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Postcolonial archival fever and the musical archiving of African identity in selected paintings by Elias Jengo

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This article examines the way music is figured in selected paintings by Tanzania painter Elias Jengo. It also identifies and discusses musical figures in these paintings that are used to archive African or Tanzanian identity. Through these paintings Jengo participates in constructing and enacting African/Tanzanian identity by invoking and depositing Tanzanian cultural heritage. The article argues that the archiving of Africanness in most postcolonial cultural productions is an expression of a fever that torments African postcolonial souls, a fever caused by a fear of the possibility of cultural loss. The article also discusses Jengo's influence on his students and other young artists in Tanzania as an act of archiving. It argues that the future of Jengo's work lies not only in his influence on these young artists but also in his own ability and readiness to take plastic forms, as well as his students' eagerness to archive him in plastic forms.

Keywords: Elias Jengo; African archives; postcolonial fever; plasticity; painting in Tanzania; music of Tanzania

Makala hii inajadili namna ambavyo muziki umechorwa katika baadhi ya michoro ya Elias Jengo. Inabaini na inajadili alama za kimuziki zilivyotumika kuhifadhi utambulisho wa uafrika au utanzania katika kazi hizi. Kupitia michoro hii Jengo anashiriki katika kuumba na kuupaa uhai uafrika/utanzania kwa kufufua na kuhifadhi urithi wa utamaduni wa kitanzania. Makala hii inajenga hoja kwamba kazi ya kuhifadhi utambulisho wa uafrika katika kazi nyingi za sanaa za kiubadaukoloni ni kielelezo cha homa ya kisaikologia inayozisumbua nafsi za kiubadaukoloni za Afrika, homa inayosababishwa na uwoga wa kupotea kwa tamaduni za Afrika. Makala hii pia inajadili jinsi kazi za Jengo zinavyoendelezwa na wanafunzi wake na wasanii chipukizi hapa Tanzania kama njia mojawapo ya kuhifadhi urithi wa sanaa yake. Inajenga hoja kuwa kuendelea kwa urithi wa sanaa za Jengo katika siku zijazo unategemea sio tu jinsi wasanii chipukizi wanavyoendeleza kazi yake lakini hata uwezo na utayari wake mwenyewe wa kuhifadhika katika kazi za sanaa na shauku ya wanafunzi wake kumchora au kuchonga sanamu za mwalimu wao, yaani kumweka mwalimu wao katika umbo la ki-plastiki.

Keywords: Elias Jengo; hifadhi ya urithi wa kiafrika; homa ya ubadaukoloni; uplastiki; uchoraji Tanzania; muziki wa Tanzania

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1. Introduction

Born in Tanga in 1936, the Tanzanian painter Elias Jengo has contributed greatly in shaping the art scene in Tanzania, not only as a painter but also as an administrator, an art school teacher, and a

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university professor of art. In many ways his paintings can be said to articulate a certain African and Tanzanian identity. This article focuses specifically on three selected paintings by Jengo, namely 'Traditional Music', 'Sindimba Dancers' and 'A Dancer', and examines how these paintings articulate, enact, and preserve African identity through the use of musical figures. The article advances three contrapuntal lines of argument.

First, the article argues that Jengo's paintings, as it is the case with other works of art, create imaginary worlds and that the paintings transport their viewers away from their ordinary world into the imaginary worlds created by these paintings. In the imaginary worlds of the selected paintings by Jengo we encounter people who sing, dance, and play musical instruments. Although the figures in these paintings are (in our ordinary world) visual, spatial, and motionless figures, we imaginatively grasp them as sonic figures in motion when we view the imaginary musical worlds created by and through these paintings. This imaginative transformation is made possible partly through memory of musical events in our ordinary musical world. For me, a Tanzanian music lover who has experienced on many occasions hearing and watching traditional musical performances in their local contexts, and having allowed myself to be transported into these imaginary worlds, I see and hear the persons in these paintings play musical instruments, sing, and dance to the music they make. In other words, the sonic experience of these otherwise visual objects is made possible by the power of the paintings to transport their viewers into the imaginary musical worlds they create. Only after this 'journey' do the viewers hear and experience the imaginary musical sounds created by people in the paintings. For me this movement into the imaginary worlds, a movement necessary for the meaningful interpretation of these paintings, is made possible by what the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer calls the hermeneutic 'fusion of horizon' (2004, 2011). It is through my pre-understanding of the ordinary musical world outside these paintings, a musical world and musical encounters in my day-to-day ordinary life in Tanzania, that it is possible for me to interpret and understand the imaginary musical worlds created in and through these paintings. My prior encounters with Tanzanian music performances in different locations and contexts, as well as my pre-understanding of these ordinary music cultures in Tanzania create a 'positive prejudice' that serves as a springboard to my understanding of the imaginary musical worlds in these paintings. The paintings themselves are informed by these ordinary music cultures in Tanzania.

In the second strand of the argument, the article discusses how Jengo gives plastic form to the idea of Africanness or Tanzanianness by using the paintings of Tanzanian traditional music performances, musicians, and musical instruments. It argues that the evocation and use of these Tanzanian musical figures to archive and revitalize African/Tanzanian identities is an expression of what I call maladies of postcolonial souls. Postcolonial souls are tormented by this postcolonial archival fever because of a fear of cultural loss imposed by various forces of cultural transformation, mutation, and imperialism. The figures of traditional musical elements are frequently evoked by Tanzanians to enact their cultural national identity, in the face of the threat of cultural extinction. This threat is the result of their cultures' seeming domination or overshadowing by foreign cultures through colonialism, neo-colonialism, and the workings of current global media.

