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# AFRICA

# South of the Sahara

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# AFRICA

## South of the Sahara

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NOTES BY ALAN P. MERRIAM

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

- BECHUANA
- ZULU
- SWAZI
- CHOPI
- BUSHMAN
- AMAKWAVI
- TWA
- LUCHOSI
- TUTSI
- GANGELE
- SHI
- HORORO
- PENDE
- BAMBUTI
- PINDI
- MAHAFALY
- IBANI
- BULU
- YORUBA
- BAMBARA
- ACOLI
- MBOKO
- MAKWA
- WOLOF
- BABINGA
- BOUNGOMO

YORUBA, BRITISH MUSEUM

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# AFRICA SOUTH of the SAHARA

Introduction and Notes

by

ALAN P. MERRIAM

While the music of Africa south of the Sahara has been the subject of a considerable number of accounts on the part of travelers, explorers, journalists and other interested laymen, it is only in relatively recent years that its serious study has been pursued as a major field of inquiry, and our knowledge of it is still far from complete even for limited music areas. Yet there seem to be underlying unities which can be isolated, and some of these will be discussed here with reference to the songs which make up this recording.

It is perhaps wise to speak first of certain of the misconceptions concerning African music. One of these--that Africans are savages, and that therefore their music can only be savage in turn--has been dealt with time and time again; let it be sufficient to say here that the "savage-civilized" dichotomy exists only in the minds of those who would artificially make it so. A second assumption regarding African music is that it is old, and that in some mysterious way it represents what Western music must have been like say, 10,000 years ago. This thoughtless point of view derives, in part at least, from our Western preoccupation with the old upon which we often tend to place a high premium; for us there is a fascination and certain reverence for old objects which probably derives partly from the fact that our own culture is a young one in the world range. But there is no reason to suppose that African songs are old at all; in point of fact, most of them are probably of very recent origin, and many are improvised today on the spot. This is not to say that there are no old songs in Africa; it is reliably reported, for example, that songs referring to battles of the eighteenth century are still current in Nigeria, although we are not told whether this means that the songs themselves are that old; and on a more modest scale there is definite evidence of songs which are ten, twenty or perhaps more years old. But we have songs in our culture which are demonstrably older than anything we can prove for Africa; thus, for example, we sing hymns written by John Wesley in 1737, and this is by no means the oldest of our songs, of course. The idea of antiquity is more closely tied up with our Western assumption

that African peoples in some way represent our "contemporary ancestors," and that thus their music must be in a stage of evolution comparable to our own, millenia ago. Involved here is a basic confusion of time and space, as well as our involvement with our own cultural values which places our way of life at the pinnacle of human achievement and ignores the achievements of others. It is methodologically naive to assume that the history of one group of people is the history of all peoples; each culture is the product of its own historical development and not a carbon copy of all others. True, there may be regularities in the development of human culture, but these do not mean a predestination of end results. African culture is as old as, if not older than, Western culture, but it, too, has changed constantly through time--no culture remains static--and has presumably moved toward its own modes of expression. There is no reason to assume that our system, in this case of music, represents the pinnacle of achievement toward which all other cultures strive. The African music system works by its own rules and satisfies those who play and sing it; it is neither necessarily older nor younger nor better nor worse - it is another system, distinct from ours.

A third assumption frequently made about African music is that it is haphazard; that a song, once sung, is never repeated; that, in fact, it never exists as a distinct and recognizable entity itself. This again is untrue, for each song itself is a unit set off from other such units to be sung again and again so long as it remains in the public fancy. It is true that less emphasis is placed in African music upon exact repetition than in the Western system, for improvisation plays a larger part, but such improvisation is used within controlled limits, and within any song there is a fixed melodic line which gives it its specific identity.

