

bands, which comes out quite strongly in the collection. This is the idea of “space” and “place” which marching bands can actively inhabit. The editors provide a short, but insightful, introduction to the concepts of space and place, basing their argument on Michel de Certeau’s distinction between the two concepts (17–22). Ramsey’s chapter picks this theme up, but so do several other authors, in particular Matt Sakakeeny (who discusses New Orleans brass bands) and Sylvia Bruinders (who focuses on the Christmas Bands of the Cape Flats of South Africa).

Sakakeeny and Bruinders offer deeper insight into the effects of racism and how this plays out in contemporary ‘banding’. Sakakeeny offers a bold and engaging chapter which analyses the politics of blackness in the largely disenfranchised communities of New Orleans. In essence his work shows the negotiations of power which take place in the staging of band marches in relation to two streams of brass band development, namely traditional and contemporary (123–138). Bruinders’ work with ‘coloured’ Christmas bands gives an almost nostalgic view of how displaced communities were held together through bands. She further examines the implications of Christian ethical endeavours of the bands and how this plays out in contrast to the popular Minstrel Carnival held around the same time of year (139–154).

Those who read this journal are generally interested in African music. For those looking for African elements, they will be sad to find very few. However, since the book does not claim any African concentration, this cannot be expected of it. But, as I have suggested above, there is much in this collection which can be used as inspiration for other musical genres and instruments which have migrated to Africa. As a prototype, then, this book may be of great value to scholars whose research interests include politics, anthropology, sociology, post-colonialism and localisation (or ‘glocalisation’ as the editors suggest in their introduction).

Finally, this book adds significantly to existing musical scholarship. More importantly, it signals a new avenue of research around brass bands. For this “first” the editors and contributors are to be commended.

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Women’s Voices from West Africa: An Anthology of Songs from the Sahel. Thomas A. Hale and Aissata G. Sidikou, eds. 2012. Bloomington: Indiana University Press . index, 143pp.

Women’s Songs from West Africa. Thomas A. Hale and Aissata G. Sidikou, eds. 2014. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. index, 341pp.

Never judge a book by its cover, or more pointedly, by its title. When I was first given these books to review, I imagined they would be an ethnomusicological investigation into music-making among women in the Sahel area of West Africa. While the books do discuss music-making occasionally, this is not the main thrust of any of the multiple

contributing scholars. Instead, they examine the texts of songs; the socio-economic background of women singing and composing the texts; the religious and ethnic expectations of women; and the power they display through articulating concerns in their songs. As the editors assert from the beginning of the first book, their intention was to make the songs available as literature (8) as opposed to music, in the hope that the texts would give West African women an internationally recognised textual voice.

In fact, while the books do contain numerous transcriptions of song texts, they have no musical examples. This was intentional. The editors decided to publish the material, which had been presented as part of a conference, as two separate books: one with textual examples (hereafter “volume one”), the other with the supporting sociological and anthropological material (hereafter “volume two”). Readers who are interested in West African songs as literature would be well directed to volume one. However, in my opinion students and scholars should consult both books for the fullest understanding of the song texts, especially as the two volumes are intended to be cross referenced by readers.

The first volume has an expansive introduction (34 pages), followed by the song lyrics. The songs are ordered in these categories: marriage; children; women in society; and death. These major subject areas are divided into sub-categories which are introduced by short explanatory paragraphs, e.g. “courtship” in the “marriage” section. Volume two is much more substantial. In the space of seventeen chapters, individual scholars each discuss women’s songs from varied perspectives. The subject material of the songs is incredibly diverse with topics such as sex, spirits, initiation, praise poetry, feminine modernity, funeral and wedding celebrations, patriarchy, lamentation and economics. One of the difficult tasks of reviewing a collection of essays such as this volume is that the writing styles and trajectories of study are so varied. This makes it difficult to pinpoint the consistency of the book as a whole. What is helpful is that, because the chapters are fairly short, the reader is given a fairly detailed glimpse into the cultures throughout the Sahel region from numerous perspectives. I found myself learning a great deal about cultural values and about the harsh lives of women in these desert areas. For anybody who studies music these days, such understanding of context is essential and the authors are to be commended on the detail into which they go in order to contextualise the songs.

I have only one suggestion for the publishers and scholars: this set of books would have benefited greatly from a companion CD/DVD. Over and over again I longed to hear or imagine the music in the contexts which had so deftly been described by the authors. While the introduction to volume one hinted that a website containing recordings was planned (8), it seems it has not materialised; or I have not typed the correct search into Google? Despite the lack of music, the volume titles are representative of what is discussed—the *griottes*, or professional female singers of the Sahel region.¹

¹ It should be noted that *griottes* is a term which is used throughout the Sahel region, but there are local terms for female singers in each separate area.

