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African Drumming: The History and Continuity of African Drumming Traditions.

Modesto Amegago. 2014. Trenton: Africa World Press, Harriet Tubman Series. 151 b&w illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index, 303pp.

Modesto Amegago's contribution to African music – especially African drumming as evident in this book – is to be commended. Amegago is an Assistant Professor at York University with specialities in dance ethnography and West African performance arts. As a performer and dance ethnologist, Amegago draws from his wealth of personal experience with the music and drumming traditions of the Ewe of Ghana (and knowledge transmitted by his father) to provide general insights on African drumming. The book is borne out of the author's motivation to "preserve, disseminate, and sustain African drumming/music and dance traditions" (ix). In this regard it should be pointed out that the book serves its purpose.

African Drumming is divided into eight chapters preceded by an introductory section where the author states the motivation for writing the book. In this section he traces the factors contributing to the marginalisation of African drumming, thus hindering its continuity. Among other factors, the author points out that African drumming has been assigned the lower "status of heathenism, barbarism and primitivism by the West" (ix, see also Chernoff 1979: 28). As a result, throughout the book the author advocates for African drumming by making a point of what he hopes will contribute to the perpetuation of this performance tradition. Among other things, Amegago notes that it is important that African drums such as the *dundun* and *sogo*, belonging to the Yoruba and Ewe peoples respectively, be acknowledged more widely, and that the product of the traditional drum makers be treasured. This point is made in response to his fears that globalisation will lead to the monopolisation of drum making processes by manufacturing companies in other parts of the world, such as Germany or the United States, thereby making it difficult for traditional drum makers to manufacture drums (52–53). Amegago also raises concern about the socio-economic status of drummers. He acts as the "voice" of traditional drummers by calling on "African and global societies" to help uphold the drumming tradition by supporting and recognising the roles of drummers (114). In addition, he argues that the rights of traditional drum makers should be protected (52) and that the status of drummers is developed (113). The author also points out that traditional African drumming will be sustained if the benefits that come from having drumming and performing groups, which he believes

have been affected by the “changes in the socio economic and political conditions [...] of the Africa traditional societies”, is reassessed (127). The book is therefore inspired by the author’s belief that the “awareness of the structure, process and factors that constitute good drumming would enhance people’s participation, understanding, evaluation and appreciation of African drumming and performance” (227).

Amegago would not be the first to address the culture of drumming in relation to communities in Africa. Agawu (1995), Chernoff (1979), Euba (1990), Nketia (1963), and Tang (2007), among others, have broached the topic in one way or another. It should also be noted that Amegago draws a lot from some of their writings to explain and corroborate his own ideas. Amegago’s approach not only looks at a single culture or a single aspect of drumming as in, for instance, rhythm or drumming; rather, he touches on different music cultures on the continent, although the focus is more on West Africa, especially the Yoruba of Nigeria and the Akan and Ewe of Ghana. More attention is focused on traditional drumming and only one or two types of drums such as the *dundun* of the Yoruba, the *atumpan* of the Akan, and the Ewe’s *sogo* and *kidi*, are discussed. It would have been beneficial to the reader had the author demarcated the part of Africa and the type of drumming to which more attention is given and why there is a degree of unevenness in his discussion, making some types of drums more important than others. This makes one wonder whether or not there is a dearth of literature on the drumming culture in the parts of Africa that are not adequately represented (considering that the author makes extensive use of extant literature to develop his ideas) or whether or not the author believes drumming is more synonymous with west African cultures. The second chapter, titled, “Drums in African cultures”, is an exception as Amegago extensively discusses numerous drums that are found all around Africa (21-53). The imbalance in the focus makes the use of the geographical term ‘African’ in the book title appear misleading. Be that as it may, Amegago should be commended for providing descriptions of drumming cultures in different settings. From the rural settings where drums are seen as an integral part of people’s lives and used for healing (82), entertainment, and other different socio-cultural and sacred activities (56, 86), to the urban setting where some drums still retain their functions regardless of changes in time and space. For instance, drums such as the *dundun* and *atumpan* which are used as “signals” to summon people to meetings in traditional settings, have moved to urban settings where they perform the same functions. For example, the *atumpan* and *donno* drums are used to announce lessons in schools, and the *dundun* is used in some Nigerian broadcasting houses to announce a news broadcast (59). Some drums such as the *dundun* have also transcended the boundaries of traditional usage such that they are now being employed in contemporary settings as in churches, and in popular music such as *fuji* and *juju* (85).