A final fallacy concerning African music is that it is inevitably expressed in terms of drums and drumming; this general belief has been stimulated by a number of factors. For one, there has traditionally been an emphasis in the literature on drums and drumming by early explorers, travellers, missionaries and others who were struck by the unquestioned high incidence of the use of drums in Africa as

compared to Western culture. Second, drums themselves present any traveler with a common bridge between the cultures, for drums exist in both and, faced with a welter of strange musical instruments and musical styles one quite naturally turns his attention toward the familiar. Third, almost all human beings seem to be interested in and stimulated by rhythm, and, again, the so-called "talking drums" provide us with a phenomenon understandable yet "mysterious", and there are a number of other factors which stimulate the Western observer. Surely one of the characteristics of African music lies in its complicated fusions of various rhythms, and surely these rhythms are expressed percussively, but to see them in terms of drums alone is but to scratch the surface of a complex musical expression. For song itself, sung by voices, or in instrumental songs, played perhaps on a harp, are expressed percussively and rhythmically as well; and there are, further, large areas of music and even great geographic extents in Africa in which drums play a minor part indeed. Taking all Africa as a subject for generalization, it is probably far more accurate to cite handclapping as the major percussive instrument, with striking sticks or other idiophones a close second, and drums third. There is no attempt here to minimize the importance of drums in much African music; rather, it is to point out that such a pre-occupation is by no means exclusive, and that the percussive and rhythmic characteristics of African music are displayed throughout the entire musical system in terms of vocal expression, melodic shapes, intonation patterns, instrumental techniques and other means, as well as through drums and drumming. The plea is for a shift to a more balanced perspective rather than for a change of perspective.

One of the characteristics of the African musical system is the stress placed upon musical activity as an integral and functioning part of the society; this is a feature which music shares with other aesthetic aspects of culture in Africa and one which is emphasized in almost all nonliterate societies. Thus music finds expression in the everyday life of the people to a degree probably more fully realized than in Western society. And further, more people seem to take an active part in musical activities, spectators and performers frequently indistinguishable in a social dance, ceremony, or whatever the occasion be. In establishing this wide range of song types in Africa, it has been said of the Hutu of Ruanda, for example, that "at least twenty four general social song types, as distinguished from religious songs, are recognized by the people, including those played by professional musicians for entertainment, songs for beer drinking, war, to pay homage to a chief, for hunt-

ing, harvesting and general work, songs sung at the birth of a child or to admonish erring members of the society, to recount a successful elephant hunt, to deride Europeans, songs of death, vulgar songs and others. Further, within each of these categories sub types may be distinguished. Thus certain songs are sung when taking a new canoe from the place it was constructed to the water, when paddling against a strong current, when paddling with a current, or to make the paddlers work better together." Music plays a part, then, in all aspects of culture; in political organization it may stand, for example, as a symbol of political power, or songs may be sung in praise of certain officials. In social organization, social control is widely effectuated through singing songs about the misdeeds of erring individuals usually without mentioning names, but always with identification made certain through indirect reference. Similarly, the wide range of songs for birth, twins, marriage, death, and so forth, fall into this general category. In the field of economics, the use of music in cooperative labor is outstanding. In religion, music frequently serves as a direct means of communication with the gods or spirits, sometimes, for example, through the medium of possession; and musical instruments, as entities, sometimes have symbolic religious meaning. Music may also function as an historic device, as a means of recounting current events, or of educating children. Music itself falls into the aesthetic aspect of culture, and its relationship to other aesthetic aspects - folklore, dance, drama - is clear and strong. And, finally, the fusion of music and language, in the form of song texts, and the influence of one upon the other, is of considerable interest, as are the texts themselves as expressions of literary behavior or of special liberties which may be taken in song although not in the spoken word.

This close integration of music with the rest of the culture, then, is of importance in understanding African music as a whole, for we deal here with a system only understandable in total terms - that is, there is no body of literate music theory which introduces concepts of scale, mode, or interval as in the Western system; instead, there is a clear knowledge, of which we understand relatively little as yet, of what music is and what it should be in terms of its total relationships to the culture of which it is a part.

