

lated by Laade himself (there is no note to this effect). It is clear that the value of the individual stories as source material is likely to be diverse – the spectrum goes from P.W. Schmidt to Kebede. In his chapter “Zum Inhalt der vorliegenden Erzählungen” Laade only goes into a comparative inter-continental study of motifs, without, in the ethnohistorical sense, closely describing the quality of the sources. He occupies himself at length with the necessity of stressing primarily non-musical oral tradition as a basis for understanding extra-European music, a necessity which has already met with general understanding. He describes his book as an attempt at initiating the onslaught on this work, which may be deemed a worthy aim. The reason why one so seldom meets publications of such scientific applicability is connected with the immense amount of labour that source examination requires. Oskar Elschenk discusses the difficulties which arise, with examples, in his thoroughgoing paper “Historische Quellentypen der Instrumentenkunde und die ihnen angemessenen quellenkritischen Methoden” in *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis IV*, Stockholm, 1976. Yet Laade is right in one respect: what is the use of scientific accuracy and the realisation of a need when so little (not to say almost nothing) has been published in this field. So praise for the bold venture and the impetus.

RUDOLF BRANDL

DANCE AND SOCIETY IN EASTERN AFRICA 1890-1970 – The Beni Ngoma by T.O. Ranger, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975, pp. xiv and 176, maps, index.

Those interested in African music may be deceived by the title of this book. It is not a work of musicology, but a piece of social history from the expert hand of Terence Ranger, formerly of the University of Dar-es-Salaam and now Professor of Modern History at Manchester in England. During a six-year period, teaching history at Dar-es-Salaam, in the 1960s, Professor Ranger collected, personally and with the help of other researchers, a considerable amount of material about the Beni *Ngoma* or dance mode and a number of other related dances. Taking the carnival traditions of Europe as a starting point for his interpretation, Ranger sees Beni as a form of “inarticulate response”, through informal and festive activity, to the experience of colonialism. The basic symbol of the dance, the European military band, was characteristic of Beni in all its forms, but the dance mode was creatively integrated in the popular cultures of Eastern Africa during the period under discussion.

Beni originated on the Kenya coast, encouraged alike by colonial administrators and missionaries as evidence of education and modernization. However, it soon became apparent that its danced drill and mimic combats, and above all its highly organised, rival dance-societies owed as much to long-standing competitive dance traditions on the Swahili Coast. The First World War gave enormous impetus to the spread of Beni, prolonging into civilian life the prestige of the returning soldier. In what is now Tanzania the characteristic German ranks and titles, no less than the celebration in the dance of the victory over the Germans, were an embarrassment to the British administrators, aware of Beni's ambivalence. When Beni became popular among the clerks and young, educated urban elite, Government officials were often alarmed. Beni aped the colonial hierarchy and all its paraphernalia. On the one hand, the dance was an expression of an increasing desire for modernity on the part of the younger generation, while on the other, it was a commentary on the experience of colonialism. In the towns it often became a welfare organization, but British opposition to Beni also forced government employees into new forms of association which helped awaken a pan-tribal political consciousness.

In the countryside it was principally the Christian missionaries who opposed Beni and who saw in it a subversive organization. Missionaries in the 1920s and 1930s principally objected to the wearing of European clothes by the dancers, and Professor Ranger is right to see the contest as one about the right to share in the use of colonial symbols. The clash with the missionaries touches on some of the central issues of colonialism, the denial of African aspirations. For all that, it was only on the Copperbelt that Beni was associated with explicit protest against colonial exploitation.

Beni died in the 1950s, partly because the colonial regimes came to an end themselves during that period. Partly also, the wider cultural experiences of the Second World War generated new interests and new forms of musical expression. Jazz, and particularly Congo Jazz, took on some of the functions of Beni as a running commentary on social and political life. Competing dance bands

and football clubs alike replaced the old Beni competition; and Beni itself survived in the form known as *Mganda* in Malawi and on the Tanzanian Coast because it was felt to belong to the local culture despite a relative lack of economic development. In these places it is no longer favoured because of its European characteristics.

Professor Ranger is afraid of being accused of triviality and impressionism. He certainly avoids the first charge by presenting us with a very plausible explanation of the origin and demise of Beni. As he himself notes, he has found it difficult to avoid being impressionistic. He covers a vast geographical area and treats what is a highly complex subject. In general he groups his scattered pieces of information about Beni very skilfully under various headings, and makes what could have been a boring book into something entertaining and informative. One regrets that there is no extended study of the content of Beni sung texts, and that we do not have descriptions of the working of a Beni *ngoma* in a given social situation, in the manner of Clyde Mitchell's *Kalela Dance*. But this is not really sociology; it is panoramic social history.

AYLWARD SHORTER

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*Ed:* In the same manner as we printed a composite of opinion on Rev. Dr. A.M. Jones' work *Studies in African Music* in Vol. II, no. 2, we now do the same for Prof. J.H. Nketia's new book *The Music of Africa*, which is likely to play as important a part in the teaching of African music. We regret that two original reviews from African musicologists were not received in time. They will be published in the next number.

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THE MUSIC OF AFRICA by J.H. Kwabena Nketia, (Gollancz) London, 1975, pp. x+278, £4.00, copyright 1974 by W.W. Norton Inc.

J.H. Kwabena Nketia's *The Music of Africa* is an introduction designed for the general reader and the college student. Prof. Nketia was born in Ghana: he is Director of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in Legon and a regular member of the Department of Music at UCLA, and his numerous books and articles have earned him recognition as the leading scholar in the field of African music.

His book is heavily biased towards the music of West Africa; but although he generally ignores the music of southern African societies because he argues, rather curiously, that it 'belongs to stylistic families outside Africa' (p. 3), he does give a few examples of and references to music from other parts of Africa, and especially Tanzania . . .

For those who want to know more about African music as an art form and as a means of expressing African attitudes and ways of thinking about the world . . . Nketia's introduction is rather short on information about African concepts of sonic organisation, but it is as good as anything currently available, and it could be improved if the publishers were to provide a demonstration tape or record of at least the music given in transcription in the text. . .

Prof. Nketia relies chiefly on staff notation to convey some idea of the musical structures even to those who have not heard a performance live or on record. He also describes the role of music in community life, the recruitment of performing groups and training of musicians, the different social processes that generate and constrain musical creation, and the interrelationships of music and dance and of melody and speech. He does not forget, as do some anthropologists, that his main concern is with the special world of music: 'the functional use of song in social life or its value as source material should not make us overlook the importance of the musical content of the songs' (p. 205).

Minor criticisms of the book are that many of the captions do not indicate the sources of the photographs, though their position in the text sometimes suggests a context, and that in Chapters 15 and 16, on Rhythm in vocal music and Speech and melody, it would have been useful to have had specific references to publications on other African musical traditions where the same or similar principles have been observed. Also, on pp. 113 ff., different scales are shown without any indication of their distribution in Africa or reference to their use in specific recordings. The chapter on rhythm could have been less confusing if there were examples of the different types and a