

DRUMS DOWN THE CENTURIES

by

THE REV. A. M. JONES

No traveller in Africa today, exploring African culture, can be unaware of the central place occupied by drumming, singing and dancing. It is so widespread that we take it for granted. But it might be of interest to pause and to ask, "How long has this been going on?—Has Africa always been like this?" Knowing the remarkable imitative capacity of the African, we might invoke history to suggest that possibly he has acquired this culture from outside influences—from the powerful and widespread influence of Islam, for example. History has, however, left its own record in the diaries of travellers, and the notes of geographers, the sifting of which leaves an interesting deposit of information about African music and dancing down the centuries. There is a curious charm in reading what our forefathers noted about the subject,—a charm which arises partly from the satisfaction of projecting ourselves into the Africa of the past, partly from the quaintness of their language, and not least from the attitude with which these old writers approached African music, some of whose observations are very acute. Space forbids us from quoting *in extenso*, and ignorance no doubt hides from us many other interesting references. It might be worth while for our Society to collect more quotations sent in by readers.

We propose to start about a hundred years ago and then work our way backwards in time.

In 1825 Captain Clapperton was in Nigeria seeking the source of the Niger. His faithful servant and biographer, Richard Lander¹, writes:

"It would be difficult to detach singing and dancing from the character of an African, as to change the colour of his skin. I do not think he would live a single week in his own country without participating in these his favourite amusements; to deprive him of which would be indeed worse than death."

"Yet even on these instruments they perform most vilely, and produce a horribly discordant noise, which may, perhaps, be delightful to their own ears; but to strangers, if they have the misfortune to be too near the performers, no sounds can be more harsh and disagreeable than such a concert."

"Of all the amusements of the Africans, none can equal their song and dance in the still, clear hours of night, when the moon, walking in beauty in the heavens, awakens all the milder affections of their nature, and invites them to gladness and mirth. . . ."

"On these occasions all care is completely laid aside, and everyone delivers himself up to the dissipation of the moment, without a thought of the morrow, his heart having no *vacuum* for melancholy anticipations.

"On the morning of Thursday, the 12th, we left Chiadoo followed by the chief and an immense crowd of both sexes, amongst whom were hundreds of children, the ladies enlivening us with songs at intervals, and the men blowing on horns and beating on gongs and drums, without any regard to time, forming altogether a most barbarous concert of vocal and instrumental music, which continued to our great inconvenience and annoyance till we arrived at Matone, when they took leave of us and returned."

Robert Norris went out to Dahomey in 1771. Having presented the King, Bossa-Ahadee, with a Portative Organ, he was invited to a feast which he thus describes²:

"As soon as I was seated, the music began. Apart from the trumpets, flutes and bells, it consisted mainly in a multitude of drums of different sizes: it was to the sound of this rude and savage harmony that a large crowd danced. When one company got tired, another took its place, and they in turn by others. Some time later the table was laid, at which they served some very good dishes"

¹Richard Lander: *Records of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa*, London 1830. Vol. I, pp. 90, 292, 294.

²Robert Norris: *Memoires du Regne de Bossa Abadee, Roi de Dahome*, (translated from English): Paris 1790. p. 118.

"When the meal was finished, the music started again, and the King came, followed by a guard of eighty women each armed with a large musket; he immediately started dancing, to convince his subjects of his good health and agility, the which gave them both pleasure and joy which they manifested by loud acclamations. He showed his musicians how much their playing had satisfied him, by causing 80 ounces of *coris*, brought by three hundred and twenty of his women folk . . . to be distributed among the 'drums' who went off very well pleased."

A Frenchman, M. Adanson, moved by the love of Natural History and travel, and acting as Correspondent of the Royal Academy of Science in Paris, was living and travelling in Senegal from 1749 to 1754. Describing the funeral of a woman and the dance associated with it, he says:³

"All the young people of the village gathered together in a large area, in the middle of which they had lighted a great fire. The spectators formed a long square, at both ends of which the dancers were ranged in two opposite lines, the men on one side, the women on the other. There were two tabours to regulate the dance; and as soon as they had beat a march, the performers began a song, the burden of which was repeated by all the spectators. At the same time a dancer stepping forth from each line, advanced towards the opposite person that pleased him most, to the distance of two or three feet, and presently drew back in cadence, till the sound of the tabour served as a signal for them to come close, and to strike their thighs against each other, that is, man to woman, and woman to man: this done, they drew back once more, and soon after renewed the same monkey tricks, diversifying their movements as often as the tabour directed them, till at length they returned to their place. The other performers did the same, each in their turn, but without a repetition; then the two lines drew near to one another, and acted their part in the same manner . . . The Negroes do not dance a step, but every member of their body, every joint, and even the head itself, expresseth a different motion, always keeping time, let it be never so quick. And it is in the exact proportioning of this infinite number of motions, that the Negroes dexterity in dancing chiefly consists: none but those that are as supple as they, can possibly imitate their agility. Notwithstanding the violence of this exercise, it lasted a good part of the night, during which they drank off several pots of a very strong sort of beer made of millet."