It is perhaps partly because of this close integration of music with the rest of culture that such a tremendous variety of musical styles and musical instruments exists in Africa. Of instruments, the four major accoustic classes - idiophones, membranophones, chordophones, and aerophones - are all well represented. Idiophones include a wide variety of rattles, bells, gongs, rhythm sticks, notched sticks, log signalling drums and gongs, and others. Of special

interest here is an instrument pan-African in its distribution, and identified under the generic term sansa in West Africa, kembe in Central Africa and mbira in South Africa. It consists of a sounding board, sometimes with gourd resonator attached, to which are fastened bamboo or metal keys, with one end left free to be plucked with the thumbs. A great variety of tunings is found; the instrument is sometimes used in orchestra, but more frequently accompanies an individual singer. It can be heard in almost all of Africa at almost any time of day or night. The xylophone is also an idiophone widespread in Africa, ranging from single slabs, or sometimes sets of single felled logs, to highly complex forms played by more than one man.

Mention has already been made of drums which constitute the class of membranophones; they are widely found in Africa in a great variety of forms. In West Africa they are most frequently played in groups of two, three or more and frequently have considerable significance in the religious system. In East Africa, much larger drum choirs are found, ranging from 5 to 25 in number, and often of special political significance. Drums are usually carefully tuned, and may be played with hands or sticks in a variety of ways.

Aerophones are widely represented by flutes, flageolets, trumpets, reed instruments and bullroarers of various types. Flutes, flageolets and panpipes are often used in connection with herding activities, while trumpets appear in hunting activities of various sorts as well as on other occasions. Of special interest, among others, is the flute technique found especially in East Africa whereby the performer produces one melodic line on the instrument itself and a second, complementary line in his own throat; the technique is considered difficult, as indeed it is, and is often the criterion whereby a good performer is judged.

Chordophones of all types are found in Africa, including board and stick zithers, lutes, lyres and harps. The musical bow is widely distributed in several forms; harps are found in upper East Africa across the continent to West Africa; lyres and zithers are found almost everywhere on the continent. The trough zither, for example, is a characteristic instrument of upper East Africa; it consists of a hollowed piece of wood approximately three feet long with a number of strings stretched from end to end; the strings are frequently brushed with the sides of the fingers rather than plucked with the finger tips as in Western performance. A number of guitar-like forms, such as the Wolof halam, are found, and single-stringed fiddles, probably of Arabic origin, are distributed in Northeast Africa.

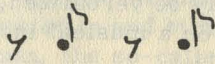
Both instrumental soloists and groups of instru-

mentalists are found in Africa, but accompanied song is probably somewhat more frequent in African music than solo instrumental performance. The latter generalization is supported by the fact that apparently almost all songs have words which are conceptualized, although they may not necessarily be verbalized, even when the song is played on a musical instrument alone.

Musical styles in Africa are as varied as instrumental types, although general characteristics bind the system together for most of the continent. It seems possible to distinguish tentatively eight music areas, the Bushman-Hottentot, East Africa, East Horn, Central Africa, West Coast, Sudan-Desert, North Coast and Pygmy. These music areas follow in general those delimited for African culture-groupings, although they are by no means identical; within each there is clearly variation from group to group, but in general this tentative mapping seems justifiable.

