

Dancing towards Dictatorship: Political Songs and Popular Culture in Malawi

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes how party politics has appropriated performances of popular art to create and entrench oppressive political culture in Malawi. Performances of popular culture were already used during the struggle for independence, and such practice was in wide use during the regime of Dr Banda, the first president of Malawi, and it has continued also after his resignation in the 1990s. The songs composed for praising the power, wisdom and excellency of the Malawi Congress Party, and particularly of its leader, Dr. Banda, were typically performed by female dancers, who used allegedly traditional modes of expression in communicating the political message. During the time of the multi-party government the practice seems to continue to be the same. The songs earlier sung in praise of Banda were later sung for Bakili Muluzi, his successor in power, and songs for mocking the previous president and his party were composed and performed during the political campaigns. However, instead of using forms of popular culture to support one party for the disadvantage of the others, there would be a need in Malawi to use such art forms for creating a 'common' political culture. (Ed.)

Keywords: Traditional art, politics, folk dance, folk songs

INTRODUCTION

In Malawi, as in Africa in general, dance and poetic performances are important forms of social discourse (Spencer 1985; Vail and White 1991; Kamlongera *et al.* 1992; Page 1993). Anthropological and historical accounts show that, in the pre-modern days, deeds of valour and moments of joy, sorrow and prosperity were expressed through popular performances which included dance, heroic recitations, and story-telling (Spiegel and McAllister 1991). Communication between the world of the dead and that of the living was through the same avenues (Drewal 1989). In addition to conveying religious, cultural and socio-political messages, these performances were 'maps' of individual, group and communal experiences (Vail and White 1991: chap. 2). As Melvin Page (1993) has noted, "for even the casual observer, the impression that contemporary dance in Malawi carries a heavy political load is overwhelming". Wherever Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the country's former president, travelled, "his coterie" of colourfully dressed women were also found dancing and singing adulatory

songs praising him. Until recently, every political event in the country was accompanied by performance of "traditional dances".

By focusing on the messages and images from some of the dances and political songs, this paper aims to demonstrate how party politics appropriated popular performances to create and entrench a Banda-centred oppressive political culture in the country. It also argues that between 1992 and 1994, the same popular performances were turned round to challenge the very same culture they had helped to create. Thus, by focusing on the messages and images from these performances, we can learn something of the country's political culture as well as the motives and intentions of its actors. The paper does not aim at providing a review or full coverage of the country's forms of popular culture. Neither does it intend to get into the academic debates on folklore, popular cultures and popular performances (Dorson 1972; Barber 1987; Drewal 1989 and 1991; Gunner 1990; Kaarsholm 1990). It concerns itself with messages and images reflecting the common Malawians' perceptions of their political world. In addition, the paper does not deal with dance as form, but with song as text. Not because dance forms are less important, but because song texts were expressive statements of the behaviour of the Malawi leader and his political regime. A focus on the song texts would thus reveal how Dr Banda consolidated his control over the country's politics, his political style, manner of operating and the use to which the dances were put in bolstering his rule (Hirschmann 1995: 245). The songs and dances are thus set within the context of the national political culture the Malawi leader and the ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP) constantly engineered in order to stay in power. In most cases the songs were a form of audio propaganda, and the dances that accompanied them were visual propaganda.

In the wider conceptual framework, this paper explores the context-sensitivity of the Malawian political songs and dances; the inter-relationship between dance-and-song use and the political preoccupations of the Malawian people under the dictatorship of Dr Hastings Banda; and the political culture that emerged from the process. The paper thus joins those who argue that verbal art, including dance-and-song use, "is constituted by poetic configurations, institutional modes for the production and reception of discourse (who says what, to whom, and when), and the interrelatedness of other forms of discourse" (Muana 1998: 39). The songs analyzed below point to the key discourses on nationalism, the quest for nation-building, the consolidation of political power, the perception and treatment of opposition, the cultural justifications for the dictatorship; and the reasons for, and manner of, its challenge and subsequent collapse. The nationalist movement, the political parties that carried it, the pro-multiparty pressure groups, and all the various political actors in the process of democratization, provide the institutional modes for the production and reception of the discourses.

1. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

It is important to capture the political context of the songs and dances discussed here, and to locate them within specific themes and periods of the country's history; and to show who the key actors were. Five themes are chosen: the progression of the political history of the country; the construction of a sense of nationhood and the pride associated with it; the emergence of Dr Banda as a sole leader and how all political activity centred on him; the expression of political subjugation and submission of the Malawian people to their leader's autocratic style; and the mass rebellion against the political regime. These themes fall into four periods of the country's political development. The first was the period of political mobilization extending from the return of Dr Banda from abroad in 1958 to the coming of independence in 1964. Following this was a period of political consolidation, from 1965 to 1969, during which Banda eliminated elements of internal opposition and began to emerge as the central figure in the country's politics. From the early 1970s to the late 1980s was the peak of Banda's autocratic rule, characterized by political detentions, deportations, and in some extreme cases, the killing of those who did not follow his political style. The early 1990s, between 1992 and 1994, was a period of the fall of the dictatorship and the coming of a multi-party era.

During the first period, most, though not all, the songs centred on the creation of a sense of nationhood and the pride associated with it. The key players were members of the Youth League, who played an important role as a mobilization force. The target was the colonial system, and those who collaborated with it. Not surprisingly, the names of colonial administrators, chiefs (who were regarded as agents of the colonial system), and those politicians who collaborated with the regime, featured highly in most of the songs. There was not much emphasis on Banda as a person, though he was frequently mentioned in the songs. Wherever he was mentioned, it was in connection with the nationalist struggle and the making of the Malawi nation, the pride of the people of Malawi and their victory, and not with Banda's personality as such. The name and the political abilities of the leader were placed within the context of the collective process of the struggle and its achievements. During the second period the targets were the so-called "dissidents" or "rebels" who had disagreed with Banda in 1964 and left the country for exile, and all those who sympathized with them. The Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP), a paramilitary wing of the MCP, and the members of the Women's League, popularly known as *mbumba*, became the key players. Banda moved centre stage from this time. Most of the political songs praised his "heroic" abilities, leadership style and triumph over both the colonial system and the internal opposition.

From the early 1970s Dr Banda and the MCP used the medium of popular art forms (dances, songs, and poetic recitals), the print and electronic media, and the visual propaganda, such as films produced by the department of information,

to demonstrate the president's power and dominance over the country. As David Hirschmann (1995: 246) has observed, the style of the films, their nature, content and focus, "clearly reveal many of Banda's preoccupations." The same applied to the dances and songs. Members of the Women's League were instructed, if not forced, to compose and sing songs that praised Banda for his heroism, his "wise and dynamic" leadership, for "destroying the stupid federation" of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, "redeeming the country from the bondage of colonialism", and "developing it beyond recognition". The Women's League and its affiliated bodies were instrumental in the consolidation of the Banda-centred political culture from this time, and onwards. The leader of Malawi himself was aware of it and actively encouraged it. He claimed that before his coming in 1958,

women were trampled down by everybody...everybody.... Nobody thought about women except to make them cook for them. That's all... So, I made up my mind even before I came that I was going to do something about *my* women. Therefore when I see my women happy and singing and dancing with their heads high, their necks bent with pride like that...it makes me happy, very happy. (As cited in Hirschmann 1995: 251).

