

REVIEWS

MUSIQUE DAN: La musique dans la pensée et la vie sociale d'une société africaine, by Hugo Zemp, Cahiers de l'Homme, Nouvelle Serie XI, Paris, Mouton, 1971. pp. 320, illus., maps, tables, song texts, glossary, bibliography and discography.

In this magnificent, scholarly book, the author achieves precisely what he set out to do: he gives a comprehensive account of some of the ways in which music and ideas about music pervade the thought and social life of the Dan, of whom about 220 000 live in the mountains of Western Ivory Coast, and another 100 000 in the adjoining parts of Liberia. Hugo Zemp has already published two long-playing records of Dan music, so that his account of its social context can be related to its sounds, which he proposes to analyse in due course.

His study of the socio-cultural context of the music follows the tradition of Nketia's 'Drumming in Akan Communities of Ghana' and Tracey's 'Chopi Musicians', and has been influenced by the theoretical framework proposed by Alan Merriam in 'The Anthropology of Music'. It assumes, quite rightly, that before we can analyse the structures of tones in motion, we must try to understand their meaning in the lives of the men and women who organize them and respond to them as music. This book is not just an optional programme note that may or may not accompany an experience of the musical sounds: it is an essential prelude to any attempt to feel and hear the music as do the Dan.

Although parts of the author's analysis are based on the study of museum collections and ethnographic records, most of his material was collected during twenty-two months' fieldwork in Dan country between 1961 and 1967. Enquiries were made in French through interpreters, but since the author made a scientific study of Dan and recorded much verbal information on tape for subsequent analysis, he need not be faulted for not adopting the more normal anthropological procedure of working in the indigenous language.

The book is a comprehensive survey that includes evidence of past as well as present practices. The first part contains a careful description of all the musical instruments made and used by the Dan and is organized according to the Sachs-Hornbostel classification into idiophones, membranophones, cordophones and aerophones. As a former student of André Schaeffner, whose assistance the author acknowledges, I was sorry that he did not use Schaeffner's classification, which follows more strictly the scientific criterion of the nature of the vibrating material. A classification which resorts to distinctions on the basis of the playing method inevitably introduces cultural factors; and if we are going to do this, we might as well adopt the folk classification, which, in the case of the Dan, is based on playing methods (p. 82): instruments are either 'blown' or 'struck'.

In Part 2, the author discusses Dan concepts of music, which are often expressed in words and may also be inferred from behaviour. There is no general term for music, and Dr. Zemp raises the important issue that the funeral laments that the musicologist would call music are not regarded as such by the Dan (pp. 71 and 81). There would be more general agreement between the Dan and the musicologist about their category of praises which, like the Zulu *izibongo* discussed by Rycroft, are not music, although they can be accompanied by a musical instrument. For the Dan, the crucial criterion of music, vocal or instrumental, is that it has a regular metre to which people can dance. In fact, the word *ta* signifies both song, instrumental music and dance. Differences in vocal timbre and pitch are distinguished, and the speech-tones of the language influence the structure of melodies (p. 77 and p. 89). I find the orthography used by the author and the linguist, Thomas Bearth, rather irritating to read, with its numbered speech-tones. But I appreciate his wish to distinguish the five-tone dialect of Santa from the Western dialects, whose three speech-tones can be more elegantly represented by the 'accents' more widely used for African languages. Dan musical instruments are not associated with elaborate sexual and cosmogonic symbolism, as has been reported for the Dogon, and the use of anthropomorphic terms is essentially practical, in much the same way that one talks of the legs of a piano. Nor do the Dan have a drum language comparable to that of their neighbours (pp. 86-92).

A chapter on Dan myths about the origins of musical instruments is followed by a discussion of the place of music in the non-human world of animals, spirits, souls of the dead, sorcerers, masks, and God, who, like chiefs, does not sing or dance (pp. 150 and 246). In the next chapter, the author describes how music produces a state of euphoria in all who participate, by creating a special world of time that transcends the uniformity of daily routines, and how it is considered to transmit energy to man. More specifically, the bow-harp and the musical bow were aids to success in hunting. Conversely, there are a number of aids to musicianship that are cited in chapter 9, such as medicines to counteract fatigue, and supernatural forces that can inspire musicians to play especially well.

