An Analysis of Music Idioms of the Kiringongo in Popular Band Music

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Sub-theme: Indigenous Science & Knowledge Systems

ABSTRACT
This paper is part of an ongoing research which focusses on the preservation of traditional music idioms of the kiringongo within popular music. A preliminary survey indicates that the kiringongo, a wooden barred-idiophone, is commonly played by the Chonyi sub-group of the Mijikenda. Popular music has been observed to include traditional music instruments from various communities (Kayhan, 2014). This demonstrates an occurrence of transfer of music idioms from their original context to a new one and may imply inclusion of music idioms of particular instruments within popular musics. This paper will highlight music idioms of the kiringongo which are present in popular band music. The main objective of this study is to establish ways in which the kiringongo’s music idioms are preserved within contemporary music, thereby facilitating continuity of the voice of the kiringongo.

The research is guided by the theories of change (Merriam, 1980) and continuity (Nettl, 2005). This ethnographic research was carried out in Kilifi and Nairobi counties with the respondents being players of the kiringongo and popular band musicians. The study further interrogated music from both groups. This study hopes to create a structure for upholding the essence of traditional music in present-day music terms (Omolo-Ongati, 2006). The study should also inform policy on preserving music towards safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritages (National Music Policy, 2015).

Keywords: Indigenous music; cultural heritage; identity; cultural transformation