As will be shown below, it is debatable that Banda promoted the interests and welfare of *his* women. For sure, he used and abused them to promote his power and dominance. Whenever there was an issue of contentious nature, Banda used women as his mouthpiece.

The last period considered in the paper is between 1992 and 1994, the period of transition to multi-party politics. The newly-formed pressure groups, and the opposition parties that emerged out of them, used popular art forms to challenge the regime. The style and strategies were similar to those of the MCP during the years of political mobilization and consolidation. Popular art forms were used to debunk the myth that Banda was unchallengeable, a sole protector and a wise and dynamic leader. The focus was on challenging the legitimacy of his rule. As was the case in the 1960s, the key performers were mostly young people, the underprivileged, and those who did not benefit much from the Banda regime. Driven by the 'liberation' energy, mood and spirit similar to those of the nationalist period, the multi-party campaign became a mass movement in which the performance of popular art forms was a factor of political mobilization.

The songs and dances analyzed in this paper should therefore be understood in the above political context. The themes are discussed in chronological order so as to show the historical progression involved. The approach used is to juxtapose the song texts and their contents with the analysis of the major events in the country during the stated periods, combined with Banda's speeches that show his political beliefs, preoccupations and predispositions. This approach is adopted in order to avoid reading the song texts too literally, especially that some of them carry hidden and figurative meanings. What emerges out of these is an indication of how Banda built his autocratic rule and why it worked.

The paper adopts Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell's (1978) definition of political culture as "the set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about politics current in a nation at a given time" (cited in Hellen 1996: 11). The song texts analysed here are expressions of the attitudes, feelings and beliefs of those Malawians who actively participated in Dr Banda's political regime. They are not necessarily the attitudes and beliefs of the majority of the Malawian people, but they are, surely, those of the powerful individuals, groups and institutions in control of the country's political process.

2. POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND MOBILIZATION

During the colonial period, everywhere in southern Africa popular performances played an important role in the expression of resistance to colonial domination and capitalist exploitation (Mitchell 1956; Ranger 1975). Through songs and dances colonized people "defined pungently and accurately the terms of their exploitation" (Vail and White 1991: 41; see also Vail and White 1978/79). Migrant labourers ideologically integrated the spatially discontinuous worlds of village and town, work and home, by the performance of traditional dances and songs in compounds and work places (Moodie 1991: 39-63; Matongo 1992: 180-217). The history of the colonial experience was mapped out in songs like this one from Nkhata Bay, northern Malawi:

<i>Tingupangana,</i>	We agreed
<i>M'chaka chiya: 1891</i>	In that year: 1891
<i>Azungu? Azungu, ku Yurupu</i>	Whites in Europe
<i>Amwenye? Amwenye, ku India</i>	Indians In Asia
<i>Tafipa? Tafipa, mu Africa</i>	We blacks in Africa.

The song was about history, and "it was the history" of Malawi's colonization. The country became a British Protectorate in 1891. To the Malawian nationalists, that was "a year of agreement": that Nyasaland, as it was known then, was a place for black people. Colonization was only a temporary, negotiated arrangement aimed at the 'civilization' and advancement of the Africans. When time came, it would come to an end. This view was firmly reflected in the second verse of the song:

<i>Tingupangana,</i>	We agreed,
<i>M'chaka chiya: 1891</i>	In that year: 1891
<i>Asani Mwasambira</i>	When you become educated
<i>Mkajiusanga mwija</i>	You will rule [govern] yourselves.

The song was popular at the peak of Malawian nationalism between the late 1950s and early 1960s. It reflected the Malawian nationalist identity and

political aspirations. As was the case everywhere in Africa at this time, there was a strong mixing of autochthonous and nationalist identities. These were influenced by the intellectual developments and the cultural and political revivalism of the time. Marcus Garvey's idea of "Africa for the Africans" and Kwame Nkrumah's pan-Africanism provided the Malawian nationalists with the intellectual basis for their autochthonous and nationalist identities.

What is particularly striking about the nationalist period in Malawi is that there was an attempt to create a national political identity. If one listened to the songs of the period, one would not miss phrases such as "we Malawians", "our land", "we are proud of" and many others of that nature. Popular art forms were used to mobilize and promote these nationalistic sentiments. There was a strong emphasis on unity and the collective spirit:

<i>Tiyende pamodzi ndi mtima umodzi!</i>	Let's march forward in one spirit!
<i>Tiyende pamodzi ndi mtima umodzi</i>	Let's march forward in one spirit
<i>Eee, A Banda tiye! Tiyende pamodzi!</i>	Banda, let's march!
<i>A Chiye tiye! Tiyende pamodzi!</i>	Chiye, [Chipembere] let's march!
<i>Tiyende pamodzi ndi mtima umodzi</i>	Let's march forward in one spirit
<i>Eee, A Chirwa tiye! Tiyende pamodzi!</i>	Chirwa, let's march!
<i>Kanyama tiye! Tiyende pamodzi!</i>	Kanyama, let's march!
<i>Tiyende pamodzi ndi mtima umodzi</i>	Let's march forward in one spirit!

Tiyende pamodzi was like an anthem of the nationalist struggle, not only in Malawi but also in what was then Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively). It was an energizing song during marches to and from political rallies. Its importance lay in its call for a collective spirit and the need to move forward as a united force in a typical Christian understanding of "*onward christian soldiers marching as to war*". Banda himself constantly emphasized the importance of unity and the collective spirit in the fight for independence from colonial rule. "If we were to defeat the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland", he argued, "we had to be united, ... [I told my people that] we must no longer think in terms of our individual tribes... We must not think in terms of our region or provinces... we are one people, one country" (Banda 4/4/75; also Banda 5/7/71).