Third, the article argues that the continuation of Jengo's project of archiving African identity through the use of traditional musical figures is made possible through his influence on his students and other young artists in Tanzania. Hence, Jengo participates in archiving African traditional music and African identity not only through his own paintings but also by shaping an artistic sensibility and style among younger artists who creatively link their present (and possibly, future) artistic productions to Africa's musical past.

Let me emphasize that these three lines of argument run simultaneously (in a contrapuntal fashion) throughout the article. Intricate connections between the three lines of argument outlined

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above are examined in this article by a theoretical approach I develop by linking two theoretical concepts, namely 'archive' and 'plasticity'. In the next section I outline what I mean by these terms.

2. Theorizing archive and plasticity

In her article entitled 'Archiving Africanness in Sacred Song', Carol Muller (2002) draws on the now rather well known work of Jacques Derrida on archives (1995), and expands the meaning of the archive far beyond conventional understandings. She suggests that song compositions are 'mechanism for archival deposit, care, and retrieval' of both 'personal and collective heritage and history' (2002, 409). This way of understanding music as archive (and musicians as performing archivization) is not only a concern of music scholars. Musicians themselves also recognize the importance of songs in recording and keeping history alive, as the following song from West Africa illustrates:

> What would remain of great exploits if we did not have our musicians?
> With their rich memories and vivid songs they keep them alive for ever.
> What great deed would survive without those songs?
> …
> Not even the most glorious exploits would survive time
> without the undying devotion of singers and musicians.
> They immortalise them and keep them alive through the ages (Quoted in Barber 2007, 2).

With this understanding, Muller challenges the tendency (which is also common among ethnomusicologists) 'to locate the idea of the archive only in cultures with technologies of repetition, such as writing, sound recording, and film and to use the word "memory" when dealing with oral or pre-literate communities' (2002, 409). Focusing on selected music composers and arrangers, Muller argues that composers such as these have used their music compositions and arrangements as 'an archive, a space of safekeeping, into which they inserted Africanness as historical style and/or sound' (2002, 410). She identifies three functions that such a musical archive plays. First, such an archive functions as retention of cultural identity and hence it functions as a form of resistance to colonialism or the hegemonic status of Western music among postcolonial subjects. Second, the archive becomes a template or a prototype of past-ness in contemporary works. And third, such an archive acts as a springboard for present and future innovations (Muller 2002, 426).

Muller's theory of the archive is very useful in interpreting and understanding the selected paintings by Jengo as devices for retrieving history, preserving cultural heritage, and enacting social identities. However, it leaves a number of issues unaddressed. Specifically, it does not explain the transformation of musical figures in the paintings from being visual images to being sonic objects. Likewise, it is incapable of explaining the nature of transformation of mental ideas such as Africanness or Tanzanianness into visual and sonic beings. And more importantly, it does not take on board the role of human individuals (such as Jengo) in teaching and imparting their artistic styles to younger artists. To address these issues, it is imperative therefore to use the concept of 'archive' in tandem with French philosopher Catherine Malabou's concept of 'plasticity'.

Malabou gives a number of definitions of plasticity, some of which are relevant to our subject at hand. First, she defines plasticity in the ordinary sense in which plasticity refers to the capacity to take form. For example, art works such as architecture, drawing, painting, and sculpture are said to be plastic arts because they have the capacity to take form. Plastic arts, she writes, 'are those whose central aim is the articulation and development of forms' (2005, 8). Drawing from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Malabou also defines plasticity as the capacity to give

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form (i.e. to mould). In this sense an artist who creates plastic art is considered to be a plastic individual because this individual has the capacity to mould or to give form. Finally, she applies the concept of plasticity to individuals and regards a plastic individual to be a model or an exemplary individual (Malabou 2005, 9). Malabou links this third conception of plasticity with the second conception when she argues that plastic individuals acquire the value of models or exemplary individuals because of their acts of giving form to mental or spiritual entities or beings (2005, 10–11).

Malabou argues that a plastic individual has the power to mould the self. In other words, a plastic individual is a self-made person and that this self creation is attained through style: 'In the plastic individual, spirit makes itself visible not in a transparent way, but through *style*' (2005, 72). By style Malabou refers to the distinctive manner of being or acting of particular individuals. She goes on to argue that it is through one's distinctive style that a plastic individual has the 'power to transmit or imprint (*imprime*) what he expresses (*exprime*)' (2005, 72).

