearsals and are on a retainer for public performances. In some instances, the musicians may only play engagements for that band. In other instances, they may be able to do other work as freelance artists, but not join another band as a full-time member.

Mibawa Cafe: The Performance

We chose Mibawa as the location for the final concert of the series. It was the most accessible and popular club that catered to the demographic, adults over 25, most likely to attend the show. In contrast to Maky's, an intimate setting able to accommodate smaller audiences of roughly 60-80 people, Mibawa was a club expressly designed for live music with a capacity of just over 200. It was also squarely situated downtown near various forms of public transit, whereas Maky's was better accessed via car despite being walking distance from town. The show was a potpourri of styles and would have been mostly unremarkable in a world music

festival in the US or Europe. It was, however, a result of a series of negotiations between various individuals of different backgrounds and social worlds. Positions of authority and established practices were challenged, but within a field of reasonable possibilities having minimal risk of communication failures or breakdowns.

Some of us had to assert ourselves continuously to retain autonomy over the show we wanted to present. Like Maky, John, the Mibawa club owner, had a very clear and strong vision of how he saw entertainment in his club and on the road when his house band toured. Unlike Maky though, he viewed music from a strictly business perspective. Though appreciative of it, he lacked the perspective that Maky had as an amateur musician and previous professional artist. John had wanted us to split the show with the Mibawa II house band, which would have undermined our creative direction, not to mention our profit margin. We had decidedly taken a more evenhanded financial approach to the show in order to better benefit all participants. It also served to test if it was a feasible business model under local conditions, a proposition doubted by others in the business. There were also conflicts generated from how sound checks and the sound crew operated. Some individuals suggested to me that sabotage was involved. I suspect it was more a matter of leveraging position and local differences in established practice. Basically, what transpired was that I was told to arrive at 6 for an 8pm show for a sound check and that an engineer would be provided. No engineer was present when we arrived, but after much searching we found the person assigned to help us in the upstairs office, evidently waiting for us to seek his assistance. This person was charged with setting up sound and would then leave, thus we were to left on our own to manage the sound through the duration of the show. We sorted everything out in due course, hiring the guitarist from the Mibawa band to run sound in collaboration with two of our guys with sound engineering experience. The sound mix that Waliko and I were striving

for was different than they usually did at the club. We wanted punchy bass and clear vocals through the use of EQ rather than volume. This took some time, but was rendered successfully. Admittedly, this series of events was perhaps little more than local renditions of internationally recognized practices. In retrospect, however, it is representative of the intricacies of social interaction in musical environments – ones that potentially reproduce or challenge canons of aesthetic values circulated in the U.S. or South Africa, or combinations of multiple sites, as is so often the case.

The rest of the show proceeded largely as planned, beginning with Agorosso's opening 45-minute set. He performed with himself on acoustic guitar and vocals, his lead guitarist on electric and backing vocals and a percussionist playing congas. This is an unusual, but not unprecedented, lineup in Malawi and represented both Agorosso's practical capabilities and his personal approach to music making. Snowden Ibu followed, singing solo with his acoustic guitar. Faith Mussa was next and maintained the acoustic atmosphere by changing the sound of his very popular urban gospel tunes to suit the evening. He used a smaller band featuring himself on guitar, a keyboardist, and a drummer.

Faith Mussa is one of the leading Gospel Urban music artists in Malawi. His latest album features mostly songs that have sonic attributes suitable for dance club performances with both driving drum rhythms and production techniques that emphasize electronic manipulation. His name, or his brand, associated with the other featured musicians represented a bit of a juxtaposition between urban and acoustic Afro jazz musics. His music is not exclusively situated in the urban music category. On his album, he has two songs that draw from what are considered traditional styles, including the one that features a homemade oil tin banjo, "Pamudzi Pano" (Here in the village). Thus the juxtaposition was rooted in plausibility given the nature of his

complete oeuvre. The set that he performed included both traditional and urban genres reframed in a way that was understood by some as a "great jazz fiesta."[103]