The collective nationalist spirit was also reflected in the use of symbols and slogans that the majority of the Malawian people could identify with. The black cockerel and the slogan *kwacha*, meaning dawn, symbolizing the coming of a new nation and a new political dispensation. These symbols, and what they depicted, were captured in some key political songs of the time:

<i>Tambala akamalira!</i>	When the cockerel crows!
<i>Kokoliko ooo oooo.</i>	crows, crows, crows....
<i>Tambala akamalira!</i>	When the cockerel crows!
<i>Kokoliko ooo oooo.</i>	crows, crows, crows
<i>Tambala akamalira,</i>	Malawians are proud

<i>Kokoliko, liko, liko, kwacha!</i>	They are proud of Kamuzu
<i>Amalawi?</i>	They are proud of freedom
<i>Amalawi ayamba, Kunyadira?</i>	Freedom, it's dawn!
<i>Kunyadira Kamuzu</i>	(free translation)
<i>Filidomo? Filidomo, kwacha!</i>	

In Malawian folklore, "the cock crow at dawn" is a measurement of time. Each day begins at cock crow before dawn. The cock crow thus divides the day from the night, the light from the darkness, and the present from the past. Those who live in the times after the cock crow live in the world of light, and thus have the potential for visions for the developments ahead of them. The cockerel and the slogan *kwacha* were therefore symbolic of the passing of the historical time, and the emergence of a new nation with a vision for the future of which the Malawian people "were proud".

3. THE BANDA-CENTRED POLITICAL CULTURE

The collective spirit and identity of the nationalist period did not last long. Just soon after the attainment of independence in July 1964, there was a cabinet crisis in the country. Key ministers: Henry Blasius Masauko Chipembere, William Murray Kanyama Chiume, Yatuta Chisiza and Willie Chokani disagreed with Dr. Banda's authoritarian leadership, his habitual reference to them as "*my boys*" - which they regarded as demeaning, his acceptance of the proposal for lower wages for Africans doing the same work as their white colleagues (see Kamwambe 1993: 28-29; Lwanda 1993: 64), and the proposal to introduce a three-pence user fee for public hospitals. Banda took it as a rebellion against him, personally. The ministers resigned, some were dismissed, and they fled the country into neighbouring Zambia and Tanzania. Banda denounced them as rebels and dissidents, and took advantage of the events to consolidate his position. Songs were composed denouncing the 'rebels':

<i>Moto! Moto! Wayaka!</i>	Fire, fire is ablaze
<i>Moto, wayaka! Moto, wayaka!</i>	Fire is ablaze! Fire is ablaze!
<i>A Malawi?</i>	Malawians?
<i>Amalawi safuna:</i>	Malawians don't want:
<i>Chipembere, Kanyama</i>	Chipembere, Kanyama,
<i>Willie Chokani!</i>	Willie Chokani!

The arrangement of the names in this song was important. Chokani was the surname for Willie Chokani, but by placing it at the end of the song, it changed meaning. It now meant "get away!", which was the message to all those mentioned in the song. Anybody with personal, professional, and blood

connections with these people was also in danger of being branded a 'rebel', and risked deportation or arrest and detention without trial.

These events were followed by a clampdown on any form of opposition. Banda employed the Youth Leaguers, the Malawi Young Pioneers, and members of the Women's League to mount surveillance on the public:

At the same time, in order to make sure that Chipembere does not even make a nuisance of himself, watch everybody who comes back from Tanganyika, or Zambia or even Rhodesia or South Africa. Watch everyone of them! See what he is doing, listen to what he says. If he says anything like: "Chipembere is coming", report him to the police, to the Youth League, to the Young Pioneers, to the Chairman of the League of Women, and see that they go to Dzeleka [Prison] (Banda 31/10/66).

He went further to warn that anybody with connections with Chipembere and the others "will be meat for crocodiles. They won't reach anywhere. Young Pioneers, Youth League, Women's League, they won't allow" (Banda 31/10/66). Particularly important in this was the creation of the culture of fear. Malawians became a terrorized nation, constantly under surveillance by security men, members of the Youth League, party officials, informers and the intelligence branch of the police. These were always on the look out for those with the potential to express dissenting views. Often this was done in the name of guarding against infiltration of the so-called rebels or "strange faces" from outside the country. The danger in this was that anybody could be regarded as a "strange face" if he/she expressed views that were in conflict with those of the political establishment.

The use of prisons for political detentions, and the mobilization of all the branches of the ruling party against elements of opposition, were key to Banda's consolidation of power. With these he was able to intimidate and terrorize the population, and to ensure total submission to himself. His triumph over the forces of colonialism, and the manner in which he handled the internal opposition, earned him the title of the "Lion of Malawi", captured in several songs of the 1960s:

A Kamuzu ndi mkango eee

Ndi mkango!

A Kamuzu ndi mkango eee

Ndi mkango!

Ndi mkango eee, eee eeeee

Ndi mkango!

Kamuzu is a lion

He is a lion!

Kamuzu is a lion

He is a lion!

He is a lion, he is a lion!

He is a lion!

Throughout the 1960s, political songs reflected Banda's consolidation of power and his emerging dictatorship. Because of his heroic triumph, everything in the country belonged to him:

Dancing towards dictatorship

Zonse zimene, n'za Kamuzu Banda

Everything else, belongs to
Kamuzu Banda

Zonse zimene, n'za Kamuzu Banda

Everything else, belongs to
Kamuzu Banda

Nyanja zonse? N'za Kamuzu Banda

All the lakes, for Kamuzu Banda

Ng'ombe zonse? N'za Kamuzu Banda

All the cattle, for Kamuzu Banda

Ife tonse? Ndi a Kamuzu Banda

All of us, for Kamuzu Banda

[Note: the singers could fit in any object into this song].

The Young Pioneers, the Youth Leaguers and the members of the Women's League assured him of their unqualified support in everything:

Zibvute, zitani, ndife a Malawi!

Come hell or high waters!

Tiri pa mbuyo pa Kamuzu!

We are solidly behind Kamuzu

Zibvute, zitani, ndife a Malawi!

Come hell or high waters!

Tiri pambuyo pa Kamuzu!

We are solidly behind Kamuzu

Tidzafa, eee, tidzafa, eee

We shall die, we shall die!

Tidzafa lero!

We shall die!

Tiri pa mbuyo pa Kamuzu!

We are solidly behind Kamuzu!

The cabinet crisis thus marked the beginning of a Banda-centred political culture in the country. "It was at best useless or worst dangerous to put forward any views that conflicted with [Dr. Banda's] known preconceptions" (Lwanda 1993: 29). By the 1970s, he had become the *Ngwazi*, the conqueror and the hero, the Lion of Malawi, the government and the law. He boasted that "the Malawi system, the Malawi style is that Kamuzu says, its just that, and then its finished.... Everything I say is law. It is a fact in this country" (as quoted in Lwanda 1993: 62 and 122). Thus, the members of the Women's League sang of him as 'the government':

Tikaona a Ngwazi awo, Timasangalala

When we see the Ngwazi, we are
happy

'sangalala, 'sangala kwambiri.

we are happy, happy indeed.

A Ngwazi ndi boma lero!

The Ngwazi is government, now!

A Ngwazi ndi boma, ndi boma, ndi boma

The Ngwazi is government, he is
government,

'sangala kwambiri

We are happy indeed.