It is in these senses that I consider Elias Jengo to be a plastic individual. An aside on the temptation to interpret the concept of plasticity too ordinarily. Sometimes the term plastic is used to denote something fake or not genuine. In present-day Tanzania, the concept may be associated with Chinese-made objects (such as flowers and trees) that have flooded the local markets and are taking the place of real organic flowers and trees in people's homes and offices. This is not the kind of plasticity referred to when I use Malabou's concept of plasticity. On the contrary, I consider Jengo to be a plastic individual first because he uses musical figures in his paintings and hence he transforms and gives music (which is a sonic object) a plastic existence. Second, I consider Jengo to be a plastic individual because of his ability to mould and transform spiritual ideas such as identity, Africanness, or nationality into visible and/or tangible figures. Third, I consider him to be a plastic individual because of his being a model or an exemplary individual who transmits or imprints his style on his students and other art lovers. And in all these three senses, I find it useful to link the concept of plasticity with the concept of archive and consider Jengo to be at once an archivist and a plastic individual.

The act of painting musical figures, an act of transforming temporal sonic art (music) into a spatial visual art, is not only an act of giving a plastic form to musical sounds but also an act of archiving musical events. The paintings become historical records or a documentation of musical events and moments that would otherwise be forgotten with the lapse of time. Second, through these paintings of Tanzanian traditional musical figures Jengo gives a plastic form to the mental ideas of Africanness or Tanzanianness and makes it possible for people to visually experience the ideas in their plastic form. Hence the paintings archive not only traditional music, but also the mental constructs of African/Tanzanian identities. Finally, Jengo's role as a model or an exemplary individual from whom many people have learnt their art qualifies him to be a plastic individual in the third sense described in Malabou's theory. At the same time, this kind of plasticity is also an act of archiving and keeping alive a style of art and its meanings in other creative human beings, who can emulate it at present or in the future.

3. Interpreting musical figures and the archiving of Africanness in Jengo's paintings

The first painting 'Traditional Music' is dated 1964 (Figure 1). In this painting there are four musicians. On the right side of the painting a drummer sits on a wooden stool and plays his long glass-shaped drum with his bare hands. The drum is made of a log which is covered with an animal skin on one side. It is commonly known as a *msondo*. The drum player places the drum between his legs and beats it with his bare hands. This kind of drum is found in many regions in Tanzania including The Coast and Dar es Salaam regions, Ruvuma, Mtwara, Lindi, and Morogoro. In addition to playing a drum, the mouth of the drummer in the painting seems to be open.



Figure 1. A Painting by Elias Jengo titled "Traditional Music" (1964).

Perhaps he is also singing, rhyming, or speaking aloud to communicate something to other musicians. A second drummer on the left plays a relatively smaller drum and a marimba. He holds two mallets in his hands. Perhaps he uses the same mallets to play both the drum and the marimba. Then there is a man who stands near the centre of the painting. He holds an animal horn with both hands and blows it. Finally, behind the first drum player on the right side of the painting stands a woman who holds and plays two *manyanga* (shakers), each in one hand. She bends her head slightly towards her right shoulder and her right hand is lifted a little higher than her left hand. All four musicians seem to be deeply engaged in the music making process. Their eyes seem to be half closed. Perhaps this is their way of contemplating and enjoying the musical sounds they make and the process of making music together.

In the second painting, dated 1988 and titled 'Sindimba Dancers', we see three musicians: a drum player and two dancers (Figure 2). The drum player kneels down on his left knee. There are three drums in front of him. One of these drums is relatively thinner and taller than the other two and it is this one that at this particular moment both hands seem to be playing, or about to play. The left hand is lifted a little bit higher than the right hand, suggesting that the two hands play the drum in alternation. The second person just behind the drummer is a male dancer. In his left hand he is carrying something that looks like *manyanga* (shakers) or a club. The third person in this painting is a female dancer who stands to the right of the scene. She seems to be in the act of dancing. Her legs are positioned apart from each other. Hence, she is able to bend forward slightly. We should also note the use of *kibwebwe*, a small cloth wrapped around the waist of a dancer. The use of *kibwebwe* facilitates and makes visible the waist wriggling movement which is typically part of sindimba dance. The two dancers are slightly turned towards the centre of the painting. The background is colourfully painted with abstract images. Hence, this painting combines both realist painting (of the three musicians and their instruments) and abstract painting of the images in the background. Perhaps these abstract images can be interpreted as representing the unidentified persons in the audience. Alternatively, these images may be representing a beautiful place where this dance takes place. Although sindimba dance is originally associated with initiation ceremonies among the wazaramo, it is currently performed by dance groups throughout