The peak of the event occurred during Waliko's set around 12:30 am (on a Wednesday evening). Waliko Makhala is one of the leading players and advocates for indigenous music, musical instruments, and values. His early career was spent as a choreographer for the national dance troupe now under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Wildlife. He is widely hailed as one of the cultural specialists in the country. As an advocate of many indigenous values, he often plays solo acoustic instruments, like the bowed lute *kaligo*, and the strummed board zither *bangwe*, that have fallen out of favor or employs performance characteristics that emanate from rural performance practice, such as open song forms, wide tunings, and gravelly or nasal vocal timbres. He also plays in Afrofusion amplified settings, but it was his association with rural practices that was notable for this concert.

Waliko's music, dubbed by himself and his fans as "bush music," draws from rural dance traditions that are well-known by many Malawians, as evidenced by the crowd's positive reactions whenever he performs. People will often sing along, and perhaps more importantly, dance along with almost exaggerated body movements and facial gestures seemingly demonstrating the dancers' affiliation with or affinity toward the region from which the dance is associated with. Secondly, Waliko embraces the story teller traditions and even in this dance club setting with amplification and a disco ball, he narrated between each song, describing its origins and region of practice. For this performance he organized the set to begin with songs from the south of Malawi and continue northward, as if in a bus stopping at each area to sample the local music. The success of his performance here was in part due to his charisma as a performer, but

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[103] Kandani Ngwira. 2013. "Rick Deja Delivers Best Jazz Night at Mibawa." *BNL Times.* November 1.

benefited, I suspect, from the setting itself. The club is a reputable venue for a variety of economic and social strata. It is this way in large part because of how it is maintained and decorated, and the technologies that are contained within. Its location in the center of town also contributes to its status as a quality entertainment venue that would be viewed as different than a typical pub with live music.

In many performance venues, like studios and education centers, there can be a convergence of influences that shape how expressive practices are understood. In this particular instance, the articulation with multiple geographic scales comes from the juxtaposition of performing artists in a venue that has accrued symbolic capital. Though my involvement as a performer makes for an obvious international contribution, it was the intersection of values brought by the three other Malawian musicians whose musical sounds and practices indexed different centers of influence. Agorosso calls to mind, for many, the sounds of southern Malawi, but he is aware of how his music draws from Zimbabwean and Mozambican elements with some features of Brazilian music. Faith brings an international component that draws from the club dance styles made popular by South African artists. Waliko's work with indigenous music is tempered by his pan-Africanist views, knowledge, and experience living in Zimbabwe, working with west African musicians, and traveling extensively abroad.

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The convergence and outreach of these sites each have different characteristics, as described. What is important to consider is now having examined each place as a site of convergence, how these influences and values are then disseminated across boundaries through communication loops that facilitate translocal cultural formations. In the case of recording

studios, the product that becomes the sign vehicle most widely disseminated is the recorded CD

or mp3. The education centers, though also recording and distributing DVDs, extend their reach

through travel and face-to-face transfer of experiences. The performance venue reaches live

audiences, but also receives attention through print media, thus reaching far beyond its borders.

My focus in this chapter is on individuals acting within very specific settings, perhaps the

base or elemental form of local – close proximity face-to-face interaction, but not merely that.

These places are focal points that serve to illustrate how translocal phenomena occur and

articulate with nested geographic scales and other social value formations. By considering these

sites of convergence, these points of origin for decisions and interaction, together with circuits of

interchange, translocal cultural formations and social worlds take on a multifarious and

multifaceted nature that takes cultural analysis beyond the confines of binary oppositions and

basic cultural "hybridity." Moreover, these point to issues of personal interaction and individual

style at the intersection of social worlds, complimentary or otherwise.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have examined how different scales of social and geographic association and subjectivity are leveraged. I have considered this in contemporary contexts and in particular after notable shifts that occurred in the 1990s. Two trajectories or themes emerged during my research. One was the chronic negotiating, contemplation, and realization of Malawian markers of identity in expressive practices and social interaction. This interaction occurs on different scales drawing from experiences and histories from within Malawi's borders. The other theme involves a similar process that deals with the inclusion of different influences in one's life and music, resulting from translocal and other smaller-scale interchanges.

