

From "tribes" to "regions";***Ethnicity and musical identity in Western Uganda***Linda Cimardi¹-University of BolognaDOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.5565/rev/periferia.478>**Abstract**

This article looks at how the paradigm of ethnicity in Uganda has influenced the conception and perception of cultural identity, and specifically of music identity. According to the 2002 Census, Uganda counts more than 50 different peoples within its territory. For most of these, the language spoken locally and the complex of musics and dances characterize their identity. These elements are currently fostered by the Government also by promoting annually a national festival where each area presents, among other items, its own music and dance repertoires. The structure of the present school festival intends to follow historical and cultural sedimentations (identifying "regions"), but it can still be traced to the colonial classification of peoples ("tribes"). Considering data especially from western Uganda, the intermingling of the paradigm of ethnicity with the ones of music representativeness and identity will be observed. Discussion will consider the repertoires chosen for representativeness in the national context and concentrate on the ambiguity of the ethnic uniqueness of these musics and on the possibilities of expression of minorities.

Key words: ethnicity, music, Uganda.

Resumen

El presente artículo trata de cómo el paradigma de la etnicidad ha influenciado el concepto y la percepción de la cultura identitaria, y específicamente de la música. De acuerdo con el censo realizado en el año 2002, Uganda cuenta con más de 50 tipos diferentes de pueblos dentro de su territorio. Para muchos de ellos, su lengua y la complejidad de su música y bailes definen su identidad. Estos elementos son en la actualidad incentivados por el gobierno a través de la organización de un festival nacional anual donde cada territorio presenta su música y bailes. La estructura tras esta escuela del festival intenta perseguir elementos históricos y culturales remanentes (identificando "regiones"), pero se remonta a los tiempos de la colonización y de la clasificación de sus pueblos ("tribus"). Recogiendo datos del Uganda occidental, se identificarán las interacciones de los paradigmas de la etnicidad y de la identidad observados. El debate considerará los diferentes repertorios elegidos por los representantes en el contexto nacional y se enfocará en la ambigüedad de la singularidad de estas músicas y en la posibilidad de expresión por parte de las minorías.

Palabras Clave: etnicidad, música, Uganda

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Since my first stay in Uganda in 2008, I concentrated my research interest on the study of western Ugandan indigenous repertoires, trying to reconstruct, both through oral memories and written sources, the transformations of these musics and dances during the last century. Deepening the analysis of the different genres and repertoires of the two historical regions of Bunyoro and Tooro and the present cultural representation in the multi-cultural Ugandan context, it became clear that the role of colonial and later of national directives – both in the field of local administration and in the one of cultural policies – were central in determining the present panorama of performative arts. This constitutes the focus of the present article, where the paradigm of ethnicity is analyzed from an anthropological perspective to examine its repercussions on music and dance repertoires in a diachronic dimension. The colonial policies concerning ethnicities are contextualized in the broader African frame to show the constructed nature of the concepts of “tribes”, “ethnic groups” and “ethnicities” and presented in their application in Uganda to reveal the impact they had in shaping the perception of cultural identities for the communities in the country. Furthermore, the cultural policies of independent Uganda are considered in their absorption and later negotiation of colonial ethnic codification. This was at the basis of the structure of the school music and dance festival, which contributed to the molding of the perceptions and representations of cultural identity. This discussion will allow to understand the adhesion of bigger Ugandan societies to the leading ethnic discourse, since in the national arena where rights are granted just to communities whose cultural specificities are recognized; however the shadows of this system of cultural representation will be disclosed through the cases of the minorities, which remain invisible both in the cultural and in the political panorama.

This article is based on the material collected in the period 2008-2013 through fieldwork in Uganda, and especially in the Western regions of Bunyoro and Tooro. The fieldwork methods applied were participation in different kinds of festivals and shows as part of the audience, interviews with the individuals involved in such performances and/or in their organization (musicians, dancers, teachers, educators, students), collective interviews among the minorities present in Tooro and direct practice of the most common dance in Western Uganda. All information and

performances were documented through audio and video recording and have been at the base of the reflections exposed below, which took great advantage from the discussions with my Ugandan research collaborators.