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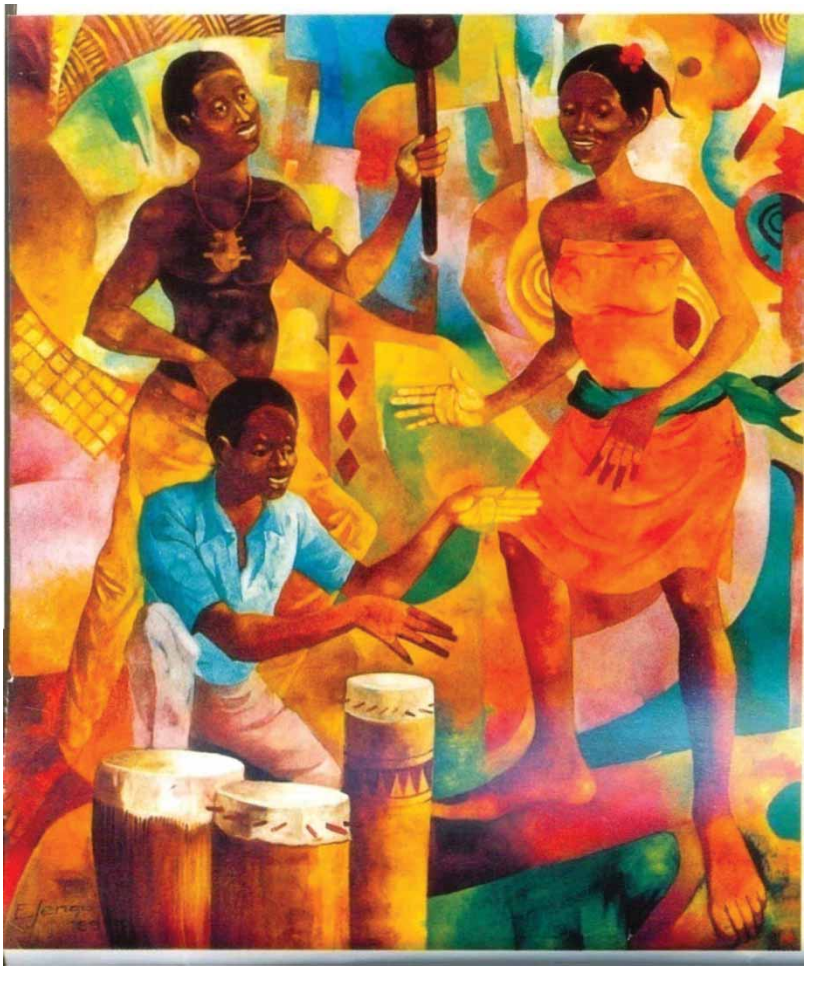


Figure 2. A Painting by Elias Jengo titled "Sindimba Dancers" (1988).

Tanzania. The reason for the spread of sindimba and other indigenous dances in Tanzania is explained in a section below, in relation to the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Youth in 1962.

Finally, the third painting dated 2006 is titled 'A Dancer' (Figure 3). In this painting a female dancer, perhaps the one directly depicted by the title of the painting, caries an animal tail in her right hand which is lifted up. Like the female dancer in the previous painting, her waist is wrapped with a *kibwebwe.* She also wears *njuga* (iron bells or jingles) around her legs and seems to be in the act of dancing. The *njuga*, and perhaps the stamping of her feet on ground during the dance, make her not only a dancer but also an instrumentalist. Both *njuga* and her feet stamping transform her dance into a sonic object and make her audience perceive her dance movements not only visually but also aurally. For the dancer herself, the aim to produce particular sounds on these embodied instruments and the aim to relate her sounds with those created by a drummer, have an impact on her dance movements themselves. The second musician in this painting is a male drummer. We see him playing two types of drums. One drum is covered with skin only on one end while the other is covered on both ends. His hands are crossed such that the right hand

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Figure 3. A Painting by Elias Jengo titled "A Dancer" (2006).

plays the drum on his left, and left hand plays the drum on his right. For viewers of the painting, the dance movements and the musical sounds from the instruments played by both musicians are evoked in our imagination. As pointed out earlier, only imagination enables us to navigate and perceive the interaction between the visual and aural aesthetics of the painting.

I want to note that there is a kind of alienation of the contexts of the musical performance that we see in these paintings because the paintings are always framed and we can only see that which appears within the paintings' frames. We the viewers cannot tell whether the playing of drums, the singing, and dancing that we see in these paintings are part of a particular festival, religious ritual, initiation ceremony or stage performance. I posit that this contextual alienation does not stop viewers from understanding and experiencing the musical performance and the musical figures portrayed in these paintings holistically. Our pre-understanding of the music culture in our ordinary musical worlds enables us, with the aid of the imagination and speculation, to see beyond the limits of the frames. Likewise, although the images are limited in terms of time, i.e. only a single photograph-like moment is captured in the paintings, through imagination and speculation we can see actions and hear the sounds made beyond this moment. It is imagination that allows us to blur, erase, or pass over the spatio-temporal borders of the paintings in question. A number of times I have used the word 'perhaps' in my description of the paintings above, and this serves to illustrate this going-beyond the spatio-temporal boundaries of the paintings. The idea of boundaries or frames imposed by the paintings can also be extended to the selectiveness of the musical elements that are used as figures of identity. In the three paintings above only particular drums, dancers, dances such as sindimba dance, props, and costumes are evoked and used.

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It is clear how the archiving of identity through these paintings gives the mental ideas such as Africanness and Tanzanianness a new existence. This happens through the paintings which make it possible for people to see and experience identities through their encounter with these plastic figures. These paintings participate in inculcating a sense of pride among Africans in their own culture. It is also worth noting that Jengo is not a lone voice in this endeavour. Through these works he is joining a chorus of other nationalist artists, who through their literary art works (e.g. poems, novels, short stories, and plays), sonic artworks (e.g. songs and instrumental music) or plastic art works (e.g. paintings, sculptures, architecture) similarly try to inculcate among Africans a sense of pride in their own cultures. As the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu writes, they try to 'restore to Africans their confidence in their own culture' (1992, 60, see also Sanga 2008).