To help understand this I began with a contemporary overview of social and environmental settings in Malawi together with descriptions of some of the salient commercial musical genres. I did this as a guide as if someone was entering Malawi right now. What are some of the things visitors would experience regarding musical activities and sounds? Though I did not frame it in this way in that discussion, part of my reasoning behind this was in an effort to recreate what I experienced as someone whose return to Malawi was so long after my initial times there. For me, it was a great effort to re-learn the lay of the land in current conditions. In that story, I referenced Malawian cultural policy. I discussed in detail a few geographic scales and alluded to the intersecting social worlds occupying them. My description of the town and music in Chileka foreshadowed two key ideas: circuits of interchange and sites of convergence.

In order to make sense of what the musical traveler might experience in Malawi, I traced historical events and constructed a narrative that considered large-scale migration as an ongoing condition occurring over a long span of time. This in turn maps onto recent trends that followed in the wake of liberalized politics and economics in association with discourses and ideas linked

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to globalization as idea and process. I considered social interchange on different scales that included established long-term societies in the area of Malawi in Tumbuka and Chewa/Maravi societies. I discussed interchange linking regions within sub-Saharan Africa – the South African region of Kwazulu Natal and the east African region of the Swahili coast, plus nearby Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, as well. I described overseas interchange and incursions in a way that avoids a monolithic whole by alluding to and discussing imperialists and Christian missionaries, as well as local white settler communities as intertwined but distinct groups. The large-scale social, economic, political, and other changes were adapted and integrated at a fundamental level such that modes of behavior and even ways of conceptualizing existence changed, but not uniformly. Furthermore, people in Malawi were subject to conditions and experiences that contrasted with neighboring territories due to economic disparities and the Banda regime. This said, there were many shared contexts and social interchanges based in connections created by geographic proximity and travel.

Having moved from current to past and back to current times, I established a temporal continuum to draw from in understanding musical practices in and around Malawi. In the third chapter, then, I elucidate a geographic and social continuum ranging from place to placelessness. I began this with a continued discussion of cultural nationalism and national sentiment beginning in the 1980s, 1990s, and beyond.

I did not initially encounter Afropolitanism as a framework for social theory, nor did I pursue it with that in mind. It was rather an idea that struck me on a personal level as a marker and discourse of identity with which I could partially identify and participate in myself. I was also intrigued by the public conversations it engendered. I was interested in the reflective engagement of individuals, similar to me in many ways, with ideas similar to those I was

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investigating. For this reason, I drew more from popular discourse than scholarly. In doing so, I explore similar types of interaction as my interlocutors, demonstrating individual agency, and various degrees of emotional conviction as issues of subjective belonging were negotiated. One logical extension emerging from this discourse was the idea of a southern Afropolitan, presented here as a foil to encourage further thought. It resonated with myself as I recall my interaction in the Bay Area with West Africa musicians and how that left me nostalgic for the familiar Africa I experienced in Malawi as it exists at the crossroads of southern Africa. Steve Dyer and Mahube, and Erik Paliani exhibit subjective positions that also articulate with this.

The ideas of place to placelessness and Afropolitanism are complementary concepts, and exemplify the idea of social worlds and subjectivities that articulate fluidly with various social and geographic scales. These are ideas and processes that occur as a result of individuals making strategic decisions in very specific settings. Thus the final chapter on sites of convergence provides a bookend or a point along the continuum framed by the place to placelessness chapter. Ideas of universal or international participation, concerns of national sentiment and representation, and individual positions in social worlds are apprehended and negotiated in sites of convergence. These sites have resonance within translocal circuits of interchange through which ideas, people, and sounds move. Individual actors strategically engage their lives via musical practices in ways that articulate with and reference different eras in history and different places in the world- neighborhoods, towns, countries, overseas places, etc. They create cognitive maps of behavior and understanding that shape social worlds in which they participate and interact and find meaning in their musical journeys and lives.

