

heightened levels of interpersonal consciousness among any performers. However, the kind of reactions elicited by music are largely culture-specific, and people engaged in cross-cultural musical performance tend to project their own cultural values onto the other culture (Kubik 1985). In other words, participation in Venda communal dances cannot make people become "Venda", nor does it allow them to "move outside" their own culture (p.67).

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References

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LIEDER IN ERZÄHLUNGEN DER BULSA: EINE MUSIKETHNOLOGISCHE UNTERSUCHUNG, by Ulrika Blanc, *Forschungen zu Sprachen und Kulturen Afrikas*, Band 3, LIT Verlag, Münster und Hamburg, 1993.

The Balsa are peasant farmers of northern Ghana, whose millet-based mixed agriculture is combined with the keeping of livestock. They number about 7000, live in scattered small farms, and speak a language falling into the Voltaic (or Gur) sub-family of the Niger-Congo family of Niger-Kordofanian, in the classification of Greenberg. They are said to share with their Kasena neighbours, and more remarkably with the extinct Guanches of the Canary Islands, the ability to communicate over long distances by whistling. Like so many other African peoples, they are greatly given to story-telling, which, according to Agalic, fulfils a variety of social functions, didactic, exemplary and entertaining. In such story-telling the reactions and interventions of the audience are integral, and the full flavour and structure of the story are best captured in live recording and/or filming. Since the 1960s the Balsa have been the subject of a number of data collections by Professor Rüdiger Schott of the University of Münster and his associates; this book is the latest publication in a series edited by him.

Its title is carefully worded, and at first suggests a comprehensive study of the songs which are embedded in a great many, but not all, of the narrative recitations. In fact, it presents an analysis of only a very small fraction of the enormous repertoire which Schott has assembled, and even that fraction is selected from only two types of tale. Since the classification of tales adopted by the author is that of Schott himself, which tends towards rather extreme subdivision, we cannot be completely certain what these categories would mean to the people among whom the stories originate; and the author herself admits that her choice is arbitrary. The main defects of her

approach, of many of which she appears to be well aware, stem from the fact that what she is attempting is archival research without any basis of relevant field experience. To help her she had a single Bulo woman, obviously well-informed and sympathetic but no substitute for the interactive gatherings described by Agalic, Schott and others.

This would not matter had the author succeeded in introducing any novelty of analysis or insight, but she simply selects what suits her from the methodology of earlier writers, Good, Kubik and especially Brandl, and within the scope of this subjects the musical part of the story to minute, often absurdly detailed, analysis which is musicologically impeccable but often ethnographically irrelevant. Her selection of methods, and the points she chooses to emphasise, though reasonable enough, are more haphazard than systematic. For instance, she rejects Nketia's division of the songs into those with a regulative beat and those in free rhythm, because he associates the one and not the other with bodily movement, while, she states, what she is looking at is explicitly narration, not dance. She lays stress on the variants of particular and recurrent songs, not discriminating between structural and circumstantial variation. Since she appears to have no experience of the situations which gave rise to the songs, she is unable to assess the extent to which these may be due to the individual whims, rather than the styles, of performers.

This may appear an unduly harsh judgment, especially since the book comes with the *imprimatur* of Schott himself, and since the author is so conscious of the shortcomings of her approach; but self-knowledge does not excuse inexperience or exculpate from the adoption of mistaken emphases. On the other hand, Ulrike Blanc is, on the evidence of this work, a capable musicologist, and one who is likely to make good use of extended field experience, especially if she will allow herself to construct her own analytical methods in the light of it. This she is plainly capable of doing. Now that what appears to have been a student exercise is behind her with this publication, it is to be hoped that she will progress to something more independent, do some fieldwork in the field rather than the archive, and allow her individual talents to make an individual contribution to African musicology.

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JUKWAA LA TAARAB — ZANZIBAR, by Issa Mgana, Mediafrica Books, Helsinki 1991, 101pp, photos, charts, song texts, KiSwahili text.

Taarab is the popular music played for entertainment at weddings and other festive occasions all along the Swahili coast of east Africa. Zanzibar is reputed to be where the style began, just over 100 years ago, and this island continues as one of the leading centres for its performance. Other important centres are Mombasa and Lamu in Kenya, and Tanga and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, but *taarab* has reached such levels of popularity that groups now also exist as far inland as Burundi and Uganda.

Taarab music contains all the features one might expect from this region,