

Title: The drum in the traditional music of the Amiiru

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This study deals with the drum in the traditional music and dance of the Mííru People. The drum will be found in the border areas of Mííru but not in the interior of it. Border areas from about one third of the total area of habited land of the district. What has contributed to this phenomenon? This is the problem we have to address ourselves to in this study. The following assumptions were postulated at the initial stages of this thesis. (a) The whole of Mííru had drums originally, (b) There were drums in the places with them today, and those without them have had no drums all through. Using the Kulturkreis theory which states that the distribution of cultural traits indicates not only former cultural contacts but also strata of cultural history, We have gone into the exploration of the problems in the historical perspective. In this we shall look into the origin of the drum music in Mííru. Schneider (1957), Adds that the kind of culture determines musical style, that is, what music. This prompts the consideration of social uses, functions, the beliefs and values associated with them. By combining these and other facts, we shall enter into the discussion on the drum in Mííru music tradition. We shall first undertake to understand who the Mííru people are in relation to other ethnic groups of Kenya. The Amiiru are a Bantu people living on the slopes of Mt. Kenya. The District has a dense population of about 1.3 million people. According to Fadiman, (1976) and Bernardi (1957) the Mííru have a coastal origin. It is believed that they migrated from the Coast (Mbwa) on Manda Island. The Coast, being a rich area in drums is probably the origin of the Mííru drums. Could they (the Amiiru) have borrowed their drums from the neighbouring Mbeere and Kamba ethnic groups? The Mííru have a strong and varied musical heritage. Apart from the folk music which is practiced today, other forms of music can be found. There is also the music which has been brought in from other African and Western countries. Our interest lies in the traditional music which includes vocal, instrumental and dance music. Other forms are taken into consideration too. There are many musical instruments of different types. Most of them are of the percussive category. The most widespread instruments is the Kíbeere (legbell) Drums, which are the main concern of this dissertation are found in some places and not in others. The drums of the Amííru are the Kíempe of Igembe and Ntonyiri divisions (of. page 97), the nkuutha of Tharaka (of. page 115), and the gíembe of the Imenti (of. page 102 and the mwínjíro drum of the Chuka of page 101 Each of these drums has been considered separately putting into consideration manufacture, tuning style, and of playing. Drums have different functions in Mííru. The main function is the musical function where a drum can have a primary or secondary role. In the primary function, drums play the major accompanying role in the music. It is the instrument that provides the basic rhythmic beat of the song or dance. In its secondary function, other instruments take the primary role and the drum becomes a subordinate instrument in the music. Other functions include the extra-musical roles where the drum is used either, purely for social purposes or where a musical performance will follow a given social act. Drums are used in traditional

dances. These dances have been explored in relation to the musical functions of the drums. The drum plays an accompanying role in the dances. However, in Mwínjírí drum dance, it is not used as an accompanying instrument. It provides instrumental music, which is at times accompanied with dancing and singing. What is unique about the Mwínjírí is that the performer sings, plays and dances. All these roles run concurrently. In this section, the choreography of the dances is given, followed by notated rhythms of the drum dance. Finally, the theory of the distribution of drums in Mííru is considered. Not only does this section tell where drums will be found in Mííru, but also the factors contributing to the lack of drum the 'other instrumental dominance', religion and politics, style of performing, cultural and social changes, traditional warfare and the settlement scheme phenomenon have been explored. The thesis ends with a summary of the whole work. Conclusions have been drawn from the empirical data, which the researcher has been able to gather in the field. These have been based on the evidence from other sources also, like the little documented sources, which however, had very limited contribution to the exploration of the topic of this study. As such, most of what appears is the researcher's findings