Ultimately, navigation of musical style creation and interaction occurs along multiple axes of socialization and value formation in which these geographic scales may be emphasized

or obfuscated to suit the strategic needs of the individual actors. This study is about that as much as it is in part a story about my own journey through social worlds and the musical map which guided me over the past 25 years. In that time, never have I, as an artist or musicologist, witnessed anyone make a creative decision or occupy a subjective position that is a result of or consideration of simply two points situated as a binary opposition. This perhaps warrants a further unpacking of processes of musical creation that are largely intuitive for so many artists.

Putting closure to this dissertation has been difficult, because the subject matter—contemporary commercial music—is in constant flux. Tay Grin's recent singles continue to incorporate indigenous styles into his hip hop productions in new and creative ways. He remains on the forefront of artists whose music intersects with the latest musical trends that resonate with broad international audiences in parts of Africa (Malawi, South Africa, and Nigeria specifically) along with the U.K. His presence in the U.S. market has been less clear to me, although he has connections with Madonna that get reported in the Malawian press when she visits the country. (One of her adopted children is from Malawi.) In any case, Grin's productions are growing more sophisticated, as a result of both creative choices and expanding recording industry connections.

Erik Paliani is growing his brand of Malawian music as he continues to tour in South Africa and Malawi. His celebrity is perhaps relatively more subdued, however, than during his years working with the likes of Masekela and Zamajobe. This is in part due to extended periods of "woodshedding," in American jazz parlance, in which musicians spend hours on end practicing their craft.

Rebecca Mwalwenje is finishing her studies in Norway and will return to Malawi. She relayed to me that her experience there was "awesome," but communication is scant. Romeo Jani continues to toil away in South Africa, performing more live gigs, but has not yet secured the

elusive recording career he desires. Recently, he lamented moving to South Africa in light of developments in Malawi where Afro jazz artists are increasingly raising their career profiles.

There have been some recent developments involving Malawian musicians and musical projects resonating outside of Africa, an area of investigation that could yield positive contributions to further discussions on social and geographic scales. The Malawi Mouse Boys, for instance, was a homemade banjo group from the Lilongwe area that received media attention by the BBC a couple years back. The story is not without its problems, though, as it is rooted in exoticism and subaltern power relations. Oakland-born world music producer Ian Brennan (not the television writer behind the series *Glee*), was behind the project. He most recently produced *The Malawi Prison Project,* another venture that received international attention and a Grammy nomination. This was met with mixed reaction among my Malawian musician friends. On the one hand, it was nice to see Malawi receive attention on such a visible platform. On the other hand, the music was basically a collection of field recordings that celebrated the catharsis of music, but highlighted the reality of despair in the third world, not to mention snubbing the exceptional productions being churned out by Malawian musical professionals who are putting everything on the line to make their voices heard.

On a more positive note, Giddes Chalamanda set out to perform for the first time in the US (as an octogenarian), to crowds comprised of the Malawian immigrant communities in Washington D.C. and South Bend, Indiana. Also, Peter Mawanga and the Amaravi Movement embarked on their second consecutive U.S. tour with American booking agent Myriad Artists, adding California and other U.S. locations to their itinerary. All of these may prove to be interesting examples of power relations in the music industry as circuits of interchange continue.

To my mind, the idea of social worlds provides a useful basis for examining intersectionality and complex subjective positioning. It is a beginning, though, and will benefit from further research having a narrower focus and greater depth. A compelling next step, as I see it, may be a collaborative biographical approach in a project that draws from Feld's *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra* (2012), appealing to me in the sense that it disrupts previous paradigms of ethnographic research and writing. The lives and careers of Erik Paliani and Tay Grin continue to be of interest to me. There is also room for a greater exploration of the historical processes underlying commercial music, not only in Malawi, but in the southern African region, drawing from more multi-cited fieldwork.

<div align="center">

Tikaoloka mtsinje

Tikaoloka

Tikakumbuke

Zomwe tachoka.

