

was paid to the way in which the separatist churches, of which there are nearly three thousand in South Africa, make use of traditional elements of singing, dancing, costume, beliefs, etc. There is a feeling that the established churches are losing members because they are not lively enough, not African enough. The question is how far they can now go in re-Africanisation without their congregations, who were largely raised in the western christian ethos (which includes such concepts as the "sanctity of immobility") suspecting that they are "going over to the separatists".

These questions and others are discussed in the report on the consultation issued by the Christian Academy. The texts of six lectures are given and there are three particularly useful study documents at the end, on a centre for training African church musicians, co-operation of hymn-book committees, and development of church music in South Africa.

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UGANDA NATIONAL CRAFTS SCHEME

Extract from letter from Mr. Owen Barton of the Ministry of Culture and Community Development, P.O. Box 7136, Kampala, Uganda:

"The National Crafts Scheme was established for the purpose of finding a sales outlet for the crafts which the people of rural Uganda are able to produce. We are not making any articles ourselves. The cultural background of Uganda is fairly rich, but many of the skills were either dormant or dying and the scheme has stimulated the production of articles such as all kinds of musical instruments, drums, arms and artifacts of all kinds. It has been our job at the Ministry of Culture to avoid the production of poor quality crafts for the sake of a quick return and of course, to keep away from "airport junk" type of items. This scheme has been successful and had resulted in an improvement in the standards of living of quite substantial numbers of people."

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY SEMINAR IN AFRICA

A promising new development in American studies of African music was initiated recently when a six-week "Seminar in African Music and Art" organised by Manhattanville and Briarville Colleges, New York State, was held in West Africa in July-August 1969, led by Prof. Nicholas England, Hewitt Pantaleoni (whose article appears in this issue) and Mr. Seth Ladzekpo. The places visited were Dakar, Abidjan, Anyako (Ghana) and Lagos, in order to observe *and perform* music under the guidance of local musicians in each region. Some of the seminarists had already studied drumming under Mr. Ladzekpo of Anyako, Ghana, and were thus able to profit from direct participation in the original music and observation of its proper social context. Dr. Pantaleoni's article in the present issue is at least partly the outcome of this welcome and more practical approach to the study of African music. It is to be hoped that other foreign colleges will continue to encourage their students to gain that personal involvement with African music which has been responsible for a large proportion of if not all the most valuable contributions so far.

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XYLOPHONES IN THE SUDAN

Interesting details of the construction of a *Rongo* xylophone in the Sudan has been sent us by Mr. David Evans who, for many years, was a member of the Sudan Political Service.

The extract he sends is taken from the *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. XXVIII, 1947 (pp. 179-181) and was written by Faustino Roro Kamitin, who is a member of the Gbaya tribe and son of the hereditary maker of the *rongo* for his clan.

What is particularly interesting is the similarity of manufacture of the Gbaya xylophone in some respects with that of the Chopi of southern Mozambique. The use of the wax of the ground bee, as opposed to that of the tree or rock bees; the nasalising membranes on the side of the resonators; and the accompaniment of the xylophone music by rattles and drums.

The extract is as follows . . .

"The *rongo* is a kind of musical instrument with ten wooden slats and ten hollow gourds attached to a flat board half a foot broad by three feet long, and having a semi-circular rod joined by string to both edges of the flat board. The instrument is hung from the neck by a string when being played.

The *rongo* is made from either ebony or a special hard dried wood fetched from the forest, which is carved into a keyboard of ten pieces with varying tones. After they have been carefully carved and tuned, they are fitted over the gourds, which are got by first sowing the seeds during the rains. These gourds, which are of a special kind (*karaka rongo*), and are used only for this purpose, are sown near trees, where the stems, after growing, creep up and yield gourds, which are cut down and taken to the nearest stream or waterpool, where they are left for a week or so, then taken out, cleaned, and hollowed out, and left ready to fit to the slats at any available time.

Next comes the wax for sticking the hollow gourds on to the flat board on which the slats are arranged. This wax is fetched from the forest from special ground bees (*uru*), by digging them out and obtaining the wax. The honey is used as food; then the wax is made into the sticking substance for the *rongo*. Thus is obtained the sticking substance; now comes the stuff which is spread over the tiny holes at each point

of the hollowed gourds; this is put on in order to give out a fine tone. This stuff is either obtained from bats' wings or from a spider's web (*tri palele*) found in the bark of fallen trees and in old huts. Finding everything now available a man makes up his *rongo*.

