

PROJECT
for The Codification of African Music and the
Compilation of Textbooks for Educational Purposes

by

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The following memorandum has been sent to several Universities and other institutions in Africa and elsewhere, in the course of preparation for the establishment of the proposed codification and textbook scheme for African music under the auspices of the Ford Foundation.

For many years it has been felt that one of the more important advances in African cultural affairs would be to compile in textbook form a complete statement of the pattern and ideas behind indigenous styles of music and thus bring the subject naturally into the realm of African education.

Sufficient samplings of several of the musics of Sub-Saharan Africa have already been taken by field research workers in the past twenty years to ensure that the range and extent of the art amply justify the work now proposed. The rewards which will accrue to Africans everywhere, to their instruction and delight, their social pride and national heritage will outstrip those of almost any other branch of cultural study. In these days of mechanical entertainment, through records and radio, there is an inevitable challenge to the continuity of national art forms.

How to achieve this object, within the diminishing time yet left us, is the theme of this enterprise.

The *Ford Foundation* has recently approved a grant to the *International Library of African Music* to enable it to approach all interested Universities and other Institutions with a view to discussing ways and means which would enable them to participate in the scheme, and for each to direct the work within its own country.

The essence of the project is co-operation both in theory and in practice. In this way each territory would not only achieve a better understanding of the nature of its own music, but, through the work of other participating countries, would acquire a broader perspective on the whole compass of African musics and their relative position in this continent-wide art.

The project, which is estimated to take about ten years to complete, falls into two sections . . . (a) the collection and analysis of data; and (b) the publication of the results in the form of works of reference, recordings and textbooks.

During the first five-year period it is proposed that teams of workers, each under suitable local direction, be responsible for the collection of an adequate quantity of representative material within their own borders.

It is intended that recorded matter from the teams will be selected, reproduced and issued, either on tape or disc, to all participants. Written commentaries will also be circulated in a number of classified volumes. The oral and written evidence will, together, form a basis of authentic data from which the textbooks will ultimately be derived.

PERSONNEL

It has been suggested that each University in Africa, or other Institution working in African studies, be invited to recruit, prepare and support a team necessary for the work within its own region, drawn from its own faculties, including students or, where necessary, from elsewhere. Such a team, it is expected, would be composed of both full-time and part-time members.

As few Universities are likely to have sufficient personnel who could be spared for all aspects of the work, it has been suggested that a form of liaison might be arranged with Universities overseas which would supply staff and equipment not locally available. Several Universities both in Europe and America have indicated that they would be glad to take part in the project in this way.

Teams would be expected to cover all facets of the study and would consist of men and women some of whom might be able to function in more than one capacity.

An ideal team would include persons within the following categories . . .

1. *Director*, responsible for the co-ordination of his own territorial section of the project, its field tours and reports.

2. *Musicologist*, responsible for the collection and preliminary analysis of representative selections of local music and an appreciation of the artistry and skill involved in music making.

3. *Linguist, or Controller of part-time Interpreters and Translators*, responsible for the writing and translation of the texts of songs; for vernacular communication in the field; for the analysis of the relationship between colloquial speech tone and melody, and for the assessment of oral literature.

4. *Sociologist, or Social Anthropologist*, responsible for placing the music in perspective within local society.

5. *Psychologist*, specializing in the symbolism of art forms and the humanistic aspects of musical culture, as well as the study of the therapeutic element in indigenous music.

6. *Physicist/Organologist*, responsible for the study of the physics of African music including scales and modes and for the study of the structure, methods of manufacture and employment of African musical instruments.

7. *Sound Recorder*, responsible for all recording equipment and its proper employment.

8. *Photographer*, responsible for general and analytical photography directly connected with musicians, instruments, dancers and craftsmen, both in ciné and still photography.

9. *Other Staff*, including drivers, mechanics and occasional assistants, responsible for transport and general equipment.

The whole team would not necessarily operate in the field at the same time but would follow up and supplement each others work, until a satisfactory territorial account is achieved.

FINANCE (First five years)

Arrangements for the support of the research team sponsored by a University fall under the two categories of cash and kind. Universities which do not have the necessary funds for the purpose might still be able to participate by providing certain facilities within the campus or neighbourhood. These might include housing, equipment, transport, office space and the loan of supporting staff such as interpreters and drivers well acquainted with local conditions. The University might also have access to certain official sources of assistance. In such cases an overseas liaison University might be able to share the outlay by providing those assets in cash or kind which are not available locally.

Lack of present financial or material resources should not deter a University from its intention to participate.

SECOND FIVE YEARS

The second half of the research programme would consist largely of editing and publishing the selected data and the compiling of textbooks. This would require specialized facilities and finance at suitable centres and is expected to entail little further outlay by a University or its team beyond consultation, the confirmation of detail in

the light of wider experience elsewhere, and the effective employment of the results of the research.

GENERAL OUTLINE OF WORK

The following observations are intended as a brief guide to those Universities and other Institutions which would like to participate in the scheme . . .

1. The primary objective of the scheme is to discover the practical basis of the music of this continent and expound it in terms of its usefulness and comprehensibility in Africa rather than in any other country. All other aspects of the research would be secondary to this purpose.

2. To achieve this end it will be necessary to make as wide a survey as possible, collecting items representative of as many African communities as time and funds will allow.

3. A good aim to work for should be an average of at least 100 carefully selected recorded items of music per million people. If this average is maintained the archive collection anticipated under this project would amount to approximately 20,000 items of authentic African material. This number, though far below the potential which could be collected, is considered sufficient, as a start, for the present inter-territorial purpose and should provide sufficient verifiable knowledge to warrant the compilation of a representative series of textbooks.

4. Collection will be effected both by sound recordings on modern equipment, by photography, and by written commentaries on all aspects of the subject.

5. Significant material collected will be copied and distributed to every participating unit so that each country in Africa (together with those Universities overseas which take part) will have in its possession an authoritative archive of recordings of African musical culture for further study and for the encouragement of the art.

6. The languages used will be English and French and data submitted in either language will be translated and compiled for publication in both.

7. Responsibility for subsequent translation into local vernaculars would remain the private concern of territorial authorities at their own discretion.

8. Technical advice and the co-ordination of research will be provided by a small staff of the International Library of African Music, in consultation with experts in each territory. They will be available to travel for consultative purposes on request, but the responsibility for the research within any one territory will remain with the Director of the local research team.

9. The International Library will be responsible to the Ford Foundation for the technical reproduction of tape recordings, the pressing of discs, and the printing of data submitted by the various teams. All material collected and accepted for reproduction under the auspices of this Ford Foundation research project will be issued under one title but fully acknowledged to each territorial contributor. In this way the difficulties of finding publishers and record manufacturers will be eliminated as the Library has access to several record pressing factories throughout Africa and elsewhere, as well as to publishers in different parts of the world. The Library has already received assurances in this regard from manufacturers and printers.

10. It is an essential part of the project that each participating territory or University receives a complete edition of all published material both in printed form and sound recordings.

11. The necessary authority or permission to undertake the research within any territory would remain wholly in the responsibility of the local University which would effect all official or governmental communications to this end.

12. The Director of the Library is prepared to visit any University or Institution within the next twelve months in order to discuss the scheme in detail. It would be

appreciated if such Universities would kindly indicate a time or period best suited for his visit to their territory so that an effective itinerary can be arranged as soon as possible.

(Signed) H. T.
Director of I.L.A.M.
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