-Waliko Makhala

</div>

APPENDIX

LIST AND DEFINITIONS OF MUSICAL TERMS AND GENRES

Afro jazz: In the Malawian context, Afro jazz is a genre that draws from indigenous Malawian or other African musical styles. The jazz element is heavily influenced by American jazz musicians like George Benson and Earl Klugh. Other African styles that contribute to this genre are derived from the music of South African jazz artists like Hugh Masekela and Abdullah Ibrahim, as well as Central and Eastern African musical styles that feature the guitar.

Afrobeat: a popular dance music originating in Nigeria, and associated most with the work of Fela Anikulapo Kuti. The music draws heavily from 1960s and 1970s American soul and R&B music as exemplified by James Brown. Afrobeat music often features large brass sections, short vamps repeated for long durations, pentatonic melodies, and syncopated rhythms in duple meter.

art rock: rock music that incorporates virtuosic elements and complex song arrangements and orchestration. One example is the group Yes, whose members included South African guitarist Trevor Rabin.

banjo: 1) American-manufactured instrument, typically with 4-5 strings and a thin membrane stretched of a round metallic resonator. This version was popular in Malawi after WWII. 2) Later "banjo" came to stand for the handmade guitar-like instrument with rectangular oil can resonators and 3-4 strings popular among many Malawian adolescent males. I suspect that the number of strings and lack of resonance contributed to the adoption of the term banjo.

beni: a musical genre that emerged out of eastern Africa which acted as a parody of the British and German military brass bands around the time of WWI. It was adapted into rural African performance contexts using indigenous drums and aerophones. It is dominated by aesthetic features within the African indigenous context with alterations derived from European examples.

chilimika: a genre related to beni, but danced primarily by women in northern Malawi

chitenje: a rectangular piece of cotton cloth with a texture like that of a bed sheet, and having brightly colored patterns. The designs often feature images of political figures, important historical figures, emblems of political parties, or cultural artifacts like musical instruments

chopa (tchopa): indigenous music-dance form originating in Mozambique and later performed nearby in southern Malawi. It features several drums of various sizes and shapes. Historically it was performed in relation environmental and religious phenomena like good harvests and rains, or appeasing ancestral spirits.

electronica: a musical genre featuring electronically-generated and manipulated sounds often at a fast tempo. It is typically played in nightclubs in urban centers. The music is generally performed from recordings and amplified. The playback of the recordings may be manipulated in real time by the individual operating the playback equipment. It is derived in part from the disco-era context and performance aesthetic.

gospel music: In Malawi, this is an inclusive term referring to music which contains lyrics referring to the Christian Bible or Christian themes. Musically, it may draw from secular styles popular among the people performing it at the time. There is often a strong musical component derived from Christian hymnody. Other stylistic features are derived from secular music from southern Africa including Congolese and South African genres such as *kwasa kwasa* and *mbaqanga* respectively. Reggae is another popular genre whose stylistic features appear in gospel music in Malawi.

gule wamkulu: an indigenous music-dance practice found in central Malawi and neighboring Zambia and Mozambique. It features decorative masks and costuming. It often includes acrobatic dancing, or otherwise spectacular movements featuring rapid footwork and tumbling. There are several cylindrical drums played with interlocking rhythms in a fast tempo with triplet subdivisions. Vocal yelps are also prominent.

highlife: a genre of music that emerged out of Ghana in the early twentieth century, which incorporates elements of Cuban, American, and Ghanaian music and musical instruments, especially hand percussion and brass band instruments.

house music: a dance music genre featuring electronic instruments and sounds. An offshoot of American disco.

ingoma: an indigenous musical style performed among the Ngoni of Malawi. It has roots in Zulu music-dance traditions.

jazz: The term jazz has various connotations in the context of music in southern Africa. It does often articulate with the American genre of the same name. It also tends to encompass various African genres of commercial music, often featuring guitar and/or brass/woodwind instruments. Improvisation may or may not present.

jit: Zimbabwean musical genre that features interlocking electric guitar parts. It incorporates characteristics of indigenous music of Zimbabwe, including triple meter, fast tempos, and cyclic chord progressions. It also draws heavily from popular South African musical styles.