The speech of the first president of Tanzania *Mwalimu* Julius Nyerere, when he inaugurated a newly formed Ministry of Culture and Youth in 1962 with the aim of revitalizing Tanzanian culture and resurrecting Tanzanians' pride in their own culture, is one of the early examples of revitalizing Tanzanian traditional music. Nyerere writes:

> The major change I have made is to get up an entirely new Ministry: the Ministry of National Culture and Youth. I have done this because I believe that culture is the essence and the spirit of any nation. A nation which lacks its own culture is no more than a collection of people without the spirit which makes them a nation. Of the crime of colonialism there is none worse than the attempt to make us believe we had no indigenous culture of our own; or that what we did have was worthless – something of which we should be ashamed, instead of a source of pride … When we were at school we were taught to sing the songs of the European. How many of us were taught the songs of the Wanyamwezi or of the Wahehe? Many of us learnt … to dance the 'waltz' and the 'foxtrot'. But how many of us can dance, have even heard of the *Gombe, Sugu, the Mangala, ... Kiduo or Lele Mama*? … Most of us can play the guitar, the piano, or other European musical instruments. How many Africans in Tanganyika, particularly among the educated, can play the African drums? How many can play the *Nanga*, or the *Marimba*, the *Kilanzi*, *Ligambo*, or the *Imangala*? … So I have set up this new Ministry to help us regain our pride in our own culture. So I want it to seek out the best of the traditions and customs and of all the tribes and make them part of our national culture (Nyerere, "President's Inaugural Address", quoted in Ministry of National Culture and Youth 1976, 3).

Nyerere advocates the revitalization of Tanzanian culture by singing Tanzanian songs, dancing to various Tanzanian dances, and playing Tanzanian musical instruments. He specifically mentions a number of dances and musical instruments of different ethnic groups in Tanzania including the drums or *ngoma*, the musical instruments that can be used in contemporary music making to vitalize Tanzanian culture. The fear of the loss of Tanzanian traditional cultural practices seems to propel Nyerere's laments that colonialism has imposed Western music at the expense of indigenous music. This 'will to remember' (Mudimbe 1993, 109), the urge to preserve figures of cultural identity from a cultural past, is motivated primarily by the threat of forgetfulness, death, or destruction. This is the case especially when indigenous cultures in question are subjected to a number of forces of cultural transformation, mutation and the imposition of new orders (Muller 2002, 412). In Derrida's words, it is this fear that generates 'archive fever'. As he writes:

> There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression. Above all, and this is the most serious, beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive (Derrida 1995, 19).

Nyerere's speech set up a project of archiving traditional musical practices as a national agenda. This was taken up and carried out by a number of cultural troupes established throughout Tanzania from primary and secondary schools, and from teachers and art colleges to university art departments (Sanga 2013, 178–179). At one level, we may understand Jengo's paintings as a visual representation of this Tanzanian cultural scene, inaugurated and encouraged by Nyerere's

speech. At another level, these paintings imaginatively create the cultural troupes that perform Tanzanian traditional music and dance which Nyerere dreamed of in 1962.

4. Jengo, a teacher and a model: symbolic power of the archivist and a plastic individual

In this section, I would like to show how Jengo as a plastic individual plays the role of an archivist of artistic styles and of a shared cultural heritage by serving as a model and an exemplary individual from whom younger artists and his students learn their art. For more than 50 years, that is, from 1957 when he began teaching at Mringa Middle School to the present, Jengo has taught art in a number of schools and colleges in Tanzania. In addition, Jengo's influence on other artists in Tanzania has been made possible through his administrative work as a chairperson of the Audio-Visual Institute Board of Directors (1987–1993) and a chairperson of BASATA (*Baraza la Sanaa la Taifa*, i.e. the National Arts Council) of Tanzania (1993–1997), and most recently as a president of the Tanzania Cultural Society (1997–2011).

In fact, on various occasions Jengo himself has highlighted his role as a model for young artists in Tanzania. He says, for example:

> My contribution to society is that I have been serious and very constant in my work from my times as a student at the University and up to now. I would like to serve as a model for young Tanzanians, as the only professor in painting, as a role model for youngsters who do not know the value of art (Quoted in Goscinny 2003, 55).

Jengo's style of using musical figures in his paintings has influenced (and perhaps continues to influence) many students of art in Tanzania. Here two works of art by Jengo's students are provided to illustrate the point.

The first case in point is a painting by Emmanuel Ishengoma who, having completed his first degree in fine art at Makerere University (Uganda), became an MA student in fine art at the University of Dar es Salaam during the years 2010–2012. During this time he took some of Jengo's courses, including one on mural painting. Jengo was also his supervisor for his MA dissertation project titled: 'Authenticity through Informal Art Education in Contemporary African Visual Arts: The Official Artists' Viewpoint'. The painting reproduced here (Figure 4), which is not titled, was one of several small (5 × 8 inches) paintings Ishengoma made during this time, but which were not part of his coursework. In this painting there are five drums and two musicians who seem to be in the act of playing these drums with their bare hands. The two drum players seem to be playing together, although they look in two different directions. Although the background is somehow abstractly painted one can see a rough representation of the map of Tanzania in yellow and green colours. We can also see a roughly painted small map of Africa on the big drum in the middle of the painting. Perhaps these maps serve to locate and identify the musical instruments and the musicians within the country and continent whose maps are presented.

