

LES INSTRUMENTS DE MUSIQUE AU NIGER

Communication présentée par M. Tolia Nikiprowetsky à la Conférence "East and West in Music" (Jerusalem, about 1963) with 19 photographs.

DARK MUSIC

Paper presented to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, Session 1962-63, by David Rycroft. pp. 24, with maps, illustrations and transcriptions.

Two interesting transcripts of papers read before two conferences as far apart as Jerusalem and Manchester, England, have come our way. Both are equally welcome, the one for the new information it contains about instruments which are Saharan rather than sub-Saharan and the other for the re-statement of many of the characteristics of living music in Africa.

The division so frequently made between sub-Saharan and supra-Saharan cultures is clearly demonstrated in M. Nikiprowetsky's paper which is printed in both English and French with excellent illustrations. That this division of cultures is no recent recent invention has been demonstrated by botanical archaeologists who have shown that sub-Saharan ancient vegetation belongs to the same category as South American flora, whereas Saharan fossils all belong to the North American varieties. Not that for a moment we are suggesting any direct connection between floral and aural phenomena. But a cursory glance at the photographs immediately shows which side of the line the instruments of the Niger belong. Drums, one string fiddles, oboes and flutes appear to predominate among the Sudanic speaking peoples whose style of music suggests attachment to the Arab rather than the Negroid world.

David Rycroft's able survey is concerned primarily with demonstrating that the study of African musics provides important information for other disciplines as well now that the science of sound recording on tape has been perfected. Mr. Rycroft who is a member of the A.M.S. is well known to readers of this Journal.

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MUSICAL COLONIALISM

In *Africa Report* for January 1963, Alan P. Merriam, the Music Editor, reviews three commercially published records of South African "Town music". He opens his review with this statement:

"There is more to the study of African music in South Africa than the traditional music of the Zulu and other tribes. Especially in the urban areas, a new popular music has been developing, made up of elements of the traditional combined with Western popular jazz forms.

This music has been little-studied by the experts."

Who these experts may be is not stated.

As a jazz man he is naturally biased towards those aspects of music with which he himself is most associated, and rejoices whenever a piece of music displays the familiar tricks of American jazz. One item he commends because it is "the best and most jazz-like piece on the record"; and another because it is "the most professionally jazz-like piece". His claims that the kind of music which is extensively produced through popular demand in Johannesburg is "new", that it "has been little studied by the experts", and that it does not seem "that anyone has done justice to what is a living, pulsating, swinging music, full of drive and joy" can hardly be substantiated. Had he consulted the extensive catalogues of the many gramophone companies in South Africa several of which have been in existence for over thirty years propagating by all means at their disposal, competitions, concerts, prizes, music bursaries and free instruments, in addition to recording contracts, advanced fees and, in one or two cases, pensions for