There was almost no separation of the presidency from the government, the party from its leader, the politics from the law, and the state from the nation. All these were fused and crystallized into Banda's personal political achievements and capabilities. Nobody else had the potential to offer an alternative. According to the Nkhata Bay members of the Women's League, those who opposed him would "burn":

Afyengi wija, afyengi wija
Akulimbana ndi moto, Ngwazi!

A Ngwazi mbachatonda
Ndi muomboli mu Malawi

They will burn, they will burn
Those who play with Ngwazi, the
fire!

The Ngwazi is a hero
He is a saviour in Malawi.

4. SUBVERSION OF TRADITION AND CULTURE

John Lwanda (1993) has observed that traditional popular beliefs reinforced the Banda-centred political culture in the country. Banda was a bonafide medical doctor, equivalent to, if not above, the traditional *sing'anga*, medicine man. In his own words, "nothing was beyond the *sing'anga* and his medicine" (Young and Banda 1946: 19; Lwanda 1993: 82). Thus, the uncritical illiterate ordinary Malawians genuinely believed that Dr Banda, like a traditional *sing'anga* medicine man, could hear dissenting views even if he was so many miles away from where the views were expressed. He had a fly whisk, a symbol of some African medicine men and women and therefore a symbol of traditional medical authority (Lwanda 1993: 81). His medical and healing powers were extended to the way he "liberated the country from colonial rule with words only":

Wamkulu ndani ku Malawi?

Wamkulu ndi Kamuzu

walanda dziko ndi mau okha

Kamuzu muyaya-muyaya

Kamuzu muyaya, Kamuzu muyaya

chipani ndi boma

Who is great [or the boss] in
Malawi?

The great one [or the boss] is
Kamuzu

Has liberated the country with
words only

Kamuzu for life

Kamuzu is for life, he is for life

The party and [or is] government

Dr. Banda also capitalized on his name: *Kamuzu*, a 'little root' or a 'little medicine' as in the Scottish 'a wee miracle'. As a medicine man he could influence the course of political events by "the timely and judicious administration of appropriate medicine", in the form of his words, the fly whisk and the slogan *kwacha*. His medical persona may also have enabled him to mete out "harsh punishment which kept out sorcery, theft, adultery and disobedience at a minimum in the name of maintaining harmony" (Lwanda 1993: 82). It can therefore be argued that the frequent portrayal of the president as a redeemer, a messiah and a medicine man in political speeches and popular performances was important for ideological and political control. Such persona contributed to the instillation of the culture of fear in the minds of the ordinary people.

The creation of the oppressive political culture thus involved the blending of images and symbols from a variety of forms of popular culture and traditional

beliefs. Biblical images, old indigenous traditions and beliefs, and modern popular performances came together to create a new political culture. The biblical concepts of a Messiah and Moses were utilized to portray Dr Banda as a redeemer and saviour of the nation. According to the members of the Women's League from Blantyre district, the president was like Moses who delivered the children of Israel from the house of bondage:

<i>Mau anu a Ngwazi, mau anu,</i>	With your words only, with your worlds only
<i>Mudamenya leki Malawi</i>	You hit the waters of Lake Malawi
<i>Taoloka Yorodano, taoloka!</i>	We have crossed Jordan, we have crossed!
<i>Taoloka lero taoloka,</i>	We have crossed now, we have crossed
<i>Taoloka Yorodano, taoloka!</i>	We have crossed Jordan, we have crossed!
<i>Mose waku Malawi</i>	The Moses of Malawi
<i>Ndiyo Kamuzu Banda</i>	is Kamuzu Banda
<i>Adamanya leki Malawi</i>	He beat the waters of Lake Malawi
<i>Taoloka Yorodano, taoloka</i>	We have crossed Jordan, we have crossed!

What the above account suggests is that despite elements of ultra-conservatism in the Banda regime, its oppressive culture was highly creative and innovative. It adopted strategies that could easily appeal to the majority of the Malawian people. For a country where religion plays an important role in the people's every day life, and where the Christian tradition is so strong, the images of Dr Banda as a redeeming Messiah, a leading Moses, could easily be internalized and subscribed to by the uncritical minds.

To legitimize his authority, Banda capitalized on the Chewa traditional concepts of *nkhoswe* and *mbumba*. In the matrilineal Chewa culture, the *nkhoswe* is a guardian of the family, usually a maternal uncle or eldest brother in the family. The *mbumba* is a sorority group of sisters and their daughters, living in their maternal village under their *nkhoswe*. As early as 1946, Banda emphasized the importance and responsibility of the *nkhoswe* to his *mbumba*:

All the male members of a Chewa family on the mother's side are *nkhoswe* to all the female members on the mother's side ... And being *nkhoswe* to them you, as a male and no matter how young you are, are a Responsible Relative ... When you say: "they are my *mbumba*", or "she is my *mbumba*", you are admitting responsibility in law... (As cited in Lwanda 1993: 83).

Capitalizing on these Chewa traditional concepts Banda became 'Nkhoswe Number One' for all the country's women regardless of their cultural differences. Through such cultural manipulations, Banda was able to use women to advance his political control over the Malawian society. He publicly and proudly acknowledged the beauty of *his* women who danced and sang for him: "*nanga si mbumba za Kamuzu! Nanga sizokongola mbumba za Kamuzu izi!*" - "aren't these Kamuzu's *mbumba*, aren't they beautiful these Kamuzu's *mbumba*" (Banda 6/7/71). Cultural engineering was part of political engineering aimed at

assuming full control of the country's political process. Through the '*chewaisation*' of the country's traditional and political culture, Banda was able to create a traditional grassroots base for himself, especially in the central region of the country where he came from. Himself a Chewa, Banda promoted the Chewa culture as a national culture (see Vail 1981; Chirwa 1994a and 1994b; Kaspin 1995). From 1978, Chichewa (the Chewa language) became the official national language studied and spoken in schools and on the national radio alongside English (Timpunza-Mvula 1992; Kishindo 1994).

In addition to creating a traditional grassroots base, cultural engineering had three political effects. First, by capitalizing on the traditional strengths of the relationship between the *mbumba* and the *nkhoswe*, "Banda cemented, as no repressive police could better, the relationship between himself and both the rural and urban women. Any dissenting female voices were completely marginalised" (Lwanda 1993: 84-85). Second, it gave some women, especially those in the party bureaucracy, and those close to Banda himself, some say in ceremonial political matters. Some of them "used this connection and superficial power to keep their men in check both politically and in some cases at a personal level" (Lwanda 1993: 84). Third, and related to the above, through the use and abuse of women, Banda was able to control men. Anything a woman reported to the party on her husband or any other man was taken very seriously. The consequences were obvious: dismissal from work if the man was an employee, detention without trial, or, if lucky, a reprimand from party officials, which would include receiving a good beating from Youth Leaguers or Malawi Young Pioneers. However, the emphasis on the Chewa culture had some negative effects. Instead of unifying the country, it contributed to political and socio-cultural divisions along regionalistic and ethnic fault lines as some groups passively resisted '*chewaisation*' of their cultural traditions. They maintained and promoted their own cultural identities through a variety of ways, including dances and use of local languages in their communities (Vail and White 1989; Kaspin 1995).