Later on, when he visited the village of Guebenn at the salt pans near the "Isle of Senegal" the headman put on a dance to entertain him.

"He had summoned all the young people of the village to give us a ball; and accordingly they attended us, dancing to vocal and instrumental musick, as far as the trading place, where they continued these sports till midnight. Dancing is the favourite entertainment of the negroes; they sometimes bring young children with them that can hardly stand: one would be apt to say, that they are born dancing, to see the exactness of their movements. The same amusements were renewed every evening."

Adanson, like most of the early traders, though not a trader himself, lived in close contact with African village life. He gives a vivid account of the Hoing Dance performed at the beginning of the digging season. . . .

". . . I was not willing to lose the opportunity of seeing their methods of tillage, which was to be in the beginning of the month of June, the next year, in that island. Early in the morning, the 8th of June, all the inhabitants attended the lord of the village into the field, singing and dancing as on a great festival; some carried their tabour and pipe; other had no other tool or instrument than a small spade helved with a stick, which was bent in the middle, and long enough to prevent their being obliged to stoop to work. After they had all danced a few minutes on the very spot, the latter, without interrupting the cadence, began to throw up the ground with their spades, in order to root out the weeds. During this operation they accorded so well with the sound and measure of the instruments in their motions and singing, that you would have concluded all those husbandmen to be professed dancers and singers. It was pleasing to see how they tossed their arms and legs, and into what contortions they threw themselves with an air of content, according as the sound of the tabour was more or less quick, and as the *guiriots* gave more life to their singing."

It is interesting to compare the attitudes of the Englishmen Lander and Norris on the one hand, and Adanson on the other, to African music. They all give good descriptions; but whereas Adanson is sympathetic and obviously realizes what is taking place, to the two Englishmen the drumming and the dancing are totally incomprehensible; and this is characteristic of the Englishman's attitude. Because he will not take the trouble to find out what is happening and because owing to this lack of knowledge

³M. Adanson: *A Voyage to Senegal, the Isle of Goree, and the River Gambia*, (translated from the French), London 1759, pp. 111, 262, 308.

he dislikes what he hears, he dismisses the whole thing out of hand. Yet there are, now and then, exceptions.

Twenty years before Adanson, a trader named Francis Moore was for several years factor to the Royal African Company of England in the Gambia, living among the Mandingos and the Wolofs. He records the use of drums and xylophones ('balafeu')⁴

"In every Town, almost, they have a large Thing like a Drum, called a *Tantong*, which they beat only on the Approach of an Enemy, or some very extraordinary Occasion, to call the neighbouring Towns to their Assistance. This same *Tantong* can, in the Night-Time, be heard six or seven Miles.

"They are naturally [*sc. the 'Mundingoes'*] very jocose and merry, and will dance to a Drum or a Balafeu sometimes four and twenty Hours together, dancing now and then very regular, and at other Times in very odd gestures, striving always to outdo one another in Nimbleness and Activity."

His careful description of the Xylophone used by what he calls the 'Woolly' tribe (*sc. Wolof*) is too good to miss.

"On my arrival at *Nackway* they welcomed me with some Music called a *Balafeu*, which at about an hundred yards distance sounds something like a small Organ. It is composed of about twenty pipes of very hard Wood, finely rubbed and polished; which Pipes diminish by little and little both in Length and Breadth, and are tied together with Thongs made of very thin fine Leather. These Thongs are twisted about small round Wands, which are put between every one of those Pipes, in order to leave a small Space. Underneath the Pipes are fastned twelve or fourteen Calabashes of different Sizes, which have the same Effect as Organ-Pipes. This they play upon with two Sticks, which are cover'd with a thin Skin out of a Cibo-tree Trunk, or with fine Leather, to make the Sound less harsh. Both Men and Women dance to this Music, and very much like it, and they are highly delighted to have a White-Man dance with them, or drink with them; but if the Liquor belongs to a White-Man, which they are not very well acquainted with, they are very cautious how they drink, always making him drink the first glass, for fear of being poisoned."