Tribe, ethnicity and tribalism

Since 1970s the concept of "tribe" and of "ethnic group" or "ethnicity" have been discussed and criticized as assumed paradigms in functional-structuralism and a cornerstone in ethnography and anthropology. The meaning of these terms often overlaps, though sometimes it slightly varies according to the scholarship of reference (Amselle and M'Bokolo 1985: 14) and tribe usually carries a pejorative sense related to backwardness and implied Eurocentric superiority. According to Southall, no proper "tribe", as an autonomous society united by language, culture, kinship system and customs, exists anymore, since "no tribal society which has lost its political autonomy can continue to be a tribal society in a full sense of the meaning" (Southall 1997: 39). So, in his vision, the concept of tribe refers to self-sufficient societies prior to the contact and impact of foreign powers; this implies the "melancholy paradox of anthropology" (Southall 1997: 39), which is studying and defining tribes when their social contexts are already in transformation due to external input and hence no more autonomous. In Southall's view, a more apt term to define homogenous social groups during colonial and post-colonial times is ethnicities and ethnic groups (Southall 1997: 49-50). Differently, the theoretical reflection of Jean-Loup Amselle does not emphasize a real difference between tribe and ethnicity, both defining a homogeneous group sharing common socio-cultural elements (Amselle and M'Bokolo 1985: 14-23). He instead focuses on the process of construction of ethnicities in the African continent, as I shall discuss later. In post-independence times, clashes and wars in the African continent were often explained as caused by tribalism, while they hid struggles for political or economic issues whose complexity could not be reduced to a tribal conflict using the ethnic paradigm (Amselle and M'Bokolo 1985: 38-42).

Tribalism seems to have conditioned Uganda, which saw its national politics determined by the ethnic origin of the actors involved from 1960s to 1980s. Indeed, the first President of independent Uganda was the king of the Buganda kingdom, the most influent and powerful of Ugandan Bantu pre-colonial realms. He was overthrown with a military coup in 1966 by his first Minister of Nilotic origin, the

Acholi Milton Obote, who later abolished the traditional kingdoms, with the declared reason that they were an obstacle to national unity, but clearly because they were deeply-rooted institutions and poles of power alternative to the national one. From early 1970s to mid-1980s Uganda had an instable political and social situation because of another Nilotic, a Lugbara, Idi Amin, who established a dictatorship through a military coup and persecuted the Lango and Acholi populations, who had supported the former President Obote (Chrétien 2000: 256-260). This brief account of Ugandan political history significantly shows that ethnicity has been key in conditioning national politics, but these were not a mere matter of tribal clashes and rather also implied more profound socio-political issues. Indeed, the northern part of the country – inhabited by Nilotic populations – greatly contributed to the army and controlled it, thus being able to steer military coups, and the southern part – populated by Bantu peoples – was richer and grounded its power in the old institutions of kingship.² This broad ethnic division is, moreover, complicated by the further differentiation of dozens of ethnic groups (either Bantu or Nilotic); indeed, the 2002 Census counted more than 50 different peoples in Uganda.³

According to Mahmood Mamdani, in the African countries ruled by the British the legacy of ethnicity and customary law was of long term, deeply conditioning the policy and society of independent African countries (Mamdani 1996: 23-27).

The ethnicization of the cultural space

Not only is the impact of the historical paradigm of ethnicity in Uganda visible in the political events, but its repercussions are evident also in the social and cultural domain. In this context, ethnicity appears rooted in a complex of intangible heritage comprising language, local history and myths, traditional institutions

² Contemporary Uganda is a multi-cultural country which, like other most other African states, inherited the borders defined by the colonial period after the so-called Scramble for Africa defined by the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885. Being the subdivision of the African continent determined mostly by the economic and political interests of the European countries involved, it did not consider the historical and cultural traits of these territories. This meant, on the one hand, that homogeneous cultures were divided by new borders (as shown by the case of the Bakonzo in Uganda and the Banande in Congo, as it will be discussed later) and, on the other hand, that heterogeneous ethno-linguistic cultures were grouped together under one colonial administration, as it happened to the Nilotic and Bantu people in Uganda.

³ <http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/2002%20CensusPopnCompositionAnalyticalReport.pdf>

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concerning power, society and family relations. Cecilia Pennacini has shown how important the immaterial cultural heritage is in Uganda, especially in its actualization through performance – the performance of storytelling, rituals, functions and of course music, which usually plays a central role in most performances (Pennacini 2011: 121). Indeed music, together with dance, is of primary importance in the historical and cultural life of Ugandan people, being the space where the memory of the past was preserved and the customs passed on, as it is common in societies connoted by orality, in particular where other artistic forms are not developed, as it is in Uganda. In the last decades, the complex of the performing arts, which in Uganda is usually referred as MDD (Music, Dance and Drama), has been at the center of a process of codification, which was based both on the knowledge produced by academics and on the practice of a national music festival (Pier 2009: 31).