The use of music figures in plastic artworks is also evident in an artwork by Dinnah Enock, namely the statue of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts (FPA) at the University of Dar es Salaam. Dinnah Enock (now a lecturer in the department) made a small model for this sculpture when she was a third-year student in fine art in the same department in the year 2000. As she pointed out in her personal communication with the author, the sculpture was made in order to represent visually various programmes, courses, and activities that the department or individual staff members and students of the department undertake. In 2002 she built the actual FPA statue in front of the department's building. As the figure shows (Figure 5), the statue depicts a female dancer with bare feet seated on a drum. Her chest is wrapped in a cloth as is usually done by indigenous dancers in most music cultures in Tanzania. The dancer carries in her right

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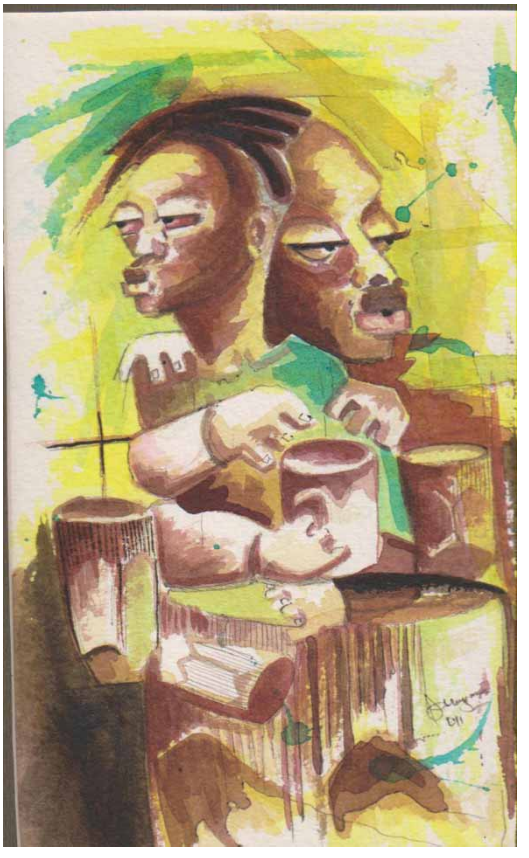


Figure 4. An Untitled Painting by Emmanuel Ishengoma (2011).

hand a letter F, her head is moulded in the shape of P and in her left hand, which is lifted up, she carries a letter A. Together these letters spell FPA which is an acronym for the Department of Fine and Performing Arts. The sculpture represents not only a drum, an instrument, but also dance in general. Together with the help of the acronym FPA, the sculpture serves to represent the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, an institution that cultivates and archives Tanzanian or African arts. The department itself is therefore a symbol of Tanzanians' efforts to archive Tanzanian culture.

As a model or an exemplary individual, Jengo sets up an artistic style and a norm of figuring Tanzanian music and musical instruments. This style and norm is creatively adopted by his students. We may understand this setting up of a norm through what Derrida calls a nomological principal of the archive (Derrida 1995, 12). In this view, Jengo as an archivist sets up the 'law' and makes other people conform to it. The term law here is not meant to pollute the idea of plasticity. The setting up and the enforcement of the law in the practice of plasticity is not done through coercion or compulsion but through 'symbolic power' (Bourdieu 1991, 163–170). Symbolic power refers to a person's ability to shape other people's actions, behaviour, or thoughts because of one's social position. In this sense symbolic power relies on one's possession of what Bourdieu calls symbolic capital referring to things like level of education, social class, age, rank, or title. According to Bourdieu, symbolic power is normally not recognized as power because it does not operate through force and coercion although it 'enables one to

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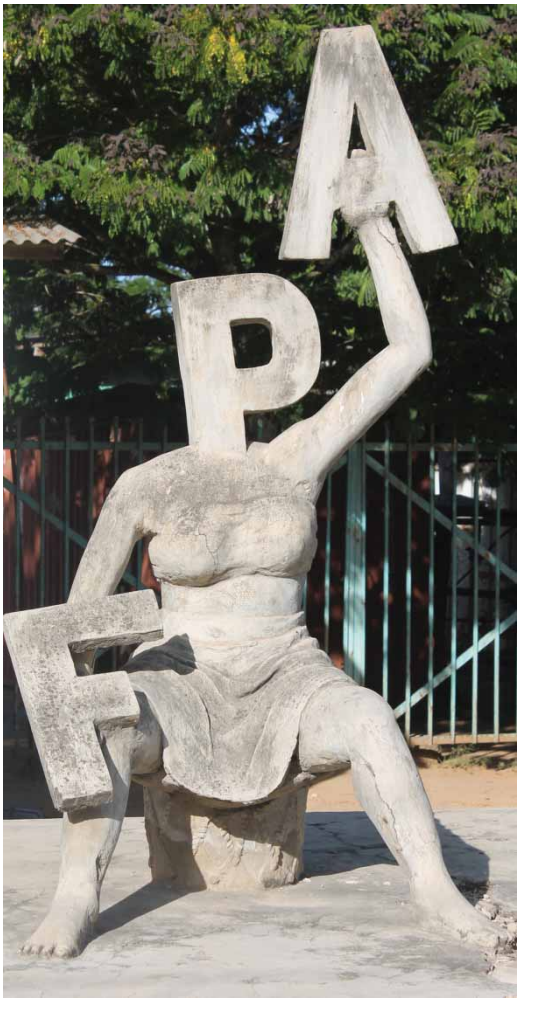


Figure 5. A Sculpture named "FPA Statue" by Dinnah Enock (2002). Photograph by Richard Ndunguru.

obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force', be it physical, economic, or otherwise (Bourdieu 1991, 169, 170).