The book describes how the process of “borrowing and adaptation” through cultural contact contributes to the distribution of certain drums among neighbouring towns. For instance, the Akan *atumpan* is now adopted and widely spread among the Ewe, Ga and Dagbamba peoples of Ghana. The discussion also shows how drums

moved from local to international circuits as a result of trans-Atlantic slavery and how peoples of the African diaspora perpetuate the drumming of their cultures of origin (for example, *bata* drumming of the Yoruba being practiced among the Santeria in Cuba (89)). Furthermore, the book is an account of how drumming moved from its original setting to the classroom, where the author notes the contribution of scholars such as Euba and Nketia. According to the author, African drumming now features in the curricula of educational institutions within Africa, the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana, and beyond, York University, the University of Toronto and the University of Surrey, among others (107-108).

African Drumming is characterized by a logical sequence of ideas and processes. The first chapter traces the origin of various drums such as Ewe drums which are attributed to hunters, Akan *aburukuwa* which is inspired by the sounds of birds, Akan *etwie* and Congolese *ngoma* are attributed to leopards, *djembe* drums attributed to blacksmiths, and drums such as the *igbin* and *bata* drums of the Yoruba are attributed to mythological beings, to mention a few (4-8). The readers are introduced to drums from every part of Africa in the second chapter, followed by uses and functions of drums in African cultures in chapter three. The users and drum owners, their organisation, and the processes of drum making follow in chapters four to six. The author describes the performance contexts in the seventh and eighth chapters where he discusses the techniques and processes of drumming, as well as the linguistic and textual content of selected drum musics.

Illustrations in every chapter of the book not only add to its appeal but also aid understanding. A contribution to easy comprehension is the author's lucidity in the use of his language. The author combines "drumming/music", "music/dance", "drumming/dancing" in his discussion of the musical arts throughout the book (23, 66, 89 and 184). This combination of musical terms depicts the act of music making in African traditional music cultures, where the concept of music indicates drumming or singing or dancing, and confirms that these arts are seldom separated.

Using narration, conjecture, and historical approaches to his review of drumming cultures, Amegago draws on ideas from different resources such as his informants, and, as mentioned, he also draws extensively (and conclusively) from the writings and accounts of other authors, especially Euba, Nketia, and Tang. On the one hand, one may view this action as necessary as it brings ideas from different parts of the continent to substantiate and expatiate his ideas but on the other hand, the manner in which he presents these writings seems almost like summaries of the books, to the extent that someone who has not read Euba's books, for example, might believe he or she has read them. The flaw created by using lots of examples and drawing conclusions from these sources is that some of the research on these sources are from many years ago (this is not to mean they are not valid). Euba's work, which was a doctoral dissertation in 1974 but adapted (without any alteration) as a book in 1990, is one example. It should be expected that between 1974 and now, things (if little) would have changed. Since culture is not static some of the practices could either be seldom found or be non-

existent. Euba himself acknowledges things could have changed as at the time of the publication in 1990 and that “the information contained in this book [...] represents [his] appraisal of the subject up to 1974” (1990: 23). An update is therefore necessary before making any generalisations in a book published 40 years later.

In all, the book, *African Drumming* is very informative and has something to offer every reader. It can be seen as a general review of drumming, touching on aspects from the physical to the spiritual, social to religious, different contexts including work, recreation and politics, traditional to modern settings, ancient and contemporary times. While its insights could serve as an in-depth study of any of the different aspects, the book could also serve as a model for any study relating to African music in general. *African Drumming* is a useful resource for researchers and scholars of African music, performers, educators and anyone interested in African drumming and dance.

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Oliver Mtukudzi Living Tuku Music in Zimbabwe. Jennifer W. Kyker. 2016. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 25 images, 3 transcriptions, bibliography, index, 290 pp.

Jennifer Kyker’s rendering of Oliver Mtukudzi’s prolific musical output, with its unique ‘Tuku music’ beat, stands somewhere between biography and music ethnography, but leans toward the latter. This is due to her careful contextualization of Tuku’s lifeworld as a singer, song writer, guitarist and arranger in Zimbabwe and her analysis of the inferred meanings of his song lyrics through presentation of interview data from Tuku himself, the musicians in his band, and many diverse others living in Zimbabwe and