In newly independent African countries, a renovated interest for local cultures arose, reevaluating practices which had been neglected or even openly despised during the colonial period both with the will to take a stand against the colonial system and the need to 'build the country'. In Uganda, the recovery of indigenous traditions was promoted especially by Okot p'Bitek (1973), who argued for the africanization of culture and against the aping of Europeans. Since 1960s, the promotion of musical and dance traditions in several African countries took two main directions: on the one hand, the creation of music and dance ensembles on the model of the *Ballet national*;⁴ on the other hand, the fostering of a national festival of music and dance. This second typology was adopted in Uganda. Combining the institution of a musical festival of religious origin – the Namirembe Music Festival⁵ – and the intellectual interest for local cultures which fostered the inclusion of African music in school curricula, the Ministry of Education of independent Uganda initiated the "School festival of music, dance and drama", an event which is held annually since 1962, year of Uganda's independence.⁶ In a project of nation building through the safeguarding of differences, which included

⁴ The issue of African *Ballet national* is briefly dealt in Kubik 1981: 85.

⁵ More information about the Namirembe Festival can be found in Wachsmann 1946 and Wachsmann 1954: 43-44.

⁶ About Uganda School Music Festival, see: Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2003; Pier 2009: 48-53; and Cimardi 2013: 262-268.

also the teaching of the main local languages in primary schools, the Government aimed to preserve Ugandan musical heritage and to improve the reciprocal knowledge of the various cultures of the country, by then identified as tribes or ethnic groups (Pier 2009: 29-30). The recognition of ethnicities at the base of the festival's structure was derived from the colonial administrative organization, which independent Uganda inherited (Pier 2009: 29).

Jean-Loup Amselle highlighted how colonial administration, jointly with ethnological knowledge, contributed to the codification of ethnicities in colonial Africa (Amselle 1990: 22-29). This process was grounded in the ethnographic data gathered in the field, but it usually misunderstood or overemphasized the idea of ethnic unity and identity.⁷ Indeed, pre-colonial African societies were generally connoted by a virtual absence of real boundaries and were organized on the basis of different kinds of exchange, economic, political and cultural spaces which connected rather than divided communities (Amselle and M'Bokolo 1985: 11-48). Although usually not supporting the colonial rule, several scholars (mainly following the theoretical framework of structural functionalism) indirectly contributed to it with their ethnographies, most of which were significantly entitled with an ethnonym of a Ugandan people.⁸ As it was underlined also by other scholars,⁹ the impact and legacy of the colonial period was hefty and the categories of ethnicity, ethnic group and tribe were assimilated by the new independent African countries, as well as by their societies (Amselle 1990: 30-32).

As mentioned above, the selection process of the Ugandan school festival adopted the colonial subdivision of ethnicities. When the competitive structure of Namirembe Festival was expanded by the independent Government on a national scale, every school had to participate in the event, which comprised a progressive selection from a county level up to the national one. Out of each identified area, the best school was to represent its "tribe" at the national level, thus confronting and meeting other ethnic groups and producing reciprocal knowledge, as underlined by David G. Pier (Pier 2009: 50).

⁷ This point is also shared by Southall 1997 for what concerns tribes.

⁸ See, for instance John Roscoe's ethnographies entitled: *The Baganda* (1911) and *The Bakitara or Banyoro* (1923) and Lawrence's *The Iteso* (1957).

⁹ See, for instance, Mamdani 1996 and Green 2008: 474-475.

The importance of the school music festival is central in contemporary Uganda, since it is the main national cultural event and it involves Ugandan youth, shaping their perception of performative arts and of ethnicities, and adults, who are part of the wide audience attending the event. Moreover, the official acknowledgement which the repertoires performed at the festival receive strengthens the perception of a corpus of local musics and dances associated to a people and hence the sense of ethnic identities within the multicultural nation. Finally, the model of school festival was absorbed by other competitive events, like the ones organized by commercial brands, such as the Senator Cultural Extravaganza Festival (Pier 2011).