The overall characteristics of African music south of the Sahara which distinguish it as a general area from other general areas such as the Indo-Arabic or Sino-Mongolian, for example, are somewhat difficult to describe with great precision, although their general outline seems clear. Surely one of these basic characteristics concerns the great importance of rhythm as well as a percussive concept of music performance; further one of the bases of the rhythmic elaboration common in Africa is the simultaneous use of two or more metric schemes. This latter principle is not to be confused with a simple rhythmic elaboration of a single basic meter; rather, different meters are used in combination, and thus while one drum is playing three beats, a second is playing four, a third two, and so forth, over the same span of time. Thus multiple meter results, bringing with it for Western listeners the problem of a basic organization to provide a central core around which the rhythmic elaboration is organized. W. E. Ward, who wrote in 1927, proposed that the organizing principle is based on the fact that in any drum choir one drum, and according to him the biggest, plays regularly in duple meter with variation in simple rhythmic alteration only and not in metric organization. A fundamental beat, then, is established, about which all the other rhythms, and meters, are oriented. Erich M. von Hornbostel, the German comparative musicologist, agreed with the multiple meter principle, but interpreted the act of drumming in such a way as to reverse what the Western observer would consider to be the basic organization. Hornbostel felt that drumming involves a two-part motor behavior in that the muscles of the arm are strained in raising the hand and released in dropping it; of the two actions, of course, but one is stressed acoustically. It

was Hornbostel's contention that Africans conceived both actions as part of the rhythmic figure; on this basis, syncopation becomes meaningless since the portion of the action not sounded - that is, lifting the arm - represents the down beat. Thus in the following



Hornbostel felt that for Westerners the figure appears syncopated because we listen only for the acoustic aspect. Africans, however, apparently conceive neither up beat nor down beat because of the physical unity of the two-part action. Unfortunately, Hornbostel never presented any evidence to indicate that the concept is truly valid to Africans, and it seems doubtful that such evidence could be gathered.

Richard A. Waterman suggests the concept of the "metronome sense" as an organizing principle in African rhythm and meter. He says: "From the point of view of the listener, the metronome sense entails habits of conceiving any music as structured along a theoretical framework of beats regularly spaced in time and of co-operating in terms of overt or inhibited motor behavior with the pulses of this metric pattern whether or not the beats are expressed in actual melodic or percussion tones." Waterman feels that this metronome sense is such an integral (although not of course racially inherent) part of African musical perception that it is taken for granted, and that with the assumption of the operation of this beat, the African musician is freed from actually emphasizing it because he can assume that his listeners will automatically do so; thus he may elaborate the beat almost at will, whereas in Western music it must be clearly stated at all times. The concept of the metronome sense is further implemented by the point that shifts of emphasis to one meter or another may and do occur in a given piece of African music since different metric components, one or the other of which may be stressed, are present at all times. It is here that the apparent logic of the proposition of the metronome sense appears, for without the metronome sense it would seem that the African listener could become fully as confused as the Westerner. On the other hand, the idea is not easily susceptible of proof, and no empiric documentation is offered save for the logic of the proposition itself.

A. M. Jones has suggested that the organizing principles of African rhythm vary according to whether handclapping or drumming is used; in the former the clapping pattern goes straight through the song, once established, thus providing "an inexorable and mathematical background to the song." Two fundamental differences differentiate drumming from handclapping. The first is that in drumming, the main beats never coincide, that is, that the initial beats of

two given patterns are not struck at the identical moment in time. This process Jones calls "crossing the beats," and he feels that it is absolutely fundamental in African drumming technique. The second difference between handclapping and drumming patterns is that while there is no variation in the handclapping pattern once established, there is considerable variation in drum patterns. The importance of rhythm in African music, then, is an unquestioned principle, and almost all students agree upon the fact that this rhythmic basis is frequently expressed in terms of the simultaneous use of two or more meters. The organizing principle on which this phenomenon of multiple meter is based, however, is accounted for in different ways by the experts. As for the use of percussion in African music, we have had occasion to comment in previous paragraphs.