Father Jean-Antoine Cavazzi was an Italian missionary who worked in Angola. His records were translated into French and augmented by Father J. B. Labat in his '*Relation Historique de l'Ethiopie Occidentale*,' published in 1732.⁵ In his chapter headed '*De la Musique des Nègres: et de leurs Danses*' Fr. Labat, who, incidentally, had not been to Africa himself, says:

"The customs of the negroes, which we have already described, are so savage and so remote from all good breeding, that it is easy to conceive their dances and their music to be no more in order than the former. Nothing is more discordant than the sound of their instruments, and nothing is more bizarre than their dances. It seems that they are concerned with nothing but to make a show of lascivious movements with their bodies, instead of making a studied attempt to display the agility of their footwork, and the nicety of their body-movements.

Their music is sheer barbarism. It is a conglomeration of confused noises, more suitable for frightening off wild beasts than to satisfy delicate ears.

The principal instrument used by persons of substance for prestige and the display of magnificence is called *Npungu*. It is made of a piece of wood hollowed out, and decorated with pieces of ivory which are pierced with several holes like our fifes. They make them of different sizes and play them all together, as we sound our trumpets.

They have another wind instrument, which makes a sharp and piercing sound. It is made from gazelles' horns. It is used for assembling troops. It also takes part in their *ensemble* playing, though to tell the truth, it would be more suitably employed in spoiling and upsetting it, than in augmenting their so-called harmony. . . .

The *Ngomba* or *Igomba* is a piece of tree-trunk hollowed out as a drum, one end of which is covered with a skin, the other end being left open. They beat it with their hands, when they are in the army, accompanying the unpleasant sound which it produces with such amazing cries and shrieks and body movements, that they seem to be mad or possessed.

They have another kind of smaller round drums which are played with a stick, and are made of a heavy wood.

Their 'balls', if one could give them such a name, or better, their dances, are known under the general term *Maquina*. The Africans love this activity more than anything else: they spend whole days and nights at it: they are sooner tired than satisfied and waste an unconscionable amount of time on it. They often get ill as a result of it, and, if they have had the good fortune to become

⁴Francis Moore: *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa*. London 1738. pp. 109, 119.

⁵J. B. Labat: *Relation Historique de l'Ethiopie Occidentale*. Paris 1732. Vol. II, Chap IV, p. 48 ff.

Christians, nothing dissipates the spirit of piety in them so much as this dancing

The person in charge of the dance first sings alone, and then everyone repeats both words and tune without deviating one *iota*. It is in the dance and this alone that we cannot accuse them of carelessness. They set themselves to learn these songs and dance movements as if it were the most serious and urgent matter in the world. A dancer would think himself disgraced, if by any fault of his, the dance had been interrupted or in any way upset

The Africans, even if Christians, love this pastime with such passion, that they would much rather submit to the penalties imposed by the Edicts than to forgo the dance."

So much for the eighteenth century. We now jump back another fifty years or more, to John Ogilby's well-known 'Africa' published in London in 1670.⁶ What he has to say has obviously been derived from eyewitnesses. In Senegal, among the Wolofs, he says:

"When a Drummer dies, they will not permit him to be buried in the Earth, or thrown into the Sea or River, but he must be cast into some hollow Tree: for they imagine that his being entomb'd in the one, or engulf'd in the other, would make them fruitless and empty, yet these sorts of people, though so abominated when dead, yet in their life time are in great esteem with the Kings, and other great Lords, who being minded to recreate themselves, send for them to beat on their Drums, as we in these civilised Parts have Musicians. . . . In short, they are neither better nor worse than Beggars, or to speak more properly, than itinerant or vagabond Fiddlers, and not unlike them in conditions; for where they are liberally rewarded, they will extol their Master with the highest Eulogies*, and descend even to the baser insinuations of colloguing flattery; on the other, not sparing the most contumelious reproaches to such as answer not their immerited expectation: for their Music itself, or drum, is nothing but a piece of a hollow Tree, three, four, or five Foot long, at one end covered over with a Buck-skin."

Later, he describes a girls' Initiation Ceremony in Sierra Leone. They have been in a wood, he says, for

"three or four months, to learn Dances and Verses of *Zandy*; which are not only difficult to learn, but contain very little that can be sung with honesty, by any that do but pretend to be chaste and modest."