The school festival and “tribe” indexing

Since 1950s, when the first festival accepted African music and an academic discussion opened about the inclusion of African music in school curricula, the knowledge of local repertoires was needed both to evaluate the performances and to teach African music in schools: this was produced by both foreign and local scholars in universities as well as in high education institutions, like Teachers’ Colleges (Pier 2009: 31; Cimardi 2013: 235-268). The practical application of this knowledge in school festival selection and evaluation and in teachers’ and students’ education – which was for a big part aimed to festival performance – progressively produced a codification of musical traditions. This process had multiple results: first, the classification of the repertoires of each identified ethnic group as the outcome of the crossed music/tribe indexing; second, a sort of freezing of the repertoires in a stable configuration which was alien to their nature connoted by orality; and third, their formal codification with a consequent oversimplification of their peculiar traits. These features are usually part of the processes of festivalization – intended as the incorporation of musics of oral tradition into an institutionalized and competitive event on a wide geographical base – in several cultural contexts. Here I choose to focus on the first of these three points, the one concerning the codification of the repertoires and of the ethnicities, because it is especially relevant to our discussion.

Pier, in his brief though pointed analysis about the process of ethnicization of Ugandan repertoires, maintains that “it seems that every Ugandan ethnic group is thought to possess at least one iconic music and dance style” (Pier 2009: 30), and he explains this as the result of the structure of the festival, which required the

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performances to be representative of the area of origin of the group. I found this belief during my fieldwork too, as well as I verified that "local versions of MDD are powerful indexes of ethnicity" (Pier 2009: 30). However, my aim here is to show how in the inventory of "tribes" and musical traditions, the school festival institution produced some diverging and deviating effects. Not all the ethnic groups had an "iconic music and dance style": some societies shared their repertoires with their neighbors and others were not represented in the festival. These are mainly the direct consequences of the colonial classification of tribes, which had identified the main cultures of the country, the ones which were by then politically and historical relevant, but had sometimes undermined differences which were locally significant. So, on one hand, some communities (usually numerically not prosperous and weakly centralized) were undermined and thus assimilated to the bigger groups into larger neighbors; on the other hand, historical and political reasons caused the division of culturally homogeneous areas. In this way, some identities were emphasized and thus included minorities, while others were simply undermined.

These processes are especially significant in the western part of Bantu Uganda, in the areas historically known as Bunyoro and Tooro, where I carried out my fieldwork. In pre-colonial times, this region was characterized by the presence of some kingdoms, most of which related their origin to the mythical Empire of Kitara, which had its center in Bunyoro. According to Amselle's theory of pre-colonial spaces (Amselle 1985: 30), the Kitara Empire and the smaller kingdoms emerged by its decline could be defined *associétés englobantes* (englobing societies), which "had the maximal power to determinate the space", and so could impose power relationships on other societies, the *sociétés englobées* (englobed societies). These power relations could be of different kind, from imposition of tributes to raids, of which the *sociétés englobées* were victims, but they did not comprise a real domination nor a cultural homogeneity. The colonial codification of ethnicities normally undermined the societies which were to various degrees and in various forms in a dominated position and considered them part of the big kingdoms. This is the case of the Bakonzo and the Bamba people, who were not deemed as real ethnic groups by the Protectorate, but were incorporated in Tooro kingdom. However, the Bakonzo and Bamba people did not, and still do not consider themselves as part of the Batooro, who in turn treated them as a subjugated population (Pennacini 2008: 81-88). This same classification was taken on by the national festival institution and this meant

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that Bakonzo and Bamba had to perform the music and dance traditions of the Batooro – who were recognized as the only society of Tooro region – thus augmenting the feeling of oppression in Bakonzo and Bamba. This is especially striking because Bakonzo and Bamba have a peculiar culture and special musical repertoires, some of which are based on the heptatonic scale (Facci and Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2008: 234-235), while other Bantu peoples of Uganda use a pentatonic scale.

In contrast to the case of Bamba and Bakonzo people are those areas and cultures which have homogeneous music traditions and culture, like Bunyoro and Tooro, and are considered separated in the school festival structure. This situation is reflected in the administrative asset: after Tooro's secession from Bunyoro during 1830s, they stabilized as separated kingdoms during the colonial period, and thanks to the colonial policy. Indeed the British administration greatly protected and advantaged Tooro kingdom, because of its docile cooperation with the Protectorate and for the purpose of reinforcing that area to oppose riotous Bunyoro, which had been the cause of troubles and instability for long. This resulted in a fostering of Tooro identity, marking a separation from Bunyoro. However, the music and dance – as well as language, customs, etc. – of Banyoro and Batooro people are very close, both in the repertoires dedicated to the king and in those performed by commoners, with the only difference of the presence in Tooro of songs related to cattle rearing, which are absent in Bunyoro, where this activity declined since the 19th century (Cimardi 2013: 69-114). Indeed, in the school festival Nyoro and Tooro groups sometimes present the same song or dance styles. This is especially true for dance: *runyege* – a dance where men and women perform different parts and which is characterized by the ankle rattles worn by male dancers and by the waist shaking of female dancers – is common to both peoples, who share very similar dance movements and musical accompaniment. However, while Bunyoro counts some other recognized dance styles like *ntogoro*, *kagoma*, *iguulya* – all variants of *runyege* – which are also performed at the festival, Tooro's only dance which is acknowledged as real Tooro is *runyege* (Cimardi 2013: 180-186; 320-341). As testified by some informants during my fieldwork, this is the result of a process which, since the early years after Independence, while codifying *runyege* led to the decline of other local variants, like *bw'omu mbaju*, while other dances, like the *riiba* of the Batuku community, were excluded from the Uganda dance inventory and

