

Oxford Nativity

The Oxford Nativity is the work of Thomas Mpira, who has been active at Kungoni Centre since the early 1980's. He is among the most skilled of the current generation of carvers.

Thomas Mpira seeks to inculturate the Gospel account of the Nativity according to the lived reality of Mua Mission. He represents the 'kings' as chiefs of the three tribes that converge in the area (Chewa, Ngoni and Yao) and the 'shepherds' as their people, men and women, who bring the fruit of their gardens and their labour in animal husbandry and fishing to the newborn Christ. All figures are depicted as Malawian.

The Oxford Nativity comprises twenty-seven pieces, of which twenty-six figures are each carved from a different tree local to Mua Mission. As such, it may also be considered a point of reference to understand the qualities of the timbers in which the artists of Kungoni Centre work.

The Oxford Nativity is the companion of a similar Nativity that has remained in Malawi. It is the first of this ambition and extent to have found a home 'beyond the Lake'.

Further information on Kungoni Centre is available at <<http://www.kungoni.org/>>. The Kungoni Art Project has a website at <<http://www.kapmalawi.org/>>.

HOLY FAMILY – Banja loyera



1 YOSEFE

BULUGAMA
Bluegum

Standing
46 cm.



2 MALIYA

KAYETSIYETSI

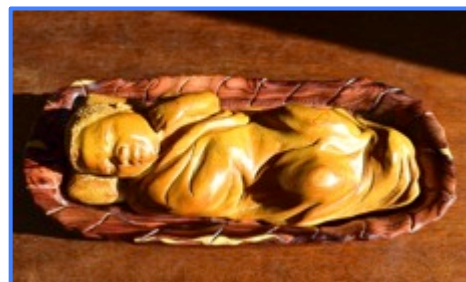
Kneeling
31 cm.



3 YESU

MAMINA APUSI

Recumbent
6 cm.



4 [CRIB]

MKULANSINGA
Red Ebony

7 cm.



CHIEFS – Mafumu

*Chiefs of the Chewa, Ngoni and Yao peoples
present offerings that befit their royal status.*



5 CHEWA

MSENJERE

STOOL

Standing
46 cm.

*The iron stool is a symbol of
royalty for the kalonga
kings of the Phiri clan of the
Chewa.*



6 NGONI

MEDICINE
Mankhwala

The Ngoni of Malawi represent the northernmost extent of the Nguni diaspora, and look to South Africa for their origin.

NGONGOMWA

Standing
51 cm.



7 YAO

IVORY
Mnyanga

The Yao chief wears an mzuli (skullcap), indicating that he is a Muslim.

TSANYA
Mopane

Standing
45 cm.



PEOPLE – Men (Azibambo)

Twelve Azibambo present their offerings.



8 BANANAS
Ntochi

MTANGATANGA

Standing
44 cm.



9 CABBAGE
Kabichi

MDIMA
Standing
44 cm.



10 CASSAVA
Chinangwa

MVULE
Kneeling
32 cm.



11 CHICKEN
Nkhuku

MKALATI

Standing
43 cm.



12 EGGPLANT

MKOLONGONJO
Leadwood

Standing
39 cm.



13 FISH
Nsomba

PHINGO
African Ebony

Standing
45 cm.



14 GOAT
Mbuzi

MTUMBU

Standing
45 cm.



15 MAIZE
Chimanga

TSAMBA
Standing
45 cm.



16 MANGOES

MUWANGA
Standing
45 cm.



17 MAT
Mkeka

MWAYA
Elephant Orange

Standing
46 cm.



18 PUMPKIN
Dzungu

MTOWO
Snot Apple

Standing
45 cm.



19 SHEEP
Nkhosa

MGWENYA

Standing
44 cm.



PEOPLE – Women (Azimayi)

Three Azimayi present their offerings.

The two kneeling Azimayi bow their heads and extend their arms in a characteristic gesture of ulemu (respect).

The standing Amayi akululutira (ululates) to celebrate the birth of Christ.



20 FLOUR
Ufa

MBAWA
African Mahogany

Kneeling
33 cm.



21 NSIMA

*Nsima (maize porridge)
is the staple food of
Malawi.*

MLOMBWA
Bloodwood /
African Teak

Kneeling
32 cm.



22 POTATOES
Mbatata

MPASA
Standing
49 cm.



ANIMALS



23 COW
Ng'ombe

MTONDO
Wild Mango
Standing
21 cm.



24 DONKEY

MVUNGUTI
Sausage Tree

Standing
26 cm.



25 GOAT
Mbuzi

MALAINA
Gmelina / White Teak

Sitting
15 cm.



26 SHEEP
Nkhosa

SENDELERA
Toon Tree

Standing
12 cm.



SHELTER – Khola

A khola for the Oxford Nativity, surmounted by the Star of Bethlehem and carved in many timbers, awaits transport from Malawi.

Here Thomas Mpira works on a khola for an earlier Nativity.



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