

thms. The author is also perceptive here about ghost or spirit masks; the mask is meant to represent "not a face but a non-face". Chapter 7 ("Hantu") reviews African literature, largely a literature of liberation, and the final chapter ("Blues"), after a lively discussion of cultural conflict and the sociological function of "blues" singing, concludes unexceptionably that "for the answer to the question why African philosophy and culture differ from other cultures there are enough historical reasons which could be investigated, for one to do without physio-psychological arguments which are on the one hand vague and on the other dangerous.

In this reviewer's opinion, the value of Mr. Jahn's book, to the richness of which the above summary does very much less than justice, lies rather in its penetrating and sentive analysis of the meaning and significance of African and neo-African ritual and art, than in its attempt to present a coherent, systematic, "African" philosophy. It may well be that no better attempt could be made; but even though, as the author claims, "the philosophical systems of five different peoples—Baluba, Ruandese, Dogon, Bambara and Haitians—agree basically with one another", there is no doubt that they also differ importantly from one another and from those of other African peoples, and that they resemble in some significant respects those of many non-African peoples (the work of the American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf on Hopi categories comes to mind here). But, more importantly, Mr. Jahn should—and probably does—know that there are dangers in imputing to other cultures systematic philosophical theories of which the members of those cultures are not themselves explicitly aware. Thus even if Ruanda do represent their universe to themselves in terms of the four categories based on the root "-*tu*" which Mr. Jahn has identified for us (and it is not entirely clear from his account that any of them actually *do* represent it in quite this way), it is certain that they have to manage without the concept "Nommo" which the author imports from a very different, and non-Bnaru, culture. Are we then to assume that Ruanda philosophy is after all incomplete? And how do the Dogon manage without the four "-*tu*'s"? Would it not after all have been more satisfactory to have had a complete account of one "African philosophy"—or of several, if the evidence is available? Despite Mr. Jahn's subtle and often profound insight one is left with the strong impression that the "systematic" unity which he imputes to African thought is *his* rather than Africa's. This is of course not at all to disparage the quality of African thinking, but one is bound to ask whether any individual African has ever really held the systematic metaphysic propounded by Mr. Jahn.

The heart of the matter is, I think, that one feels a little uncomfortable at the suggestion that there can, or should, be a specifically "African" metaphysic, and, especially, at the injunction that this product of the African intellect should be measured not by the universal standards of human reason but only "by standards proper to African culture".

Such relative, contextual standards are plainly appropriate where matters of taste and aesthetic and perhaps moral values are concerned; they appear very much less so when the nature of the universe which Africans share with all other human beings is in question. Beliefs about the power of ghosts, the magical force of the word, and so on, are all highly important cultural facts, but as beliefs they are either valid or invalid, and the criteria by which their validity is to be assessed are not a monopoly of Western culture. In the end it will be no service to Africans to suggest that what is true for them and what is true for Europeans should be determined by different criteria.

But as cultural facts, the beliefs and values of the various African and neo-African cultures need to be understood in context, as it were from the inside. And especially in his brilliant discussion of African ritual, music, dancing and writing, Mr. Jahn makes a most valuable contribution to this kind of understanding. He understands, as many anthropologists have failed to, that African ritual and art are expressive rather than instrumental; they are a language, a way of saying things, rather than a technique, a way of doing things (though they may be this too). "In African culture function is directed to meaning not to purpose". When this is understood the right questions can be asked, and sometimes answered, and there is no doubt that Mr. Jahn's rich and evocative study comes up with a good many of the right answers.

John Beattie.

LES CORDOPHONES DU CONGO BELGE ET DU RUANDA-URUNDI by J. S. LAURENTY, 2 vols, 4to. paperback. Vol. I, text with 122 line drawings, 230 pp.; Vol. II, 37 plates and 5 maps. *Annales du Musée Royal du Congo Belge*, Tervuren, Belgium, 1960.

The author of this considerable work is a Doctor of Anthropological Science and assistant at the Royal Museum of Tervuren. His present study, this reviewer understands, was made solely on museum exhibits and through extensive researches in the local museum library. Thus the work is literally an encyclopedia of the complete collection of "The Stringed Instruments of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi" available at the Museum of Tervuren.

This tells enough of the scope of the work, of its limitations as well. Further, we are warned that "one should not expect to find in this work a study purely musical in scope" (p.2). Students of African music especially will regret that the author, after having gone through so much research work, did not find it appropriate to give us at least some indications regarding the range of the more important

groups of instruments, or a number of musical transcriptions that his four-page bibliography no doubt contains. This would have added so much worth to his otherwise competent descriptions, valuable ethnological data and a wealth of information which, if lacking the warm approach and personal touch of the worker in the field, have the accuracy of the scholar who controls his findings almost to the point of fastidiousness.

The general plan of the work is clear: Volume I deals with the description of instruments, their classification, their general distribution, their rôle in African life, craftsmanship, origin and affiliations, in as many chapters and with a profusion of very fine line drawings. Volume II is made of 37 photographic plates where figure the 456 instruments in the collection, in a small scale but exceedingly well reproduced, plus five comprehensive maps as guides to the geographical distribution.

But for that much, the rigid *compartmentation* of the subject matter tends to make it static and brings about duplication that a more flexible approach would have eliminated. A synthesis has no doubt its good points and authors are evidently free to plan their work the way they please, but had the author, instead of dissecting his material according to restrictive topics, elected to integrate his information, plates, and maps in, say, four or five chapters according to groups of instruments, the over-all interest would have been markedly greater. As it is, Chapter 1, running over 100 pages of descriptions only, is hard to digest. Then, if one is interested in musical bows, for example, or in any instrument for that matter, one may have to leaf through each of the seven chapters of Volume I, proceed to Volume II, shifting back and forth to hold onto the thread and try not to forget the reference number . . . an annoying procedure to get your information in our jet age! The information, however, is there; complete, exhaustive; concerned mainly with the former Belgian Congo, but its holds good for adjacent territories; and elsewhere, with a minimum basic knowledge similar or related instruments may be compared and discussions carried to fruitful conclusions.

The object of Chapter 2, "an attempt at a morphological classification", is rather a re-classification of African stringed instruments. Like everything else in the study, it is meticulously arrived at, there is nothing artificial about it, and it clarifies in many ways a certain confusion introduced by the own confusion of observers in a hurry.

The rest of the study, Chapter 3 more especially, as it deals with the "general distribution" of wind instruments, aims at giving a more general appeal to the work, but one feels that "répartition en Afrique et dans le monde" is usually confined within the limits of the author's bibliography, however rich it is.

To sum up, the study as a whole is the work of an expert in his own right, and it brings light and order in a portion of a field that hitherto had been explored only piecemeal and too often with more good intentions than sound cognizance of the matter involved. It is to be hoped that Dr. Laury will extend his researches into publications covering other groups of instruments in addition to the other two excellent studies on Congo drums and xylophones already published by the Tervuren Museum, and that meanwhile, for the benefit of a larger audience, his present study may be given several translations; whether in its actual form might be debatable, as there are the inevitable occasional lapses and omissions, but the opportunity and the importance of his work are obvious.

Dr. The Rev. Brother Basil.

On going to press, we have received a copy of *The Music of Central Africa*, by Rose Brandel, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1961. pp. 272, 135 pp. musical transcriptions. A review will appear in the next number of *African Music*.