today are not performed in the festival, but remain an heritage spontaneously preserved by the Batuku community (Cimardi 2013: 180-200).

The role of new ethnicities and of cultural revival in defining regions

In Uganda, not only post-independence struggles were influenced by conflicts which took an ethnic connotation, but this legacy continued to reflect also in the more democratic developments in the following decades. In the mid-80s, Uganda was stabilized by the new President Museveni, who promoted a new Constitution (later further modified) granting civil and human rights to citizens. The terms "ethnic origin" and "tribe" are directly mentioned in the 1995 Constitution, when declaring its stand against any discrimination based on them (Uganda Constitution 1995: ch. 21, 2), and when stating its aim to "integrate all the peoples of Uganda while at the same time recognizing the existence of their ethnic, religious, ideological, political and cultural diversity" (Uganda Constitution 1995: I, ii). Furthermore, Uganda past conflicts are mirrored in the prohibition to have political parties based on ethnicity (Uganda Constitution 1995: ch. 71b). Although contemporary Uganda grants – at least on the paper – the same rights to all citizens, the paradigm of ethnicity, of the belonging to one indigenous group, is well grounded in the state organization, which today recognizes local cultural institutions and leaders, as well as in Ugandan population's perception. Indeed, an important turning point in recent cultural and political history of Uganda has been the restoration of the traditional monarchies in 1993. This was the result of the insistence and mobilization especially of Baganda people for *ebyaffe* ("our things"), claiming what the central Government took away from their kingdom in 1960s, together with the restoration of their king (Karlström 1999). All pre-colonial monarchies – except Nkore – were thus restored and a cultural revival started in all these areas, which had their cultural identity recognized under their own kings, though just as traditional leaders.

The 1995 Constitution later acknowledged all Ugandan cultural leaders who were empowered by their community. This incentivized all ethnic groups to obtain leaders following the Bantu model, inspired in particular by Buganda kingdom; so the groups that were identified, if at all, as minorities, started to be officially recognized by the Government. This meant both a political and a cultural acknowledgment and it also became a requirement to survive in the complex of Ugandan peoples

struggling for national recognition. As noted by Ugo Fabietti in his discussion about ethnic identity (Fabietti 2013: 100-101)

In an institutionalized multicultural context, meaning that it is recognized by a central power, the ethnicities (and more generally all those groups which claim their “authenticity” and their “right to difference”) enter the social scene as groups competing to get resources, benefits, privileges – hence power – obviously on the basis of their right to be what they are, i.e. *different* from others.¹⁰

So, if an observation from outside (colonialism and ethnological indexing) was at the origin of the codification of Ugandan ethnicities, it is the current multicultural context which stimulates the proliferation of new ethnicities as a strategy to access resources. This is significant not only in the economic and political arena, but also on the cultural level: the belonging to a specific people in the Ugandan puzzle is indeed nowadays important to respond to one’s need of a tight and united community of which to be a part. The cultural institutions, restored or created anew since the 1990s, act today as cornerstones of ethnic identity and contribute together with other elements, like language, performative arts and customs, to define community identity.

The Bakonzo and the Bamba peoples struggled for decades to be recognized as independent from Tooro and in 2006 they were acknowledged their Rwenzoruru Kingdom and had their cultural leader and institution legitimized. Soon also their performative traditions were recognized in the Ugandan cultural landscape and thus represented in the music festival. The process of local identity acknowledgement did not stop in the early 2000s, but it continues even today to foster the awakening of other communities.

