

## NOTES AND NEWS

### ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

We had three days of very interesting meetings and there were several papers that I note would be of interest to Africanists: "Some Speculations on a Drum Chime Tradition in Buganda", by Klaus Wachsmann; "Musical Instruments of Madagascar", by Norma McLeod; "Ubakala Dance: A Special Festival", by Judith Lynne Hanna; "The Musical Instruments of Equatoria, Sudan", by Roxanne McCollester.

One afternoon was spent in an interesting symposium: Music, Dance and Anthropology: Ten Years of Co-operation, and we paid visits to two notable collections of musical instruments, The Stearns Collection at the University of Michigan and the Freeman Collection, a private one, in Detroit.

Other papers presented at the Meetings ranged from Oceania to the American Indians in their subject matter, but the number of papers on African music and dance indicates the high degree of interest in that part of the world as shown by the research of members of the Society.

David McAllester.

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### TROPICAL AFRICAN STUDIES

The International African Institute in conjunction with the University of Ibadan, held a Conference on Tropical African Studies, from the 5th to the 11th April, 1964. One section of this Conference was devoted to the Arts in African Studies, and the following report is taken from their published report on the Conference in Volume 35, No. 1, of *Africa*, for January, 1965.

The subjects under discussion were the scope and development of studies in the visual arts, music and literature; their relation to other fields in African studies and further needs in research and teaching. The Chairman: M. A. Diop, Rapporteur: Mr. A. Drayton, Opening Speakers: Prof. J. H. Nketia, Prof. A. Merriam, Mr. D. Williams.

In his contribution to the discussion, Prof. J. H. Nketia stated that: "This was a time of stylistic or idiomatic change, with both traditional and contemporary forms of artistic expression coexisting. Study of their interaction should particularly interest students of culture change. But a pre-requisite for this was the systematic collection and study of the traditional forms themselves and, as these were closely integrated with social life, both artistic and other cultural factors had to be considered. Traditional artists had been and were concerned with African life from at least three angles: through the visual arts; oral literature; and dance, drama, and music. Hence the student of the arts in Africa was closely concerned with the way of life that found expression in the objects of his study.

Problems of meaning, significance, and value had to be studied, since the traditional artists were also concerned with the meaning and significance of events, the expression of philosophical ideas, concepts of divinities, and their awareness of social and moral values.

Since occasions and objects of almost any kind could provide avenues for artistic expression, the arts were linked with all institutional aspects of culture. Values and ideas affected the arts just as they affected other aspects of culture. Hence the importance of complementary approaches to their study. Even the African scholar who had not lost touch with his own society should rely on more than his own background of experience to achieve understanding of the cultural matrix. This dependence on relevant disciplines was an indication of the breadth of training and orientation needed by the student of African arts and the kind of collaboration he should seek from other scholars.

In emphasizing the importance of the "cultural matrix" and the contribution that anthropology could and did make to studies in the arts, he was not suggesting that the study of music, art, literature; dance, and drama in Africa should be confined within departments of Anthropology and Archaeology. Nor was he minimizing the importance of formal stylistic studies through which specialized scholars made their own contribution. There was a place for comparative studies as well as for systematic study of regional or local styles. There was also a place in musical studies, for example, for the comparative study of African and non-African forms. But stylistic studies should not be carried out in a vacuum. They should be related to the cultural experiences of those associated with the styles. It was equally necessary for the teaching of the arts not to be too rigidly departmentalized. The traditional arts of Africa had been practised as interrelated or interdependent forms, and this interdependence should be reflected in research and teaching. The collaboration which this pre-supposed was easier of achievement within an institute or a school.

He wished also to stress the importance in universities of the arts of Africa as practical, creative subjects.

Not only theory but also practice was needed; not only musicologists who would collect, analyse, and write about African music, but also performers with theoretical understanding, composers and teachers of African music; not only scholarly books and articles contributing to musicological knowledge but also suitable music in an African idiom for performance as well as textbooks on the music of Africa for all levels of music education, including musical training at the university level. Similarly texts of traditional literature were needed for courses at African universities, as well as sound-recordings, films of dances, ceremonies, and rituals that could be used in teaching programmes or in creative and production programmes by composers, writers, dramatists, and choreographers.