A contentious issue is the extent to which Dr Banda advanced and protected the interests of women. Rhetorically he emphasized their contribution to the fight for independence, and their role in strengthening the Malawi Congress Party:

...the women...are part and parcel of the political and social life of this country. They are members of the Women's League, a branch of the Malawi Congress Party, the governing party in this country. Wherever I am, you will find them, at every function, because they were in the battle that gave us our independence in 1964. I do not want anyone in this country to take things for granted. No! If we are celebrating our independence today, do not forget these women. Do not forget the Youth League. Do not forget the Malawi Congress Party. Because it was these women, the Youth League, the Malawi Congress Party [that] when Kamuzu was Her Majesty's guest at Gwero [means: in prison], they carried on the fight here at home (Banda 3/7/70).

Such speeches give the impression that his interest in women lay in their political importance, rather than in their social and economic welfare as a vulnerable group. Even in the field of politics, women were not fairly represented. There was one female minister in the first cabinet in 1964, and up to the early 1970s, there were less than five female members of parliament in the national assembly. His attitude towards female political representation was paternalistic. Women would qualify as members of parliament, not in their individual capacity and ability, but because they were members of the MCP, and because he wanted them in parliament:

You know we have two women in parliament now. I want more! I want at least five. So, please remember this: when you are nominating candidates, do not just limit it to men. Think about women. There are some educated women among you, some of them are teachers, some of them are working in the statutory bodies, some of them are working in private shops and private offices. You know those who are members of the Malawi Congress Party, who support the Malawi Congress Party. Please think of them when time comes. I want more women in Parliament (Banda 12/1/71).

Given that Malawi was a one-party state, it was automatic that members of parliament had to be members and supporters of the MCP. What Banda looked for was loyalty to the party, and not just membership. It was those women and men who had unqualified loyalty to the party who could be nominated for candidature. The names of all the nominees were sent to the president himself for approval. He could therefore choose the ones he knew were loyal to him and the party.

The first attempt to create a forum for the advancement of women's interests and welfare was in 1985 with the establishment of the *Chitukuko cha Amayi m'Malawi* (CCAM) - Organization for the Advancement of Women in Malawi. The function of the organization was to advance the socio-economic welfare of women. It supported them in micro-enterprises, skills training in business, arts and crafts, family planning, and other social issues. It operated small gardens in almost every district in the country, purportedly to raise income for the running of the organization at the local level; also in the name of agricultural skills training. However, the administration and operations of the organization reflected the paternalistic and political control of the party. The organization was funded by the party, and its central offices were in the party's headquarters. It was headed by Cecilia Tamanda Kadzamira, Banda's own female confidante and 'official' hostess. Its office bearers were key officials of the Women's League of the MCP. As a result, the CCAM operated like a wing or sub-branch of the Women's League. Like the Youth League and the MYP, the CCAM was an instrument of coercion, designed to coerce women into submission and loyalty to the party. The use of women's labour in the organization's gardens, without pay, was likened to the *thangata* labour tenancy

of the colonial period, which was one of the major causes of African resistance to colonial rule in the country.

The control over the Women's League and the CCAM were central to Dr Banda's grip over the country's political life. Their dances and songs were important to the making of his name as the country's leader. He appreciated their dances and songs for three reasons: they told a story about him personally, depicted a political culture in which he was a dominant figure, and were a challenge to the western culture which he feared would erode his control and authority over the Malawian people. Speaking on departure for Singapore on 12th January, 1971, Banda told those gathered at Chileka airport, Blantyre, that:

I also want to thank you for entertainment given to me this morning. You have sung for me. You have danced for me. In every one of your songs there was a story. A story to thank me, and to a great extent, to praise me for what I have done for you, the people of this country and for the country as a whole.... It is pleasing, gratifying and encouraging to me to see that you my people, appreciate what I have been trying to do ever since I came almost thirteen years ago (Banda 12/1/71).

To him, the dances and the songs were an expression of the Malawian people's appreciation for his personal achievements and what he had done for the country. Through the dances and songs the Malawians expressed their gratitude, happiness, and solidarity with his leadership:

I enjoyed everything you did yesterday: dancing, singing, so too this afternoon. Those who danced yesterday have danced here again. You did not say: "Oh we danced yesterday." You did not say that. But you came here to dance. All this makes me feel very happy because I came here in 1958 to free you so that you can be free and be happy. Now I have done my job: you are free, you are happy (Banda 21/7/68; see also Banda 23/7/68).

The struggle against colonial rule, the attainment of independence, the political and socio-economic development of the country were regarded as Dr Banda's personal achievements, and not the achievements of the Malawian people as a nation. There was very little reference to the collective spirit. Most of the times Banda referred to the fight against colonial rule as a personal fight, and achievement:

Do you remember when I used to cry, even at such places as the Salisbury airport, Chileka airport, surrounded by legions of policemen: Down with Federation, to hell with Federation! Self-government now! now! now! Those were the days, I miss them now. Life is rather dull now. Very dull, very dull! No Roy Welensky to fight, no Malcolm Barrow, no Edgar Whitehead (Banda 25/6/68).

Banda was aware of the importance of the political culture centred on him. It gave him space to behave like an African king or chief in control of 'his'

subordinates' lives. He regarded himself as guardian of the Malawian cultural traditions and beliefs:

When I came in 1958, our traditional dances were dying because the missionaries of all denominations, particularly the missionaries of my own church, the CCAP [Church of Central Africa Presbytery] told my people that dancing was sin.... Do not let anyone make you believe that if you dance your own dance you are not going to heaven.... There is nothing wrong with dancing any African dance. That is what I have said many, many times. Here, men dance by themselves, women there. But in Europe and America, when I was there, what did I see? A married man with another man's wife, a married woman with another woman's husband... If God is going to burn anyone for dancing, he is *not* going to burn you. He is going to burn the white man – the Americans, the British, the French and the Germans.... They have their own dances. So why should *chimdidi* be sin? Why should *chioda* be sin? Why should *Ingoma* be sinful? Do not believe anyone who tells you that. If anyone tells you that, say Kamuzu says: "*you are a liar!*" (Banda 9/4/68; see also Banda 20/7/68).