Another case of a population comprised in the Tooro area of influence and undermined until recently are the Basongora (Syahuka-Muhindo 2008: 34-48), a semi-nomadic community which in the past lived on cattle rearing in the western Tooro area, but they were pushed away across Congolese border by local expanding farmers and by the establishment of a national park in the territories where they were settled. Their ethnic group was not formally recognized by the

¹⁰Translation by the author of this article; italics was present in the original Italian text.

Government until recently and among sour complaints by their neighbors, especially Bakonzo who feared land claims in their newly recognized Rwenzoruru area. For this very reason, no territory has been assigned to Basongora and so their formal acknowledgement is not yet complete. Consequently, Basongora's musical traditions – so special because of the women's role in singing accompanied by the through zither *nanga* – were and are not yet represented in the school music festival. However, at the moment their musical traditions are included in an internal revival, which resembles a mobilization of their cultural heritage with the aim of legitimize future political claims.

This revision of the "ethnic paradigm" that started in 1990s, with its conceptual swift from colonial tribes to self-declared ethnic groups or peoples, had an impact also on the structure of the school festival for what concerns the geographical selection and the repertoires represented, which are both based on the principle of ethnic groups' indexing. In the past, the various areas identifying homogeneous music styles and repertoires were named after the traditional kingdoms or the tribe identified as living in that area, like Buganda, Bunyoro, Tooro (this one comprising Bakonzo, Bamba and Basongora), etc. Today this principle is abandoned because it does not correspond to the present geography of recognized ethnicities of the country and a new nomenclature is used, based on musical styles or on indigenous instruments, while substantially maintaining the original regional division. For what concerns western Uganda, Bunyoro region is now identified as *Runyenge* region, while Tooro is *Makondeere* region. This last area is essentially the same of Tooro kingdom during the colonial time, indeed just the designation has changed. Meanwhile, the current subdivision in administrative districts, whose number has remarkably augmented in recent years, represents a lower level of selection. This allows for example Bakonzo to be represented in the Tooro/*Makondeere* region because Bakonzo are the majority in three of the six administrative districts which are part of Tooro region. Furthermore, the designation of the regions using musical references is usually convoluted: in the case examined, *runyenge* refers to a dance popular in both Bunyoro and Tooro, as well as *makondeere* are royal instruments equally used in both regions. From a political point of view, the action of the Ugandan Government in local identity policy is ambivalent and seems to disguise the principle of *divide et impera*: on the one hand, local identities and institutions

are recognized and promoted, on the other hand the nomenclature used in festival selection tries to hide ethnic subdivisions by using deceiving musical terms.

If the institution of school music festival can be considered the main arena for ethnicity representation and confrontation, because of its both capillary and national impact, a brief final remark is necessary to underline the role of traditional kingdoms and institutions. These are the main field for a cultural revival which seeks above all internal cohesion and recovery of identity markers, one of which is royal music, which was revived after monarchy restoration. In Bunyoro e in Tooro royal music has a special value; indeed, differently from other kingdoms and cultural groups, it was considered strongly linked with the institution of the kingdom and reserved to the king himself. For this reason, it was not possible to perform it without the sovereign or in non-royal contexts; hence it was not included in the repertoires considered by the festival. Both in Bunyoro and Tooro, royal music is today played just for the annual anniversary of the coronation of the king, the *Mpango*, that is a great ritual, ceremonial and cultural event condensing all the significant identity markers for Nyoro and Tooro contemporary ethnicity and for their relevance in multicultural Uganda. Although it was not involved in the process of festivalization and ethnicization of the school festival, the significance of royal music as an identity symbol is deeply felt by local communities, who do strongly associate royal repertoires to the institution of the kingdoms, and thus to all Banyoro and Batooro.

Concluding, ethnicity is still today a strong category to consider music and socio-political phenomena in Uganda. During the colonial period, it emerged as new 'constructed' category: even if it was rooted in the actual presence of different societies, in some cases it was a real "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:1-14). Later, ethnicity was absorbed by the Government of independent Uganda and penetrated into the institution of the school music festival, leading to the codification of music repertoires and of social perceptions. As a result, the contradictions and negotiations which took place in the classification of ethnicities in Uganda reflect the recent tensions in defining musical identities. In the 1990s, a further negotiation and partial transformation of the ethnic paradigm to incorporate previously neglected ethnicities was stimulated by some societies, then acknowledged by the institutions and finally exploited by the minorities. So, the

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transformation and reception of the paradigms of tribe and ethnicity in Uganda has lead to the current diversification of musical repertoires and mirrors the itinerary of codification and assimilation of cultural boundaries and of political tensions.

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