kalimba: generic Malawian term for a lamellophone usually having one row of metal tines fastened to a wooden sound board.

kanindo: Originally the name of a record label from Kenya, it refers to a style of music featuring multiple guitars playing interlocking melodies at various registers/tessituras. Triple meters are prominent but duple ones are frequent as well. It is derived in part from Congolese styles of popular commercial music.

kwaito: a style of music made popular in urban areas in South Africa, particularly Johannesburg, incorporating elements of house and hip hop. Vocal melodies are comprised of short phrases repeated throughout much of the song. The underlying rhythmic accompaniment is often highlighted in the hi-hat sound of a drum kit, and is played on the offbeats similar to that found in disco. There may be a slight lilt, swing, or shuffle feel in the rhythm, and the timbre tends to feature higher frequencies played in a crisper manner than the open hi-hat sound in disco.

kwasa kwasa: a style of dance music originating in the Congo region, especially Kinshasa and Brazzaville. It is a style within the Congolese rumba tradition with underlying Cuban influences and interlocking guitar melodies. The term *kwasa kwasa* refers to a particular dance move popular in Congo at one time, but is often used in Malawi as the generic term for all Congolese commercial dance styles, similar to the way the word *soukous* is used in America or the discourse associated with world music.

kwela: musical style featuring pennywhistle, often accompanied by guitar, one-string bass, and rattle. It was popular in Johannesburg and other South African urban areas during the 1950s. It exhibits stylistic features similar to American swing-era jazz band music particularly in the swing feel to the rhythm and the role of improvisation. In addition to American musical elements, local South African styles contributed to the *kwela* sound as well.

Malawi reggae: this term essentially is a colloquialism of the term Malawian reggae referring to reggae created by Malawian musicians in Malawi, particularly from the towns of Balaka and Chileka. Stylistically, it resembles Jamaican roots reggae as performed by Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Morgan Heritage as well as, and perhaps more so, South African reggae artist Lucky Dube. There are several subtle elements that are idiosyncratic to local Malawian indigenous and commercial music styles evident in the vocal melodies and, at times, in the rhythmic accompaniment.

malipenga: Malawian indigenous music-dance style similar to *beni*. Performers utilize gourd instruments fitted with plastic or similar membrane similar to that found on a kazoo. Costuming includes uniforms that are modelled after military garb. *Malipenga* is typically performed by men in the central region of Malawi.

manganje: an indigenous music-dance style found in Malawi's southern region most noted for its driving rhythmic phrase vocalized as "cham'pweteka chimanga."

maskanda: a musical genre popularized by Zulu migrant workers. It usually features acoustic guitar played in either a finger picking or strumming style over a two to three chord repeating harmonic cycle. Lyrical content often includes social commentary and topical subjects. Other instruments may include concertina and violin. A full ensemble will include electric bass and drum set as well.

mbaqanga: A musical genre from South Africa, largely associated with Zulu musical roots and urban jazz styles like *kwela*. Mbaqanga deviated from its jazz roots in its focus on vocals,

typically a male lead vocalist together with several accompanying female singers. Some distinguishing characteristics can be heard in the lead guitar parts which employ double-stop perfect fourths and diatonic thirds, occasionally ornamented with scoops, where the target note is approached from the tone below using a sliding technique. Pentatonic melodies are common, and the picking style is rather percussive, with a slightly piercing timbre. The organ or keyboard player often plays in a similar style. The bass part is prominent due to its volume, timbre, and percussive delivery, sometimes using a plectrum (pick) instead of one's bare fingers. The tempos are often medium to up-tempo in duple meter. The drum set plays a steady underlying groove punctuated with syncopated accents from the kick drum, snare, and hi-hat. The paradigmatic model of the male voice came from Simon "Mahlatini" Nkabinde, with his low raspy voice that resembled growling. The accompanying female vocals are harmonized using diatonic thirds and fourths.

