

BOOK REVIEWS

THE ORIGIN OF THE KEMANAK by JAAP KUNST. In *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 116, 2e Afl (1960). pp. 263-9, 4 plates.

In 1955 the Abbé Breuil published "*The White Lady of the Brandberg*", recounting, with illustrations, his work on the cave paintings in the Brandberg mountain situated some seventy miles from the coast of S.W. Africa, near Cape Cross. One painting shows a sort of religious procession in which there is a young man carrying a pair of what Breuil suggests are musical instruments, perhaps clappers or cymbals.

Jaap Kunst, the great expert on the music of Java and the Indonesian Archipelago, says these instruments are "unmistakably *Kemanak*". This is a very important identification, for the *Kemanak*, usually occurring in pairs, is a typical Javanese clapperless, metal slit-bell.

Kunst uses this discovery to reinforce a diffusionist review of other instruments, the Chinese plucked lute, the African xylophone, the Indian *vina*, the bar-zither, the pointed flute and the bull-roarer. But the Brandberg *Kemanaks* are the centre of his interest, for accepting Abbé Breuil's date of between 1600 and 2000 B.C., and the opinion of Breuil's collaborator, Mary Boyle, that the cave painters were men of Mediterranean origin (possibly Knossos in Crete), he believes he has found the original home of the *Kemanak*, namely in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The identification of the Brandberg objects as *Kemanaks* is, we think, likely to find general acceptance, but not the date nor the origin. Most scholars regard Breuil's date for the paintings as wrong, and would place them around 1000 A.D., i.e. some 3000 years later: and Breuil himself treats Mary Boyle's Cretan parallels with obvious reserve—to us they seem too fanciful. Much turns on the date, for the latter date rules out Knossos. No one has yet dated the paintings themselves by chemical or other objective means. The C₁₄ date on which Breuil relies is that of the floor of the cave and not of the paintings.

However, the occurrence of the Javanese *Kemanak* near the coast of West Africa certainly reinforces the growing opinion among ethnomusicologists that plurigenesis does not account for the detailed phenomena they observe, and that some sort of diffusion must be postulated. It is a tribute to the memory of Dr. Kunst that his keen observation should have enabled him to give us what must be one of his last but not least important monographs.

A. M. Jones.

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THE DRUM AND THE HOE—Life and Lore of the Haitian People, by HAROLD COURLANDER, University of California Press, 1960. xvi + 371 pp., 90 photographs, 109 pp. of musical transcriptions. \$10.00.

Negroes and other peoples of dark complexion have constantly been used as scapegoats to cover up some of the evil practices of European society and its colonial offshoots, and white men have projected onto black men the darker side of their own selves, as Mannoni has shown in *Prospero and Caliban*. Corrupt or crumbling authorities, reactionary know-alls, prejudiced little men and panic-stricken materialists are always ready to attribute violent and wicked characteristics to harmless people, and sinister motives to innocent pursuits.

One of the most fatuous remarks of 1960 was that of a senior South African police officer, who claimed that when Africans meet in large numbers they mean violence. To anyone who has enjoyed being with crowds of singing and dancing Africans, this theory must seem as bigoted and ill-informed as many sensational accounts of Voodoo (or *vodoun*) must appear to Mr. Courlander, who has studied the music and life of the Haitians for four years, covered by twelve trips between 1937 and 1955. After reading his accounts of *vodoun* and other religious rites and beliefs (Chapters 2-8), and studying the texts of the songs and the excellent photographs, I refuse to believe that the Haitians were ever 'blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened' negroes—and indeed Dr. Alfred Métraux's recent book, *Voodoo in Haiti*, emphasizes clearly that the myth of blood-curdling Voodoo rites was propagated by colonialists, capitalists and their apologists, and by other interested parties who searched anxiously for any excuses to justify their oppression and exploitation of the Haitians.

Mr. Courlander insists that the Haitians "are notable for their restraint from physical violence" (p.164), and a political song about a President shows how they express their dissatisfaction with a regime (p.153):

*There was a president,
He was Tirésius Augustin Simon Sam.
If they were all like him,
Haiti would be finished!*

One can understand the following "humorously macabre" song of a secret society being misunderstood by an outsider just as one of the horror songs which are in vogue today, or the rhyme "Father heard his children scream . . ." might be misunderstood by a Haitian:

*Cut up or devoured, which do you prefer?
Devoured or quartered, which do you prefer?
I'd sooner be devoured!* (p.168).