"When they enter the Town, or Village, where the People gather together as if it were some Holiday, the *sogwhilly* [head of the initiation ceremony] leads to the Sporting-place, where one sits Drumming with two Sticks on a round hollow piece of Wood. By the ill-run'd Musick of which (if so we may call it) Instrument, everyone understands his time; and they all seek to exceed one another in Dancing.

Ogilby was impressed by the music and the dancing of the women in the Gold Coast. The horses' tails he mentions, are still used by the Ewe people in the way he describes. He says:

"They have great inclinations to Dancing; so that when they hear a Drum or other Instrument, they cannot stand quiet, but must show their skill. They meet usually in the Evenings to Revel; while some Dance, others play upon Instruments, as Copper Panns, struck with Buttons [*batoons?*] or Drums made of a hollow Tree, and cover'd over with a Goats Skin or such like barbarous Musick. They Dance commonly two and two together, Leaping and Stamping with their Feet, Snapping with their Fingers and Bowing their Heads one to another; some have Horses Tails in their Hands, which they cast one while upon one Shoulder, and one while upon the other; others with Wisps of Straw in their hands, which they let fall, then again suddenly reaching it, they cast it up aloft, and catch it in their hands. This Dancing having continu'd an hour, or an hour and a half, everyone returns home."

The women in the Kingdom of ARDER, at the east of the Gold Coast "are so addicted to Dancing, that they cannot forbear upon the hearing of any Instrument, though they be loaden with one Child in their Belly, and another at their Backs, where they commonly carry them."

Nearly two hundred years before Ogilby, the King of Portugal, in an effort to divert the gold trade from the South-North route across the Sahara, westwards to the Atlantic coast and so into the hands of Portugal, decided to build a fortress later known as S. Jorge da Mina on the Gold Coast near the gold deposits of Ankober. Joao de Barros describes the arrival of the expedition in 1481.^(7a) They landed where they were

⁶John Ogilby: *Africa*, London 1670. pp. 349, 406, 451, 466.

^(7a)*The Voyages of Cadamosto*: translated by G. R. Crone: Hakluyt Society, Second Series, No. LXXX, p. 50.

to build the fort, and Mass was said, and then they waited for Caramanca, the local King, to come from his village.

"Caramanca" says de Barros, "was seated on a high chair dressed in a jerkin of brocade, with a golden collar of precious stones, and the other captains were all dressed in silk. With the men drawn up in ranks, a long and broad way was made, up which Caramanca, who also wished to display his standing, came with many people in war-like manner, with a great hubbub of kettle-drums, trumpets, bells and other instruments, more deafening than pleasing to the ear."

As we shall see, there are traces of Moslem influence in this orchestra, but the authentic ring of Africa is unmistakable, with the drums and bells, both of which still figure prominently in West African musical *ensembles*.

Shortly before this, in 1455, Cadamosto, a Venetian, sailed for Cape Verde and Senegal, and stayed in the tribal area of the Wolofs.^(7b) He says very little about African music except for one enlightening sentence which shows how little this musical culture has changed.

"The women of this country," he says, "are very pleasant and light-hearted, ready to sing and to dance, especially the young girls. They dance, however, only at night by the light of the moon. Their dances are very different from ours."

In working back through time we now have to pass beyond the period of European contact with Africa. We naturally turn to the Moslem writers. Some of the Arabs were great geographers and travellers and have left fascinating details of African custom. After the spread of Islam westwards across North Africa, the Arabs pushed their trade routes south across the Sahara to Timbuctoo and other centres, and thus had contact with the Africans of the Niger basin.

When using their testimony to musical practice, two facts must be borne in mind. First, music was theoretically frowned on by orthodox Islam doctrine.

"To listen to music is to transgress the law: To make music is to transgress religion: To take pleasure in music is to transgress the faith and renders you an infidel,"—D'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire Ottoman* ii.188⁸.

If therefore Arab writers take the risk of committing their impressions publicly in writing, we may presume that the music they heard was specially noteworthy. Secondly, in spite of the theological wrangle, it is a fact of history that kettle-drums, trumpets, tambourines and specialised singing established themselves as part of the regular *insignia* of Moslem potentates. The famous Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 A.D.) says:

"Among the privileges of sovereignty there is the right of flying flags and banners, of beating drums and of sounding trumpets and horns."