mbumba: the term comes from the kinship relationship of a niece to her eldest uncle. In musical contexts, a *mbumba* is essentially a choir of women singers and dancers, often in a large circle, and accompanied by various combinations of indigenous hand drums. They are best known for their role in political gatherings and state functions under the presidency of Hasting Kamuzu Banda from 1964 to 1994.

mganda: an indigenous Malawian dance associated with *beni*, and identified in part by the costuming featuring neatly-pressed attire similar to that of a military officer.

ngoma: 1. a cylindrical drum with a single animal skin head, often containing a ring or circle of tree sap in the center, and played with one's hands. 2. a music-dance tradition of South African origins, but performed in southeastern Africa among cultural groups, like the Ngoni of Malawi, who are descendants of the Zulu…

nkocho: a type of rattle that accompanies *ulimba* (xylophone) music

Nyau: a society of initiated members within the Chewa sociolinguistic group. Nyau is generally a secret society rooted in indigenous religious beliefs. The society is known for the masked dance performances that accompany various social ceremonies and rites of passage.

penenga (also lipenga): an instrument made from a hollow dried gourd, with a narrow neck and bulbous body. There is a hole on the side of the neck in which the musician hums melodies. Elsewhere on the instrument is a hole covered by a thin membrane, traditionally made of a spider egg sack, but more commonly from a plastic grocery bag. The overall sound resembles that of a kazoo.

ragga: derived in part for the term ragamuffin, referring to a raggedly dressed youth, ragga is a musical genre of Caribbean origin featuring elements of hip hop and reggae, or subgenres of reggae like dancehall. Some notable characteristics include electronic timbres and rhythmic samples common in dance club music, and spoken or chanted vocal riffs.

rumba (also Congoloese rumba; African rumba): generic name for music popularized in Brazzaville, Congo, and Kinshasa, DRC, that draws heavily on Cuban *son* music via imported records, together with indigenous styles and genres. The songs and arrangements feature lyrical vocal melodies and several interlocking guitar parts. Older bands often had brass sections as well.

seben: the up tempo, primarily instrumental, section of a soukous tune, a style of Congolese rumba popular in the 1990s. The seben usually follows a slower introductory section of the song in which the main versus are sung.

sikiri: a semi-sacred music-dance tradition among Yao speakers in southern Malawi. It features tightly overlapping call and response vocals performed by men who dance in a circle. The vocal melodies are also punctuated with rhythmic guttural vocal phrases.

soukous: a style of Congolese rumba popular in the 1990s. It is also the generic term used in the U.S. and world beat discourse for guitar-based Congolese dance music.

sungura: a guitar-based musical genre popular in Zimbabwe and neighboring countries within southern Africa. It contains stylistic elements from eastern, central, and southern Africa. Sungura is a Swahili word meaning rabbit, and was the name of a popular Kenyan record label whose recordings were widely-circulated throughout the region of southern Africa.

ulimba (valimba): a type of xylophone found in southern Malawi and Mozambique. It has over 20 tuned wooden slats and is played by three musicians, two sitting opposite the third, each using one mallet in a designated area of the instrument. The musicians play melodic parts which interlock with one another to form a composite melody. Songs are generally accompanied by a pair of rattles, as well as women who sing and dance in a circle.

urban music: in the context of southern African music, it is an umbrella term referring to hip hop, R&B, ragga, and other styles popular in dance clubs in cities and towns.

vibraslap; a percussion instrument first manufactured by the LP company (Latin Percussion) in the 1960s. The instrument was designed to replace the rattling horse jaw bone. It has a wooden ball, fastened by a U-shaped metal wire, to a wooden resonating chamber in which there are metal teeth. The rattling sound it produces is achieved by holding the wire and striking the ball with an open palm. (http://www.lpmusic.com/about/)

vimbuza: a song-dance tradition found in northern Malawi and parts of Zambia among Tumbuka speakers. It is a healing dance used to treat mental illness. It is accompanied by several cylindrical hand drums played in interlocking fashion at fast tempos in triple meter. Dancers wear non-pitched bells around their waists and women add further accompaniment with handclapping.

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