The third part of the book considers the social context of the music. Chapter 10 describes the functions of music and musicians, past and present; chapter 11, the social status and the role of the musician; chapter 12, music in the life cycle; chapter 13, the process of musical education. Although this part contains valuable and interesting information, I found it the least satisfactory in presentation. It seemed

to me that the chapter on the functions of music and musicians would have been better placed *after* a discussion of music in the life cycle, which in turn should have been integrated with the chapter on musical education. There is also some uncertainty about the author's distinction between the uses and functions of music and Dan society. In particular, it is not always clear to what extent the nine different categories of musicians cited by the author in chapter 10 correspond with the folk taxonomy; whether or not a single musician may perform in more than one capacity; whether they are recruited as musicians *from* or *for* each group and, if the latter, from what groups they come. Dr. Zemp shows clearly that although musicians may seek fame and glory through the exercise of their skills, most of them are basically farmers and only part-time specialists in music; that the possibility of earning money from coffee-growing has diminished the number of professionals (pp. 242-244); and that the choice of a musical 'career' is partly conditioned by family background and/or other social forces (p. 251). But he does not attempt to show whether the recruitment of musicians is non-random or in some way related to the class structure of the society. In this respect, the third part of the book does not constitute a truly sociological analysis. One has the impression also that much of the discussion is based on the general statements of informants and descriptions of particular musical events, rather than the continuous observation of groups interacting in a series of musical situations.

These are minor criticisms that are possible only because this is such an excellent book and because I look forward to further analyses of Dan music by Dr. Zemp. Finally, it should be noted that the Dan musical tradition is very much alive and needs no artificial conservation. As the Dan proverb says, "the village without music-makers is not a place where a human being can stay".

JOHN BLACKING

'Principles governing the construction of the Silimba, a xylophone type found among the Lozi of Zambia', by Atta Annan Mensah.

'Ghanaian xylophone studies', by Mitchel Strumpf.

'Oral notation of some West and Central African time-line patterns', by Gerhard Kubik.

'Fieldwork in African music', by John Blacking.

All in *Review of Ethnology*, published by E. Stiglmayr, Institut für Völkerkunde der Universität Wien, Universitätsstrasse 7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria, respectively Vol. III, no. 3, Vol. III, no. 6, Vol. III, no. 22 and Vol. III, no. 23.

In these four very interesting and nubbly articles we have more evidence that Engelbert Stiglmayr's *Review of Ethnology* is turning out to be a very useful publication. The associate editors are Anna Hohenwart-Gerlachstein, Gerhard Kubik and Emmerich Stiglmayr.

To describe these four articles briefly — in the first Mensah offers accurate observations from two informants on the tuning process of the *silimba* xylophone, concentrating on the maker's objectives, or basic principles, as revealed by his actions and comments during the process. Amongst other conclusions, *silimba* makers rely on 'regional' rather than absolute pitch, and the testing fragments of music used to check pitch seem to be important determinants of melody and harmony in the *silimba* repertoire.

The second is an extract from 'Ghanaian xylophone studies', a method course for learning to play the Ghanaian xylophone, Institute of African Studies, Legon, Ghana, and covers briefly the function, construction and tuning of the xylophones of the Lobi, Dagarti and Sisala peoples of northwest Ghana. These xylophones are similar in appearance to the better known Malinke instruments of Guinea, but are pentatonic. Five basic melody patterns are given, using the cipher notation first developed by Gerhard Kubik for the xylophones of the Ganda.

I should mention that the author has his acoustics mixed at one point, where he says "If the sound of the gourd is flat he will make the size of the top hole smaller . . ." and *vice versa*. It actually works the other way round.

In the third, Gerhard Kubik considers the verbal phrases that are used as mnemonic patterns, indeed as a kind of 'oral notation', for expressing the rhythm of the various 'time-line patterns' that are found in such similar forms in many parts of Africa, such as, typically, the 'kon kon kolo kon kolo' (x.x.xx.x.xx.) pattern used in the Yoruba *dundum* drum set. He reaches the interesting conclusion that the speech sounds of these phrases convey much more than the mere rhythmic values; they also "reflect the intrarhythmic and timbre-sequence structure of a musical complex more efficiently in the context of African musical cultures than can be achieved by using staff notation" and can be "a guide to finding out how the musicians conceive the patterns they play".

In the fourth, John Blacking discusses some of his experiences and the techniques he used in his fieldwork in Africa, revaluing some of the concepts, rejecting certain kinds of approach, and overall stressing his viewpoint that the analysis of musical sound must be treated as part of the analysis of the cultural and social system.

ANDREW TRACEY