So, when an Arab writer mentions African music, we have to remember that, if he is speaking of African Chiefs and their *entourage*, the musical instruments have probably been influenced by Islamic custom. This is certainly so where trumpets and kettle-drums occur together.

Ibn Batuta, "the greatest of Moslem travellers" lived from 1304 to 1378 A.D. In 1352 A.D. he set off from Morocco, crossed the Sahara⁹ to Timbuctoo and travelled some way down the Niger. He describes his journey in great detail but he makes not a single mention of drums till he is south of the Sahara. When, however, he witnesses the audiences held by the Sultan of Malli, which he calls 'capitale du roi des nègres,' and which was near the Niger, he says:

"When the Sultan is seated, from the lattice of one of the casement windows is thrown out a silken cord to which is attached a striped kerchief of Egyptian make; when the people see this, the drums are beaten and horns are sounded." He adds "Each commandant has in front of him his men, with their spears, their bows, their drums, their horns, (the latter made of ivory, or

^(7b)in the same book, *The Asia of João de Barros*, p. 117.

⁸D. 'Ohsson: *Tableau général de l'Empire Ottoman*, ii. 188, quoted by H. G. Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music*, London 1929, p.20.

⁹*Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah*: translated by C. Defrémery & B. R. Sanguinetti. Paris 1858, pp. 403 405, 406, 411.

of elephants' tusks), and lastly their musical instruments made of reeds and gourds, which are beaten with sticks and make a pleasant sound." When the Sultan goes to an open-air audience, "In front of the Sultan go the singers holding gold and silver rattles; behind him are about three hundred armed slaves. The Sovereign walks leisurely . . . Finally he slowly mounts the platform, in the manner of a preacher mounting his pulpit: as soon as he is seated, they beat the drums, and sound the horn and trumpets".

We note in passing that the Yoruba in Nigeria today have a Royal Drumming called *Bembe*, used when the Chief goes out of his palace. Special rattles called *Sbekesheke* are used, whose handles are still sometimes decorated with gold.¹⁰

When the Sultan prays, "A raised seat is prepared for the Interpreter to sit on: he plays a musical instrument made of reeds and which has some little bells on its underside. He sings a poem eulogising the Sovereign, mentioning his martial enterprises, and exploits, and his great deeds. His wives and female slaves sing with him and play on bows. With them are nearly thirty boy-slaves of the Interpreter, clad in red tunics and wearing white fezzes: each of them carries slung from his neck a drum which he beats. Lastly come the children or young men, pupils of the Interpreter: they disport themselves, they jump in the air, and turn somersaults like the natives of Sind. They perform these exercises with an elegant bearing, and wonderful agility, they also fence with sabres quite prettily."

Apart from the obvious *traits* of Moslem influence the whole of this is redolent of the real Africa. The reed instrument may well be a *sanza* or "Kaffir piano", with reed instead of metal keys, which form is still used in parts of Africa. The boy-slaves are carrying drums slung over their shoulder in the manner of the Yoruba *omele* drums, and the young men are surely performing an African acrobatic dance.

Two hundred years before Ibn Batuta, there was born in Spain a distant descendant of Mahomet, the famous geographer El Idrisi. Sicily at this time, though peopled by Mussulmans, was ruled by the Norman King Roger de Hauteville. This open-minded monarch had a passion for geography and El Idrisi was employed by him to collate all available material. Idrisi was provided with a band of travellers to supply him with first-hand information. He finished his book about 1154 A.D.¹¹ In one hundred and ninety five pages of a modern translation of his text about the whole of North Africa, including the western part south of the Sahara, in spite of the meticulous care to furnish local details such as water supplies, products, people's dress and so on, Idrisi mentions drums only once, and that at Ghana. Of the King of Ghana he says, "Every morning his officers go on horseback to his castle, each carrying a drum which he beats. On arrival at the door, they stop drumming." The very fact that it is only in Negro Africa that drums are mentioned seems significant. It was the use of the drums there, which was particularly worthy of record.

If we go back another eighty years, we catch a fleeting glance of practices much more authentically 'African' than what we have just described. El Bekri, who was probably a native of Spain, wrote a book in 1086 A.D. describing North West Africa, the Sahara, Ghana, and Timbuctoo and the region of the upper Niger, places which he appears to have visited personally.¹² Speaking of Ghana, he says:

"When an audience is granted to the people . . . the opening of the Royal Session is announced by the sound of a certain drum which they call *deba*, and which is made of a long block of wood hollowed out. At the sound of this instrument, the people foregather."

