A Reply to Ulrich Wegner
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Call and Response
A Reply to Ulrich Wegner

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Ulrich Wegner's experiments in cognitive ethnomusicology with Baganda musicians (1993:201-42) proved fascinating reading for one who has for years interested himself in the Kiganda musical repertory and that of their neighbours in southern Uganda. But I was a little disconcerted to find my own views as expressed in an early article (Cooke 1970) misquoted. Ulrich wrote as follows: "Peter Cooke, skeptical about inherent patterns in amadinda music . . . indicated that—if they exist at all—they are more than 'incidental to the main object which is to present known songs effectively'" (1993:225). The omission of the word "no" before the "more" leads the reader to suppose that I was contradicting myself in the same sentence. Wegner has since told me that during the processing of the article the word "no" had been accidentally deleted. A first reading of his paper though was enough to send me scurrying to obtain my old contribution so as to verify what I actually did write. It was: "If it is accepted that xylophone repertoire is based on the attempt to outline songs then . . . an answer should be given to the question: does concern for inherent rhythms affect the content of xylophone parts? My view is that they are to a large extent a coincidental feature of the [compositional] process" (1970:77). On the following page I added "It is also possible that some inherent rhythms only vaguely suggest words to performers who then make minor modifications *(ebisoko)* of either part to make the pattern more prominent and better fitting to the suggested text. In both cases, however, they are incidental to the main object, which is to present known texts effectively."

I was puzzled also to read that I was "skeptical" about inherent patterns: this may have arisen from misunderstandings in his reading of the same early article and perhaps also of friendly and useful correspondence we have had with each other since then. It could well be that I was insufficiently forthcoming about the *importance* of inherent patterns as far as the Baganda

themselves are concerned. I have to confess I am still in doubt about this despite the 'real' existence of inherent patterns for me and for many students who have listened to or played the repertory with me.

One cannot quarrel with the responses of Wegner's informants to his carefully thought out tests, nor with his own conclusions that the nuclear theme (the vocal melody which identifies each item of the repertory) can be regarded as an inherent pattern and the primary one for his Baganda informants. If it were as simple as this, however, there would be few more questions to ask about inherent patterns. But there is at least one, for if the sole aim of the compositional method is to outline a single vocal theme on the xylophone, one must ask "Why not do just that and omit, as Wegner puts it, the 'redundant input information' "? By the latter Wegner (1993:207) presumably was referring to the non-melody notes, which I described in my 1970 article as "ancillary notes," and which I also then noted were mostly an interval of a "Kiganda fourth or fifth" from the melody pitches which they separated (that is, in disjunct relationship to the melody notes).

If one were simply to reiterate melody notes then the beginning of the cycle of one of the songs quoted by Wegner ("Ssematimba ne Kikwabanga") would be rendered somewhat thus on the amadinda:

															?		?		
	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	5	5	2	
to parallel the sung text	4	$\bar{1}$		$\bar{1}$	$\bar{1}$		$\bar{1}$	5		2	3	3	3	3	\	5	\	2	
	A	-	ba	-	si	-	b'	em	-	bu	-	zi	ba	-	si	-	bi	-	ra	bwe	-	ree	-	re
rather than the normal	4	1	4	1	1	4	1	5	4	2	3	3	1	3	2	5	3	2	

the sign \ indicates a downward pitch glide

One could certainly then hear the vocal line clearly enough. But this is not the practice and the "disjunct" notes must have some other purpose or purposes which still require adequate explanations.

One possible reason that emerges from a study of variation-making both vocally and on different Kiganda instruments suggests to me that such a complex matrix of pitches exists because it increases the potential for variation making both musical and textual. There is even the possibility that behind the "surface structure" of any Kiganda melody lies a *double* bank of tones (dare one call it a "deep structure"?) which can be drawn on in performance when inventing vocal utterances or when performing the song on a variety of instruments. Furthermore, one should not discount the possibility that Baganda process such streams of syllabic units far more readily than Europeans can and that the tempo of Kiganda music might need to be speeded up considerably before auditory streaming of the kind Europeans experience is perceived by Baganda (this may be a cue for more tests

in musical cognition with Baganda musicians). The readiness with which they appear (in their musical practice) to identify individual ancillary notes, rather than perceive them simply as no more than interruptions in an auditory stream, and to use or modify them to suit their own musical (and textual) purposes, lends weight to this supposition.

Two examples provided in my 1970 article showed how musicians were in fact doing this very thing (p. 76, 78). Another example was recently pointed out to me by Andrew Cooke with reference to a performance of *Ssematimba* by the Muganda musician Albert Ssempeke (Cooke 1993). There, in fourteen out of seventy-four cycles he alters one note in the accompanying xylophone okunaga part to highlight an alternative text he frequently utters during the course of the song performance.