How it is played

It is played by striking the slats with two pairs of rubber-ended sticks, holding a pair in each hand — when thus played it gives out a kind of harmony with both bass and treble tones.

There are four tunes played on the *rongo* for dances; and it is accompanied by a drum, and by hollow, round-headed gourds with seeds inside, which give out noises agreeing both with the drum and the music (of the *rongo*)."

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THE PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL — TWO VIEWS

JOSEPH OKPAKU, Nigerian Playwright.

After several days of sitting in plenary sessions at the Pan-African Cultural Festival at Algiers, I wondered whether I was in the right place or had not by error strayed into an international cocktail party. Many of my fellow African writers and artists shared my feeling.

We Africans are a people who like to wrestle and it is time for politician, artist and critic to tie their wrappers firmly and prepare for the bout. The organizers of the festival succeeded in bringing together these three traditional enemies, all whetting their palms in eager anticipation of the match. But it never took place. Instead, official delegation after official delegation spent their time trying to convince fellow Africans that their particular country has a culture or that many centuries ago a national literature was in fact started. The time devoted to government policy statements on culture made the festival sound like a meeting of the O.A.U., this time with a very restless audience of artists.

Since it is obvious that every African in his right mind knows that there is a valid and rich African culture, was it not a pure waste of time to devote all that effort to state the obvious? Or perhaps it was not for the African ear. Why then all the talk about imperialism and neo-colonialism? The woman who takes off her clothes and says to a man, "See, am I not beautiful?" cannot turn around and accuse the man of having made her a prostitute.

All is not sunshine and roses in Africa. (If it were, the continent would be uninteresting.) How could we then get together in Algiers to heap praises on each other, pretending that all is well, when my own Nigeria is in the midst of a painful civil war; when other countries are plagued by grave problems; when artists are carrying guns or have taken over military propaganda; when writers and film makers are in jail? Art is not diplomacy and the artist is not a diplomat. The very nature of the festival demanded that the politicians, after organizing it, disappear through the back door as soon as the guests arrived. Instead, the artists stayed in the galleries and were forced to listen to politicians officiating at the ritual of cultural diplomacy.

The festival failed to discuss how culture can progress in the midst of political turmoil. It failed to make a clear distinction between a government's minister of culture and the guardians and bearers of culture. Where society is a castle, the minister of culture is the drawbridge. He can keep the couriers in or out of the castle walls.

Unlike his Western counterpart the African artist or writer is often an important man who can say what he wants and is often listened to. In many cases, he actually holds an important position in government, the mass media or teaching. Whatever his public role, the artist functions most effectively in society as a critic of life and death, as a dreamer, a seer, a madman, a prophet, a bard. At a time of turbulence, when the society needs all kinds of new ideas, when the continent is in its most creative period, the artist must give his best efforts to the creation of new ideas. He must at the same time defend freedom of expression from the excesses of political pragmatism and artistic irresponsibility.

Artists actively involved in politics have the same responsibility as other citizens to respect the law, or in disagreeing with it, to be prepared to face the consequences. As long as people are allowed to say what they like openly, there is never the need to go underground and the artist will never be a threat to national security merely by playing his role as social critic.

At Algiers the wrestling match between artists and politicians was postponed. The future of Africa requires that this match take place and that culture (defined as the synthesis of art and politics) triumph. The artist must not be destroyed, certainly not by the politician; because the destruction of the artist is the destruction of culture, which in turn is the destruction of society, and therefore the ultimate destruction of the politician's basis of power.

The greatness of Africa will lie in what we can do in the face of our handicaps and we can do a great deal if we begin to recognize the important role of free thought, criticism and meaningful dialogue among people of all ages and views. Africans, especially the elders, should remember that young men, like artists, may once in a while have a good idea. We so need a fresh approach that the joy of each precious idea is worth the anger and irritation produced by less worthy ones that must also be heard. Controversy is the fuel of cultural progress, not legislated uniformity or sterile exercises in cultural diplomacy. The recent release of Wole Soyinka gives one reason for guarded optimism.