In volume two Marloes Jansen points out, "For centuries griots have attracted the attention of scholars. However, their female colleagues, the griottes, have been largely neglected in social sciences literature" (88). This book definitely goes a long way to correct this neglect, although it is hoped that more research will be forthcoming in the future. Jansen goes on to say, "The tendency to focus attention on men rather than women is all the more surprising in the Mande world because females are so conspicuous" (88). Certainly, having read through all the chapters, one is strongly aware of the important role many female singers have in this geographical region, particularly in traditional ceremonies. But as Aline Tauzin points out in the context she was examining, "Song is no longer a part of social organisation. It becomes simply entertainment..." (122). Like many of the other authors, Tauzin reveals the changing nature of female music-making, with particular reference to the commercialisation of West African music in the West, most especially France. It is true that some *griotte* have benefitted from commercialisation and even developed international reputations. Chapters eight (on Siramori Diabaté) and seventeen on Diabaté's daughter, Sanungwe Kouyate, deal with this. However, there are many professional singers related to "noble" families whose income is considerably smaller. Returning to the main point, a collection of essays on women's songs in the Sahel at this crucial time of the changing nature of music-making will have considerable value in the future, for the documentation it provides as the so-called "traditional" songs may begin to vanish.

An important question throughout both books is "Do women have a significant voice through the medium of song?" (volume two, pg. 2) It would appear that artists like Diabaté and Kouyate do (for they have gained economic independence), but for the most part the authors seem to agree that women are still basically voiceless in the realms of power, most especially in rural areas. Yet, songs are one place where women can say almost exactly what they want, particularly in certain contexts. Volume two deals with this aspect in some detail. Ariane Deluz argues "The lyrics reveal that Guro women are free to say what they want within the framework of a society that has clearly defined roles for both sexes. Their freedom of expression contradicts the view of female Africans as voiceless servants in male-dominated societies" (80). Hale seems to agree, "... women do exercise a public voice. While men may hold political authority, women express their power in a wide variety of songs... What are needed now are deeper analyses of the complex nature of that power" (261). Interestingly, the medium of song in some areas of the Sahel is clearly an area of rapid development for women. Tauzin suggests that women are able to innovate musically because of their ability to sing beyond the social confines of religious or social occasions, while male singers have gotten stuck in the purely traditional ways (116). In a sense, this shows that women are gaining a modern voice which surely competes with the traditional male one. Personally, I wonder what kind of impact the rise of militant religious extremism in the Sahel has had in recent years since many of these studies were completed? No doubt this will become the topic of further research in this area. Nevertheless, I cannot say I am convinced that the voice of women in this region is

a strong one. While women are free to voice their frustrations through song, by and large this is within the context of women's gatherings, i.e. those with the power do not ever encounter it.

Overall these two books provide fascinating reading. They will interest scholars of music, sociology, African studies, feminism and perhaps even religion (especially those chapters in volume two dealing with the uneasy relationship between Islam and the local spirit religions). I commend the scholars for giving the women of the Sahel an international voice through these books, and I hope it will encourage other scholars to build on this valuable research.

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Taarab Music in Zanzibar in the Twentieth Century: A Story of 'Old is Gold' and Flying Spirit. Janet Topp Fargion. 2014. Surrey: Ashgate. 10 b & w figures, 1 table, index, 250pp.

This book provides an overview of *taarab* music in Zanzibar during three different historical and political periods: during the Arab-speaking aristocracy 1870–1963; postcolonial nationalism under Nyerere from 1964–1985; and the post-Nyerere era and the beginning of neoliberal policies on the island from 1985–2010. Through the historical contextualization of *taarab* in Zanzibar, the author demonstrates the origins of this musical style in Egypt in the 1870s and how, during the twentieth century, *taarab* is influenced by other musical forms from the Arabian Peninsula, India and even local Zanzibari rhythms. Fargion's research on *taarab* music in Zanzibar was done for her doctoral thesis during 1989–1990. She revisited this ethnography in the mid-2000s by attending various cultural events in Zanzibar and examining how *taarab* music has developed in the last twenty-five years. As a result, this book is divided into four parts, the last part of which is the conclusions based on her post-2000 research.

Although Fargion emphasizes the predominant role of women in the development of *taarab* music, she also offers an extensive analysis of how the religious, political and social conditions in Zanzibar affect *taarab* music in the historical periods mentioned above. In order to understand the evolution of *taarab* music from its origins, the author provides translations of *taarab* songs, music transcriptions, interview extracts and photographs. Further, Fargion uses Swahili words and local musical terms in relation to the musical concepts found in *taarab* music which enhances the study of the specific characteristics of *taarab* as a musical form.

In the first part of the book, Fargion points out the importance of the “multilayered evolution” of *taarab* in relation to how this musical style is influenced by different social contexts and external cultural contacts with India and the Arab Peninsula (1). She examines the origins of orchestral *taarab* in relation to its band format known as *takht* in Egypt and its instrumentation based on *ud* (plucked lute), *qanun* (zither), *nay* (flute), *riqq* (round frame drum) and violin.