He believed that he spoke with authority because he was an African who knew Western culture well, having stayed in America and Europe for many years. However, there were occasions when he appreciated dancing and village life with a sense of nostalgia - taking himself back to the days of his childhood. "For example, in explaining his love of traditional dances, he described how his mother danced and he, a small child on her back, would let his head roll back and forth to the beat and movement of his mother's body" (Hirschmann 1995: 249). The key factor in all this was that he did not want to see the emergence of an alternative culture that would conflict with his, and in the process erode his authority and control over the country's political process. Cultural engineering thus became one of the key factors that legitimized Banda's dominance in political life. Members of the Ntcheu district Women's League were therefore not far from the truth when they sang:

<i>Tifuna yani lero?</i>	Who do we want now?
<i>Ngwazi yekha!</i>	The Ngwazi alone?
<i>Tifuna yani lero?</i>	Who do we want now?
<i>Ngwazi yekha!</i>	The Ngwazi alone!
<i>Winanso? Winanso ai!</i>	No one else, no one else!
<i>Winanso ai!</i>	No one else!
<i>Ngwazi yekha!</i>	The Ngwazi alone!

5. Banda's Control Mechanisms

There were three other factors that supported Dr Banda's dominance in the country's political life. First was his insistence on discipline, obedience and loyalty. Members of his party, especially those in the MYP movement and the Youth League, "we to be disciplined and obedient, not argumentative and contradictory. 'Don't go *this* way when you are told to go *that* way. Don't ask why. Don't ask if it is necessary'" (Hirschmann 1995: 250). He also insisted on the ministers, civil servants, the police and the army to be obedient, disciplined and loyal to him and to his party. Loyalty was the main qualification for appointment to high positions in both the party and the civil service. Second was the expansion of the 'public' security system. Banda created parallel security institutions: the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP), the Police, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), the Youth Leaguers, and the Army. During the 1970s and 1980s, the MYP and the SIS used informers and 'plants' to infiltrate the civil service, the party machinery, and academic and other institutions of civil society. The creation of these parallel and competing security systems was very crucial to the maintenance of a culture of terror and fear. Among themselves, they competed in their display of loyalty to Dr. Banda personally and his political regime in general. In return, they received recognition and favour from him (Chirwa 1994a: 26). With these institutions he was able to stamp out any form of overt dissent, turning the country into "a land where silence ruled [and a] proof that repression can work" (**Africa Watch** 1990: 1). To emphasize submission to their leader, the Mzimba women sang:

<i>Tose tikhale chete!</i>	Let us all listen!
<i>Tikhale chete! chete!</i>	Let us all listen! listen!
<i>Haye! Haye! tikhale chete kwa Kamuzu!</i>	Let us all listen to Kamuzu
<i>Ngwazi yayowoya, tikhale chete! chete!</i>	The Ngwazi has spoken, let us all listen! listen!
<i>Haye! Haye! Tikhale chete kwa Kamuzu!</i>	Let us all listen to Kamuzu!
<i>Tawanthu titemwanenge! Titemwanenge!</i>	Let us love one another, love one another!
<i>Tileke kusankhana mitundu!</i>	No ethnic divisions!
<i>Haye! Haye! Tikhale chete kwa Kamuzu</i>	Let us all listen to Kamuzu!
<i>Lero Ngwazi ya wina! Wawina Banda!</i>	Now the Ngwazi is the winner [sole leader]
<i>Haye! Haye! Tikhale chete kwa Kamuzu!</i>	Let us all listen to Kamuzu!

The third mechanism was the control of the flow of information by a variety of mechanisms that impeded freedom of expression and social, political and academic discourse. All publications, movies and popular performances, other than those performed at political events, were subject to control by the Censorship Board (**Africa Watch** 1990: chap. 9). Even the songs and dances

performed at political events were subject to approval by officials of the MCP in case they conflicted with the president's preconceptions. As **Africa Watch** (1990: 69) has noted, "controlling the flow of information [was] crucial to the Malawi Congress Party's [and indeed Dr Banda's] monopoly of power." It was impossible and dangerous to organize any form of political opposition in the country. The fourth mechanism was the use of popular performances to ensure political submission. Virtually every political event, diplomatic and state function was accompanied by 'traditional' dances. All the songs were in praise of Kamuzu: for the roads, bridges, schools, abundant food, and 'development everywhere'. The same applied to parliamentary proceedings. For weeks members of parliament continued to praise the Ngwazi for having developed the country 'beyond recognition'.

6. CHALLENGING THE DICTATORSHIP

It was not until 1992 that the country's Banda-centred political culture was openly challenged. The first to do this were catholic bishops in their lantern letter in March that year. "We would...fail in our role as religious leaders if we kept silent on areas of concern", declared the bishops. "Nobody should ever have to suffer reprisal for honestly expressing and living up to their convictions: intellectual, religious, or political." They added:

We can only regret that this is not always the case in our country ... Academic freedom is seriously restricted; exposing injustices can be considered a betrayal; revealing some evils of our society is seen as slandering the country; monopoly of mass media and censorship prevent the expression of dissenting views; some people have paid dearly for their political opinions...(Catholic Bishops of Malawi 1992: 8-9).

For weeks the country was tense. The bishops were intimidated by the police and the party functionaries. Those who dared speak out in support of the bishops were arrested and tortured. As Banda was about to consolidate his hold on the country again, Chakufwa Tom Chihana, a trade unionist, picked up from where the bishops had left. He denounced the Malawi Congress Party as "a party of death and darkness" and challenged Dr Banda to call for a referendum to let Malawians choose between a one-party state and a multi-party democracy. Under pressure from internal political groups, the clergy, international donors and human rights organizations, Banda conceded and called for a referendum on 17th June, 1993. When the day came, he suffered a humiliating defeat, losing by almost two-thirds of the votes in favour of multi-party politics.

During the referendum campaign, there was a renewed interest in popular performances. Officials of the two major political groups, the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) and the United Democratic Front (UDF), energized and

mobilized their supporters with chants of "we want change! we want change!", followed by "*Kongresi paulendo, paulendo, paulendo*" - Congress on its way out! on its way out! Their mobilization strategy was quite similar to that of the MCP during the fight for independence, and during the period of its consolidation of power. In the same manner that the MCP and all the Banda followers targeted colonialism as an 'evil force', the 'new' political agents of multi-partyism also isolated the MCP and the key figures in its bureaucracy as enemies of the collective political will:

<i>Tatopa ndi Kongresi! Tatopa ndi Kongresi!</i>	We are tired of the Congress [Party]
<i>Tatopa ndi Kongresi! Tatopa ndi Kongresi!</i>	We are tired of the Congress [Party]
<i>Kongresi pa ulendo! Paulendo!</i>	Congress march out! March out!

