

Songs of the Dinka of South Sudan. 2012. Recorded by Elizabeth Achol Ajuet Deng, Simon Yak Deng Yak and Tatiana Reid. Annotated and produced by Angela Impey. 44 pp. of notes, Dinka song texts with translations into English, 5 colour photographs. 1 compact disc, 20 tracks.

Dance To The Drum Of Our Home: A Book Of Dinka Children's Songs. 2012. Compiled by Peter Malek. Published by the compilers. 40 pp., b&w illustrations, CD. Available outside South Sudan from Mantra Lingua Ltd., London. www.mantralingua.com

These two items, a 20 track CD with accompanying booklet and a children's book of songs with accompanying CD are products of the research project *Metre and Melody in Dinka Speech and Song*. Funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council's 'Beyond Text' programme, the project concentrated on the interplay between the Dinka language and song structures, in particular focussing on prosody, and also considered how this rich tradition of songs and singing has been affected by the long period of instability in South Sudan. Carried out by researchers from the University of Edinburgh, the School of Oriental and African Studies and Dinka researchers in South Sudan, the recordings from the project include all four major Dinka dialect groups, Bor, Rek, Padang and Agaar. The complete collection of recordings, from which the material for *Songs of the Dinka of South Sudan* and *Dance to the drum of our home* is drawn, will be preserved in the British Library Sound Archives, the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen and also in South Sudan once an archive has been established.

Dance to the Drum of our home: A Book of Dinka Children's Songs, with its soft cover, clear print and black and white illustrations, is designed for children. One page is dedicated to each of the thirty songs and chants, with words in Dinka along with English translations, an appropriate illustration and brief details (in English) contextualising the song and describing actions or games that might accompany it. The songs include nursery rhyme-like repetitious chants, call and response songs and games, and songs which are reminiscent of the adult songs heard in *Songs of the Dinka of South Sudan* with their linear structure. None have instrumental accompaniment, but many include regular clapping on the beat. The field recordings have the fresh feel that is characteristic of children's voices.

The CD, *Songs of the Dinka of South Sudan*, has 20 tracks that cover various themes, for example songs about conflict and nation building, praise songs and ox songs. The pentatonic songs have a linear structure, are mostly unaccompanied, or accompanied by simple percussion and all are performed by solo singers. The Dinka's love of cattle is evident both in the texts and in the accompanying sounds of the cattle in some of the recordings. An attractive CD sized hard cover booklet provides contextual information about both the project and the songs and interested readers can access more information from the project website address provided in the notes. The accompanying notes explain that "songs play a fundamental role in the lives of all Dinka

people, functioning as individual and social chronicles of relationships, experiences and historical events.”(n.p.) Elsewhere compiler Angela Impey has described how cassette recordings of Dinka songs that have accompanied communities and individuals throughout the diaspora have been used as a form of ‘audio-letter’ (Impey 2013: 197). She asserts that ‘a tradition of personal song making, which is rooted in a culture of pastoralism and localised mobilities, has been repackaged to accommodate population dispersal across continents and cultures.’(*ibid.* 198). If this is the case, then the songs on this CD recording might serve as another audio-letter for Dinka listeners as well as the non-Dinka listeners who would like to learn more about this beautiful and rhapsodic tradition.

The two products that have come out of the *Metre and Melody in Dinka Speech and Song* provide an example of the possibilities of applied ethnomusicology. The children’s book provides a resource for literacy development at a local level where such resources are extremely limited. While it is aimed at the Dinka community, it will also prove useful to elementary music educators in other contexts. The CD provides a well-produced collection of songs, and the notes refer to further material that is freely available. According to the liner notes, a single book on Dinka song texts published in 1973 constituted the total body of research published on Dinka song. The research team of *Meter and Melody in Dinka Speech and Song* have started to remedy this situation and are to be commended for their concern to produce research products that benefit Dinka communities as well as the academy.

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Reference

Impey, Angela

- 2013 “Keeping in Touch via Cassette: Tracing Dinka Songs from Cattle Camp to Transnational Audio-Letter.” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 25(2): 197–210.