Mr. Courlander's book, which is beautifully produced, adds a new dimension to existing studies on the people of Haiti. The texts of the songs, which are given in Creole and in English translation, and

of incantations, tales and proverbs, all throw more light on the thoughts and humour of the Haitians, and in many cases show clearly their relationship to the culture of West Africa, from where their ancestors were brought as slaves. We are not allowed to forget, however, that all this art is the production of poor people, one of whose common sayings is "Pitit mangé, travaille youn pile" (A little food, but tremendous work), and that an Englishman, James Franklin, had in 1828 been unkind enough to write; "Nature is too generous to the Haitian; he never wants, and so he never works for hire, as do free labourers in other countries" (pp. 110-111). Franklin did not see that to the recently freed slaves, the "inspiring battle cry of the French Revolution did not mean that all men would work together on another man's plantation and receive the same wages", but that "every man would have his own garden to work for himself as he chose". This understandable reaction of the Haitians to freedom, after nearly three centuries of slavery, angered the English and the French, who maintained that Haiti could never be of any use to anybody except as a colony, and in the long run it has, perhaps, been partly responsible for the over-population and poverty of the country.

In view of the social situation, one can see the immensely significant position of music and dancing in the life of the people, and the variety and ingenuity of their art is well demonstrated in Chapter 19 by the 186 transcriptions of songs and drum rhythms by Dr. Mieczyslaw Kolinski. This is a permanent record of great value to ethno-musicologists, and I hope that Mr. Courlander may be able to complete his contribution to our knowledge of the music, by publishing three or four (or more) long-playing discs, with the actual recordings from which the transcriptions have been made.

One regrets that Mr. Courlander and Dr. Kolinski have refrained from an analysis of the music, especially the patterns of the rhythms and melodies of the styles which are used in different social contexts. In view of the importance of the trance state, one would have liked a discussion of the function of the music in inducing it, and especially some account of Haitians' attitudes to music and musical performances, such as McAllester has given us in *Enemy Way Music*. The early chapters of descriptive ethnography, which add little to our knowledge of *vodoun* rituals and the *loa* spirits, and in any case lack the necessary sociological information as to *who* does what, might profitably have been reduced in size, so that we could have more information about the music, as in the excellent Chapter 13, which demonstrates the value of music and song-texts in the study of ethno-history; a delightful example in this chapter is the contrast between the accounts of an official historian and a popular song of the death of President Florvil Hippolyte in 1896 (pp. 150-151). Mr. Courlander's explanations of Haitian political songs remind us how careful we have to be in our study of African song-texts, where in many cases there are no verifiable records, and we may be tempted to read esoteric symbolism into what are often little more than plain statements of historical fact.

Any complaint that the book contains no analysis or theory is, however, largely compensated for by the fact that the author gives us an unpretentious and honest account of his knowledge of the Haitian people and their musical activities, and does not stray beyond the bounds of his chosen subject.

John Blacking.

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NATALE NATALE O, words and music by Father F. Giorgiotti, F.S.C., *Editrice Nigrizia*, via Meloncello 3/3, Bologna, Italy, 19 pp., no price given, Zande text with an alternative Latin version.

The author introduces his work briefly in these words: "A song typically African, with a practical example of African counterpoint by the voices in the Finale, with an imitation of Zande musical instruments and drum accompaniment for each variation."

The "song", divided into two main sections, may be used as a Christmas cantata. The first section comprises three shorter sections, each with its own theme, and here Fr. Giorgiotti is at his best, at ease with an African tune and its characteristic development. For the student of African music it is an elaborate, consistent illustration of the principles expounded in the author's major work "MUSICA AFRICANA".

The second half, the Finale, takes over the initial themes in a contrapuntal form distributed amongst two choirs of treble voices, the cantor with helpers, and a male choir. Where it is feasible, the Finale is repeated, when the four choirs become eight in number, including the congregation; the accompanying voices add up to ten, and if one wants to add to the song again with an orchestra, the author has given the harmonics of the drums together with the accompaniment (reduced to a double accompaniment on four staves) of various local musical instruments.

With such a setting, no doubt African singers almost anywhere will enjoy both the song and themselves tremendously in their typical fashion, while a trained Western choir is certain of the applause of a hit number. In the opinion of this reviewer, "NATALE NATALE O" is an important addition to the meagre repertoire of genuine African church music, and we must thank the author for it; the more so as he has to work under particularly trying conditions. Incidentally, it is hoped that the Journal may reproduce next year part of another work of his currently in process of being printed, "LA SUPERSTIZIONE ZANDE", a deep incursion into the ethnological field this time; but as one may well presume, a dance song of the sorcerer receives the scholarly attention expected of the author.

Dr. the Rev. Brother Basil.