The image of Dr Banda had also changed. Previously the 'father and founder' of the Malawi nation, the wise and dynamic leader, the *nkhoswe* number one, was now the oppressor, torturer, and ruthless killer:

<i>A Kamuzu dziko la Malawi mwalizunza</i>	Kamuzu you have tortured the Malawi nation
<i>Nanga tichite bwanji able?</i>	what do we do now?
<i>Dziko la Malawi mwalizunza</i>	You have tortured the Malawi nation!
<i>Onani! Gadama munapha!</i>	Look! You killed [Aaron] Gadama
<i>Onani! Chihana ku ndende ku Zomba</i>	Look! You locked up Chihana in prison in Zomba
<i>Dziko la Malawi mwalizunza!</i>	You have tortured the Malawi nation!
<i>Onani! Matenje munapha!</i>	Look! You killed [Dick] Matenje
<i>Onani! Aleke ku ndende ku Zomba</i>	Look! You locked up Aleke in prison in Zomba
<i>Dziko la Malawi mwalizunza</i>	You have tortured the Malawi nation!

The strategy of the multi-party advocates was to challenge the legitimacy of the regime, isolate the key figures in its bureaucracy and discredit them. This way, the campaign for multi-partyism and democracy would be focused. The top officials in the MCP were portrayed as unintelligent, untalented and worthless. The main targets were those closest to Dr Banda, notably, John Tembo, Wadson Bin Deleza, and Cecilia Tamanda Kadzamira:

<i>Iwe Tembo iwe, heee</i>	Hey, you Tembo!
<i>Iwe Tembo iwe, umachita dala!</i>	Hey, you worthless [useless] Tembo!

<i>Iwe Tembo iwe, heee</i>	Hey, you Tembo!
<i>Iwe Tembo iwe, umachita dala!</i>	Hey, you worthless [useless] Tembo!
<i>Ndichani cho? Chotere?</i>	What is this [useless thing] you do?
<i>Ndichani cho? choka! choka!</i>	What is this [useless thing?] Get away! Get away!

Tembo was, for a long time, Treasurer-General of the MCP, Governor of the Reserve Bank, Chairman of the University Council, chairman of several boards of governors of companies and statutory councils, and an uncle of Cecilia Kadzamira. He was regarded as Banda's right-hand man, and the most powerful figure in the MCP. Normally, nobody would go to Dr Banda without passing through Tembo or/and his niece Kadzamira. He thus became one of the major targets of the political campaign during the referendum and the run-up to the general elections. Similarly, Wadson Deleza, then Administrative Secretary of the party, one of the longest serving members of the cabinet, and Banda's personal bodyguard, became a political enemy of multi-partyism:

<i>Aheee Deleza!</i>	Behold Deleza!
<i>Chimutu chachikulu-kulu, ahee Deleza</i>	Big, big headed Deleza!
<i>Chopanda ndi nzeru zomwe!</i>	Big headed without any intelligence!
<i>Ahee Deleza!</i>	Behold Deleza!

In a chant similar to the South African *toyitoyi*, the symbol of youth resistance in that country, the Malawian youth chanted down Cecilia as: *Cecilia ndi hule, ayendera bwanji ndi gogo!* "Cecilia is a whore, how can she go out with an old man!" This was a calculated challenge at the moral integrity of a woman who was very close to the president, and the head of an organization meant for the socio-economic advancement of women in the country. Understood in a wider context, it was a challenge at the abuse of women in the political system. The understanding was that women had been forced into social and political immorality in order for old Banda and his regime to stay in power. Cecilia Kadzamira symbolized the 'immorality' and 'immoralization' of the country's women who helped sustain the system.

In most cases the multi-party campaigners challenged the legitimacy of the oppressive regime by using the same songs and dances that contributed to its creation and entrenchment:

<i>Tifuna yani lero? Matipate!</i>	Who do we want now? Multi-party!
<i>Tifuna yani lero? Matipate!</i>	Who do we want now? Multi-party!
<i>Winanso? Winanso ai! Winanso ai!</i>	Nobody else! nobody else!
<i>Matipate!</i>	But multi-party!

Originally the song was "*tifuna yani lero? Ngwazi yekha!*" - "who do we want now? Ngwazi alone! In a similar manner, the president, once the 'Lion of Malawi', was now a hyena:

*Si uja m'nkati ndi mkango le,
Si uja m'nkati ndi mkango le, ndi fisi!*

The one you said is a lion,
The one you said is a lion, now is
a hyena!

The Malawi Congress Party, once a sophisticated political player, was now a loser:

*Si uja m'nkati njododa le,
Si uja m'nkati njododa le, yaluza!*

The one you said is a juggler
[skilful player]
The one you said is a juggler,
now is a loser!

7. IMAGERY, POETIC CONFIGURATIONS, AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Striking in these songs, chants and dances was the imagery, poetic configurations and the modes for the production and reception of the political discourse. For example, in Malawian folklore, a hyena is a powerless, unintelligent and cowardly animal that does not move during day time. It mostly lives on scavenging decaying flesh. In magic and sorcery, the hyena is a witch's mode of transport at night, and hence associated with evil, killings, death and bad omen. The above songs thus portrayed Dr Banda as a tired, weak and no longer intelligent politician. He could not face the emerging opposition. His MCP was a 'party of death and darkness', a world of evil, no longer a skilful political player, and thus a bad omen for the political future of the country. The change to democracy and multi-partyism was portrayed as 'redemption through death', in a typical biblical fashion. It was a transformation of the political soul from the world of evil and darkness to that of righteousness and light. A funeral song was adopted to reflect this transformation:

*A Ngwazi inu! A Ngwazi inu!
A Ngwazi inu! A Ngwazi inu!
m'manja mwanu tachoka!
A Ngwazi inu!
Tiri m'manja mwa Muluzi!
A Ngwazi inu!*

You Ngwazi! You Ngwazi!
You Ngwazi! You Ngwazi!
In your hands we have departed!
You Ngwazi!
We are in the hands of Muluzi!
You Ngwazi!

In its original context the song symbolizes the departure of a dead person's body and soul from the living world, 'on the way to God'. In its political context, it

was symbolic of the departure of the country from Dr Banda's control and the beginning of a 'new Malawi'. Not surprisingly, the voting symbol for the advocates of multi-party during the referendum was a hurricane lamp, a symbol of light shining through the world of darkness. As was the case during the consolidation of power by the Banda regime, there was a creative fusion of cultural, religious, and political symbols to create a 'new' political culture.

The imagery and poetic configurations were also reflected in the portrayal of the multi-party movement itself, and the institutions that carried it. Multi-party as a socio-political movement was a powerful force, forward looking and marching; and ready to destroy those that existed:

<i>Kodo! Kodo! Ayee</i>	Provoke! Provoke! (or beckon! Beckon!)
<i>Kodo! Kodo! Ayee</i>	You have provoked us!
<i>Wayikodola</i>	AFORD is coming there
<i>AFORD yikubwera konko</i>	You've provoked us
<i>Yikubwera ndi Chihana yomwe</i>	We are coming with Chihana as well
<i>Wayikodola!</i>	You have provoked us!