¹⁰ It may be of interest to note that in July this year (1957) the International Library of African Music recording expedition recorded several items of a similar nature which are still employed in the court of the Paramount Chief of the Kanyoka tribe of Southern Congo, near KandaKanda.

The same practice is also observed in the court of the Mukama (Paramount Chief) of Bunyoro in Uganda. Recordings will shortly become available from the Library in the "Sound of Africa" series of LP records . . . Editor.

¹¹ *Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne par Edrisi*, translated by R. Dozy & M. J. de Goeje, Leyden 1866, p. 8.

¹² *L'Afrique Septentrionale par El Bekri*, translated by Mac Guckin de Slane, Paris 1913. pp. 329, 342, 343.

Here unmistakably, is a genuine African drum.

At *Kaoukaou*, which may be the modern Gao on the Niger, east of Timbuctoo, he says that "When the King seats himself for a meal, drums are beaten, and the African women, with their thick hair waving up and down, start dancing." He points out that *Kaoukaou* consisted of two separate towns, one for Muslims and the other, with its King, for Africans, and it is about the latter that he is speaking.

Referring to the derivation of place-names, he observes,

"The inhabitants say that the name of *Kaoukaou* was given them because their drums make this word sound very distinctly. In the same way among the people of *Azower*, *Hir* (mod. Air) and *Zouila*, the drums sound the words '*zouila*, *zouila*'."¹³

Is this very interesting observation the first reference in literature to the Talking Drums which still figure so prominently in West and parts of Central Africa?

So much for Arab writers. We are now at the beginning of the eleventh century: behind this is a gap of 1,000 years before we arrive at the classical writers. Pliny, who lived from 23 to 79 A.D., has a short reference to our subject in his *Natural History*. Speaking of the neighbourhood of Mount Atlas, he says:¹³

"[It is reported that] during the day none of the inhabitants is visible: everywhere is silent with the dread which belongs to desert places: a quiet awe comes upon the minds of those who go near, and besides there is the dread of the mountain raised above the clouds, near to the circle of the moon. But at night it is lit with many fires, it is filled with the revelry of Goat-Pans and Satyrs, it resounds with the song of pipes and reeds and with the sound of drums and cymbals."

Finally we leap back to 500 B.C. Hanno the Carthaginian took part in a naval expedition down the coast of West Africa. It is not quite certain how far he got, but he probably went beyond Sierra Leone, possibly as far as Cape Palmas. In the *Periplus of Hanno*,¹⁴ his description of African custom is in striking agreement with that of Pliny.

"Having taken in water," he says, "we sailed thence straight forwards, until we came to a greater gulf, which the interpreters said was called *Hesperon Keras* (the Horn of the West). In it was a large island and in the island a lake, like a sea, and in this another island, on which we landed; and by day we saw nothing but woods, but by night we saw many fires burning, and heard the sound of flutes and cymbals, and the beating of drums, and an immense shouting. Fear therefore seized on us, and the soothsayers bade us quit the island."

In commenting on these two classical passages, Dr. Thomas Winterbottom, writing in 1803, neatly sums up the whole of our thesis.¹⁵

"These descriptions, though they appear dressed in the garb of fiction, are perfectly reconcilable with truth, and clearly evince that the lapse of so many intervening ages has not produced any material change in the customs of the natives of this country. During the heat of the day, an African village is often nearly deserted by its inhabitants. At a certain part of the year, the men and young people of both sexes are in the daytime at work in their plantations, which probably was the case when Hanno visited the coast: those who remain at home are overwhelmed in the lethargy of sleep; or oppressed by the enervating heat, pursue their occupations in the shade, in languid silence. No sooner, however, does the departing sun permit the air to cool, than fresh vigour seems to animate each breast, and the village resounds with the tumult of loud mirth. About the same time, the young people return to enjoy, after the fatigue of the day, their evening repast: then 'welcome joy and feast, midnight shout and revelry.' The surrounding woods, in which the village is embosom'd soon re-echo with the sound of drums, and shouts joined with the 'clam'rous cymbals' shrill-toned bells,' which are heard at a prodigious distance."

Thus it seems that the drums with their dances, so familiar to us today, have been sounding in Africa right down the ages. We do well to respect so ancient a culture.

¹³Quoted by Dr. Winterbottom, see (14).

¹⁴C. Simonides: *The Periplus of Hanno*, London 1864.

¹⁵Thomas Winterbottom M.D.: *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone*, London 1803. p. 110.