Bourdieu also points out that although symbolic power is a structuring force it is also a structured power. I find this understanding of symbolic power illuminating in understanding Jengo's role in shaping artistic sensibility and trends, especially among Jengo's students. Because of his symbolic power, including his relatively advanced age and professorial status, Jengo's students and other people respect what he practices. It is through the symbolic power of plastic individuals such as Jengo and Nyerere that musical figures have attained and maintained their status as 'elevated' or 'authorized' figures in Tanzania. Symbolic power, Bourdieu writes, 'is the means by which a discourse declares itself to be authorized, invested, by virtue of its conformity, with the authority of a body of people especially mandated to exercise a kind of conceptual magistrature' (Bourdieu 1991, 152).

The efficacy of the symbolic power of plastic individuals can partly be attributed to a desire among students and other young artists to be appreciated and recognized by their models as artists

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who matter. In her theorization of the intersubjective dimension of psychic power, Judith Butler argues that a subject internalizes a particular social norm because one seeks to be recognized by the authorities (people with symbolic power) and it is this recognition that gives the subject 'social existence' (Butler 1997, 20–21). In the same way, the wide circulation of a particular style, be it a musical style, a style of philosophical writing, or a style of using musical figures, is enhanced by an attempt on the part of young artists to be recognized, especially by the authorized individuals, those who possess symbolic power. This is most obvious in the professor-students relationship. However, let me hasten to deconstruct the myth that plastic individuals (the models), to the extent that they initiate a style and others imitate from them, are therefore free individuals. This goes back to what one might call a Hegelian myth. Referring to Greek figures such as Pericles, Phidias, Plato, Sophocles, and Socrates, among others, as plastic individuals, Hegel writes: 'They are great and free, grown independently on the soil of their own inherently substantial personality, self-made, and developing into what they (essentially) were made and wanted to be' (Hegel 1975, 719, also quoted in Malabou 2005, 9). To be sure, while it is true that these plastic individuals act as models and therefore influence other people, they too are themselves shaped or influenced by other people, by widely circulating ideas and by socio-cultural and politico-economic conditions of their time and place. This is especially true in regard to the use of musical figures as figures of African identity. The use of traditional musical figures as a figure or emblem of African identity was already in circulation in many spheres of cultural production in Tanzania and greater Africa even before 1961 when Tanganyika (now Tanzania) attained its independence from the British.

It is worth pointing out that the young artists for whom Jengo is a model are not passive imitators of their master's styles. The voice of their master is always in dialogue with their own creativity and imagination. This is a point that should be made also with regard to most artistic uses of motives, themes, or styles from traditional cultures. The archived voice from the past does not come into the future as the only voice and in isolation from the new context. This voice always interacts or enters into conversation with other voices it finds in the new context. Thus I think Mudimbe is right when he argues that cultural or artistic preservation 'does not exclude revision and re-interpretation of canons' (1993, 109). In this sense, the power (*nomos*) of the archive, in Derrida's sense mentioned above, is not without limits. This is because cultural archivists or 'specialists of memory', as Mudimbe calls them, do not only 'faithfully obey their vocation and responsibility: to transmit a heritage, record its obsessions and preserve its past', but they also 'create, invent, and transform' this heritage (Mudimbe 1993, 109). For this reason, I find compelling and useful Mudimbe's concept of *reprendre* which he uses to reflect on artistic archiving practices in Africa. As he writes:

> The word *reprendre* – strangely difficult to translate – I intend as an image of the contemporary activity of African art. I mean it first in the sense of taking up an interrupted tradition, not out of desire for purity, which would testify only to the imaginations of dead ancestors, but in a way that reflects the conditions of today. Second, *reprendre* suggests a methodical assessment, the artist's labor beginning, in effect, with the evaluation of the tools, means, and projects of art within a social context transformed by colonialism and by later currents, influences, and fashions from abroad. Finally, *reprendre* implies a pause, a meditation, a query on the meaning of the two preceding exercises (Mudimbe 1994, 154).

Third, Jengo as a plastic individual himself shows the capacity to receive form or to take form. For this reason, thanks to the interaction with the work of his students, Jengo himself is a plastic individual. He has been represented in drawing, painting, and sculptural forms. Hence, he has become a plastic figure of African identity. Here two of those works are cited as examples. The first is a painting by William Chishosha and dated 2003 (Figure 6). In 2003 Chishosha was a third (final) year undergraduate student majoring in fine art. At the time of writing this article Chishosha is an