The song portrayed the emergence of the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), and its 'fearless' leader, Chakufwa Chihana, as a situation that had been 'provoked'. The mood suggested in the song is that of a 'fearless' and confident movement, not prepared to retreat, and ready for confrontation. The sense of power and confidence; and the mood for open challenge and confrontation were among the key characteristics of the multi-party movement. They were expressed in a lot of songs during and immediately after the referendum:

<i>Wapalamula iwe</i>	You've provoked it
<i>Wapalamula chitedze lero chizakuyabwa!</i>	You've provoked chitedze [wild itching beans]
<i>Wapalamula iwe</i>	you've provoked chitedze, will itch you
<i>Wapalamula chitedze lero chizakuyabwa!</i>	Multi-party is fire [sometimes power], will itch you
<i>Matipate ndi moto (or ndi pawa)</i>	We will itch you
<i>Tizakuyabwa!</i>	

Chitedze is a wild hardy bean that itches on contact. The feeling is likened to the 'persistent bother', pestering, and pain the multi-party movement would cause to the political regime of the time if it did not conform to the demand for change. The inevitability of change was further captured in one of the UDF slogans: *kaya wina afune, kaya asafune, zinthu zisinthu basi*, whether one likes it or not, things will change! After the first general elections the slogan changed to: *Zinthu zatani? Zasintha!* What has happened? Things have changed!

Banda's congress men and women did not lose control without fighting back. They were equally good at jibing at the opposition, and employing

imagery to discredit its motives. Notable in this case was the image of *bongololo*, a millipede. Jokingly they inquired: "*munali kuti inu a bongololo* - where were you, you millipedes?" In Malawian folklore a millipede is a spineless and cowardly creature that coils itself whenever it senses danger. The multi-party advocates were portrayed as cowardly creatures that could not face Dr Banda at his peak. They were now uncoiling, taking advantage of his old age. Viewed figuratively, the image of the *bongololo* was symbolic of the MCP's potential capacity to intimidate the opposition, if it wanted to. With a few detentions and various forms of harassment, the multi-party advocates would be intimidated and forced into recoiling.

To the opposition, the *bongololo* image was a humorous aside, a bawdy joke; but a true portrayal of their strategy. It was true that they had recoiled when Banda was at his peak. Whoever has watched a millipede will know that after recoiling twice or thrice, and sensing no real danger, the creature will forge ahead, with its head slightly bent down. The Malawi opposition did exactly that. After a few detentions, beatings, and verbal reprisals, they decided to forge ahead, and on 17th May, 1994, the Banda-centred repressive regime collapsed. The victory of the multi-party movement, according to the *UDF News* (24-30th May 1993, p. 6), the mouthpiece of the United Democratic Front (UDF), was a triumph of the (millipede) *bongololo* spirit:

Bongololo, your meekness is the foot-stool
of the body of democracy
Today the train of democracy
Has recoiled, has submitted
Because the criers for freedom
have been insulted
From the official platforms

Alas, the enemy has not known
That by recoiling itself,
The long body of the marchers
has forged with reason
and determination.

8. CONCLUSION

Though the *bongololo* spirit triumphed, it would be wrong to assume and conclude that popular art forms will cease to play an important role in the country's political culture. The general elections and change of government offered Malawians with an opportunity to create a new political culture. Unfortunately, songs, dances and other artistic performances that played an important role in the creation of the old oppressive culture continue to be party-

dominated, and may easily be manipulated to articulate the interests of the ruling party, and those of the self-interested elite and dominant groups. As was the case during Banda's presidency, wherever Bakili Muluzi, the current president, goes, there is always a coterie of women dressed in yellow, his party's official colour, dancing, ululating, and singing praises to him and his party. The songs are full of mockery, hate mongering, character assassination and condemnation of the previous regime and its key officials. No attempt is made to create a wide enough space for the airing of views and discussion of issues as a way of creating a new political culture. There is also no attempt to revive the national identity and cultural nationalism that began during the period of the fight for independence.

This is not surprising. The majority of the top officials in the ruling UDF were in Banda's party and government structures. They were party to the making and entrenchment of his dictatorship. There is therefore a legacy that accounts for continuity of the old practices. As much as the 'new' regime would want to depart from the past, there is a tendency to go backwards and to adopt the strategies of the previous one in order to consolidate power. As was the case before, those in power now are most likely to appropriate popular art forms to advance their agenda (see Crehan 1990). Elements of this are visible. Most of the songs previously sang for Banda are now sang for Bakili Muluzi, the state president, in the same manner, modes of expression, and political style, and generating almost the same discourse as was the case during Banda's consolidation of power. All these demonstrate how powerful the song-and-dance use is to the construction of the country's political culture. During the fight for independence from colonial rule, Malawians used these modes of expression to create a nationalist identity, and to mobilize themselves against colonial rule. After independence, the art forms were used to consolidate political power and to campaign against elements of opposition. The creation and entrenchment of the dictatorship also capitalized on the power of political songs, dances and other forms of artistic performances. To challenge the dictatorship, the advocates of multi-partyism mobilized their support by the same methods. Given the regionalistic and ethnic divisions manifested in the voting pattern in the 1994 elections (see Chirwa 1994a and 1994b; Kaspin 1995), there is need now, more than ever before, to use popular art forms to bridge the ethno-cultural differences in order to create a 'common' political culture. This, however, is not the case. Political songs and dances are, instead, used to justify the existence of the ruling and party and its leadership in a particularistic and individualistic fashion, creating a Muluzi-centred populist political culture.

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| 31/10/66 | The President Speaks at the New Capital City Site, Lilongwe. |
| 9/4/68 | The President's Speech at Kamwendo Village, Mchinji. |
| 25/6/68 | "The Fruits of Independence": Address to Parliament, Zomba. |

Dancing towards dictatorship

- 20/7/68 Speech by His Excellency the President Ngwazi Dr. Kamuzu Banda at Kasungu During the District 2nd Anniversary Celebrations of the Republic of Malawi.
- 21/7/68 Speech by the President Ngwazi Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda at Kasungu Boma.
- 23/7/68 Speech by His Excellency Ngwazi Dr Kamuzu Banda at the Opening of the Benga Road.
- 3/7/70 The President's Opening Speech at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation's (MBC's) New 100 Kw Transmitter at Nkhumbwe, Blantyre.
- 12/1/71 The President's Speech at Chileka Airport, Blantyre, on Departure for Singapore.
- 5/7/71 President Speaks at Mount Soche Hotel, Blantyre.
- 6/7/71 Address at the Republic Celebrations, Kamuzu Stadium, Blantyre.
- 4/4/75 Address to Wives of Civil Servants and Women Civil Servants, Lilongwe.