So instead of the normal xylophone notes

The melody note (2) is changed (to note 5) and as a consequence the

1 3 2 2 5 2 ② 5 2 4 1 3 4 2 4 4 2

corresponding to the singing of

$\bar{1}$		$\bar{2}$	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{2}$		$\bar{1}$		3	4		4		4
Ah		Sse	-	ma-tim	-	ba	[ne]	Ki-	kwa	-	ban	-	ga

he plays and sings

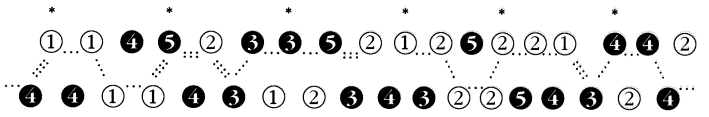
1	3	2	2	5	2	⑤	5	2	4	1	3	4	2	4	2	4
				5		5	5		4		3	4		4		4
				Baa	-	na	ba	-	ttu		Ki-	kwa	-	ban	-	ga

ancillary notes and the melody notes briefly change roles. Non-Baganda might perceive and explain the change as the temporary replacement of one auditory stream by another.

Lastly, at the risk of confusing the debate still more, I fitted the best known nuclear text for the song *Ssematimba* to Wegner's Fig. 2b (where Kubik's two inherent patterns are presented). As a result one can see that the text-carrying patterns clearly belong to, but switch between, Kubik's two inherent patterns. With such a degree of overlap it is not surprising that Wegner's informants spoke only about the text melody and seemed unconcerned with our notions of inherent patterns. Perhaps, for this reason, *Ssematimba* was not a particularly good choice as a test piece for the experiments in cognition. Below I reproduce Wegner's Fig. 2b but beginning from a different point in the cycle. I have added texts and link up the notes that carry the text syllables. (The first group of pitches numbered 1 in the melody part are sung in the higher octave.) Disjunct intervals (shown with a double link), which, according to auditory stream theory should inhibit

perception of the text-based patterns, perhaps do not do so because they closely parallel tonal features of the text.

Fig. 2b (from Kubik/Wegner) with one of the principal nuclear texts for "Ssematimba ne Kikwabanga" added. Linking lines show how the melody uses both of the auditory streams but switches between them. Asterisks show where the song's clap pulse lies.



A-ba-si-b'em-bu-zi ba-si-bi-ra bwe-ree-re Ah Ssem-a-tim-ba Ki-kwa-ban-ga

4 1̄ 1̄ 1̄ 1̄ 5 2 3 3 3 3 \ 5 \ 2 1 2 2 2 1 3 4 4 4

Those who keep goats keep them in vain Ah! Ssematimba [and] Kikwabanga.

Recent correspondence with Ulrich Wegner (17.12.93) makes it clear that he was also aware of the correspondence. "I noticed for example that my informants often started in with their shadow singing where streams formed part of the the melody." But perhaps he does not consider that the progression 411115 could constitute an auditory stream (see his remark concerning muko transposition in his footnote 40). It may appear that note 5 is disjunct in relationship to 1, but one has to remember that in the *amadinda* tradition when a third part—the *okukoonera*—is also played, notes 5 and 1 are adjacent in two of the three octaves. This could well be the very reason why Baganda evolved *okukoonera* : it extends the melodic range into the third octave and allows one more easily to hear such streams as this, which straddle the boundaries between playing areas.

While welcoming Ulrich Wegner's venture into the field of cognitive ethnomusicology as another valuable approach towards an understanding of Kiganda xylophone playing, perhaps we also should admit that our fascination with the xylophone repertory has meant that xylophone music has too frequently been studied in isolation from the study of the vocal versions (the main burden of my 1970 article) and also from that of other Kiganda instruments and related musical traditions. In some other Ganda ensembles, for example, the flute and lyre band and the *abalere ba Kabaka* (the Kabaka's flute band) one finds a considerable degree of heterophony occurring as one or more musicians prolong either the melody pitch or the ancillary pitch yet appear to draw on the same tone bank used in playing the xylophones (much of the song repertory is common to the different ensembles). In 1970 I pointed out that expert players of the Kiganda *ndere* (flute) would at times perform the same streams of notes as can be heard on

the amadinda. I did not also add then, what I only partly perceived at that time, that they readily prolonged ancillary pitches also.

Recent study of ensemble performances by Basoga musicians (close neighbours geographically, linguistically and culturally of the Baganda) today using a very mixed instrumentarium (xylophone, panpipes, fiddle, flute, lamellaphone, and other percussion instruments) shows them also to be extracting a number of different melodic patterns simultaneously from a tone bank (like that played on the amadinda) but which at a deeper level appears to consist of a double bank of notes (Cooke, in preparation). Wegner's final quote from Wright and Bregman could not be more apt.

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