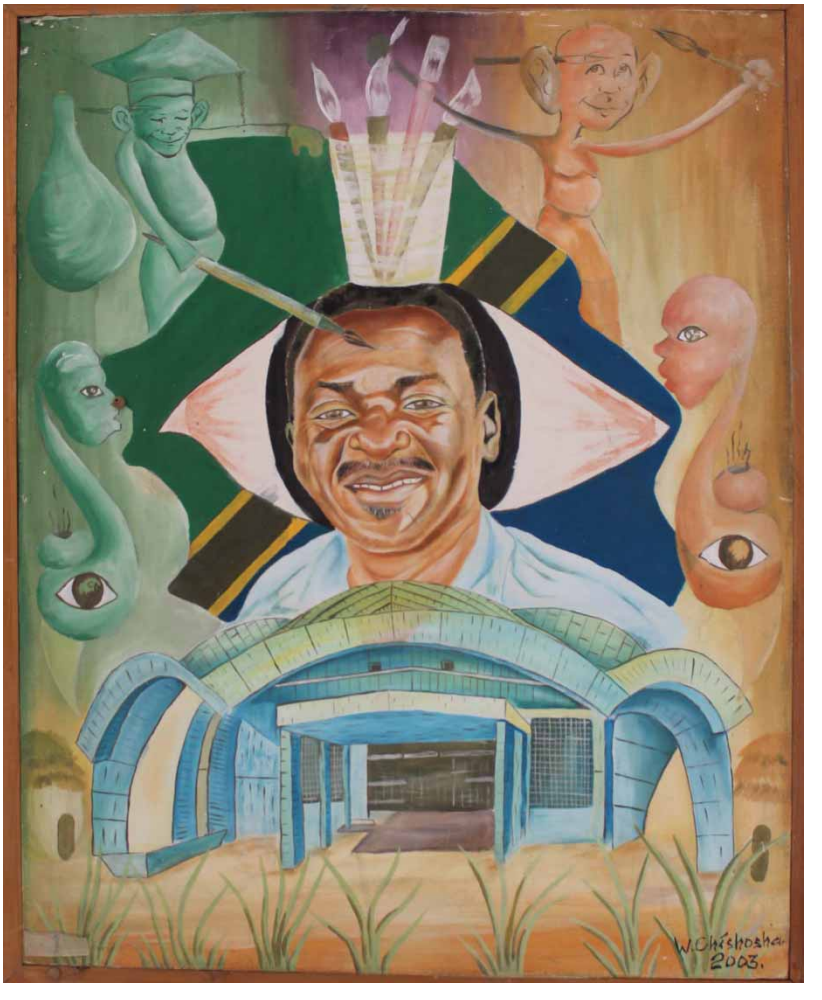


Figure 6. A Painting of Elias Jengo by William Chishosha (2003). Photograph by Steven Ndibalema.

MA student in fine art at the same university. The painting realistically (i.e. in a near photographic manner) depicts Professor Jengo at the University of Dar es Salaam. Jengo is surrounded by abstract figures representing four other persons. Perhaps these are his art students at the University of Dar es Salaam. Two of these figures carry brushes in their hands and seem to be enjoying a painting class. Behind the figure of Jengo there is a map of Tanzania. All the visible parts of this map are decorated with the colours of the Tanzanian flag, which include the blue on the low part, the green on the top part, and the diagonal yellow and black strips in the middle of the painting. I think both the map and flag are important symbols of Tanzanian identity. There is also a figure of the famous Nkrumah Hall just below the figure of Jengo himself that evokes Pan African identity. Kwame Nkrumah led the struggles for Ghanaian independence and he became the first president of Ghana. He was one of the great pioneers of the Pan African movement which aimed at freeing Africans in Africa and in the Diaspora from the ills of colonialism and racial segregation. Hence, the main lecture and conference hall at the University of Dar es Salaam, the first and the main public university in Tanzania, is named after him. The building is also used on a Tanzanian 500 shilling note. It is this building, the building that reminds us

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Figure 7. A Sculpture of Elias Jengo by Juma Swafi (2010), Photograph by Steven Ndibalema.

of the history of Pan Africanism, which Chishosha captures in this painting. This painting transforms Jengo, the professor and artist, into a plastic form in which he is rhizomatically linked to both Tanzanian and Pan African identity.

The second artwork is a cement sculpture of Elias Jengo by Juma Swafi (Figure 7). Swafi made this sculpture in 2010 as part of his practical projects for his MA degree in fine art for which he was studying in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at the University of Dar es Salaam. Unlike the first artwork, the sole focus of this sculpture is on the person himself and hence the viewer is deprived of knowledge that will clarify the context surrounding the person. In both artworks, however, Jengo (the plastic archivist) himself is being archived in plastic forms. Swafi's interest in archiving his teacher is also evident in his choice of topic for his MA dissertation, which focused on the life and work of Elias Jengo (Swafi 2010).

5. Conclusion

The archiving of Africanness is a kind of fever that torments African postcolonial souls. The main force behind this fever is the fear caused by imperial cultural relations, globalization, and global media forces. As an escape from this fear, African postcolonial souls seek to reconnect with their continent's past. I have argued that the archiving of African identity takes place through the use of selected musical figures. Jengo's work is particularly interesting in this process of archiving African identity because it navigates and makes us shuttle between the visual and sonic realms. In the three selected paintings, Jengo presents musicians and dancers at work, musical instruments, and the music they make in visual form. In so doing he gives visual embodiment to the sonic existents. Finally, the future of Jengo's work and zeal to archive the traditional music of Tanzania through his paintings resides in his influence on young artists in Tanzania, his own ability to take plastic forms, and the zeal among his students to archive him in plastic forms.

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