No clear delineation of African melodic structure has been made, although some general comments on melodic contour and rhythm are found. Thus Jones has suggested that the outline of an African melody is like a succession of the teeth of a rip saw, that is, a fairly steep rise followed by a less steep descent. Overall, further, the line tends to be slowly descending. Hornbostel suggested that the typical melody consisted of two halves, the first resting on the dominant, the second built analogously on the tonic. Kolinski has emphasized the useage of various successions of thirds in West African melodies. In melodic rhythm, Waterman has advanced the concept of offbeat phrasing of melodic accents in which the melodic accents fairly consistently fall between the percussion accents; this is a device used in African melody to threaten but never quite destroy the listener's orientation to the subjective metronome. It tends to heighten musical excitement. The major formal structure in African song is clearly antiphony - alternate singing by soloist and chorus - although other types certainly occur. Further, the melodic line sung by the chorus typically identifies the song, while the leader is free to improvise his melody within fixed limits; thus the chorus line remains basically unchanged while leader's line is usually varied. Finally, the phrases of leader and chorus generally overlap, thus producing harmony, and leading sometimes to ostinato and canon. Form of melodic lines and, indeed, songs, tends to be binary rather than ternary. In general, song forms are of the litany type, although highly complex forms may occur as among the Chopi where orchestral pieces of nine to eleven movements comprise an integrated orchestral-dance-poetic performance lasting approximately 45 minutes. Again, the song cycle is fairly widely used in which songs are strung together in a meaningful sequence resulting, as among the Ekonda of West Central Congo, for example, in extremely complex and cohesive extended performances.

Considerable controversy has existed over the form of the mythical African scale, with some observers insisting on a sixteen-note division of the octave, others a pentatonic concept, and still others a natural scale of conjunct fourths. In general, however, the present view seems to be that most African groups south of the Sahara use a modified diatonic scale arrived at, of course, independently from Western influence. There has also been much discussion of the African scale with flatted third and seventh degrees; whether this can be substantiated remains somewhat in doubt. Most writers have denied the presence of harmony in African music; Waterman, on the other hand is a strong supporter of the view that harmony is more widely used than is ordinarily admitted. Central here is the question of the differentiation between harmony and polyphony, especially as applied to a non-Western music, but no matter what the terms applied, it is clear that the simultaneous sounding of more than one pitch by different singers or instrumentalists is a commonplace in much of African music, as is especially notable in the present album.

Singers in Africa seem in general to use an open, resonant voice quality of a type familiar to Western listeners in Western European folk music. At the same time, a wide variety of tonal qualities is employed and often a thready or buzzing tone is sought out, frequently in instrumental performance. The use of a wide variety of tone qualities seems characteristic of African music, as does a wide variety of ornamental devices such as the rising attack, falling release, glissando, shouting, and others.

These, then, seem to be general characteristics which enable us to speak of African music south of the Sahara as belonging to a reasonably cohesive music area. All these are probably not to be found in the music of any single tribe, nor does every tribe necessarily have any single characteristic. Like all generalizations, these must allow for exceptions. Finally, it should be pointed out that all the characteristics noted here are to be found in the songs which comprise this album; they are indicated in the notes for specific songs.

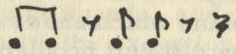
**BAND 1. ZULU SONG:** The Zulu are cultivators and pastoralists in southeast Africa, probably best known through their leader and brilliant tactician, Chaka, who united the diverse Nguni family of Bantu-speaking people into the Zulu nation in the late 18th century and ruled it until his assassination in 1828. This Zulu song begins with a choral recitation in which the leader speaks a phrase in a non-melodic style and is answered by the chorus in similar manner; normal speech melody lines are apparently exaggerated. The leader then introduces the song material and is again answered by the chorus, after which the frequently-heard antiphonal

chorus and response pattern is established. The chorus not infrequently sings in parallel fifths, the leader supplying one of the parallel lines. The song is a litany type in which the chorus line occupies three quarters of the melodic length, the leader's the remainder in a 4/4 meter. Handclapping is begun fairly early in the piece; it takes the form of a simple and persistent eighth-note beat. The main melodic outline is as follows:

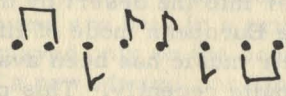


**BAND 2. SWAZI SONG:** The Swazi, like the Zulu, are a Bantu people of southeastern Africa centered, however, in the Swaziland Protectorate. The economic basis of their culture is agriculture with maize or millet as the primary crop, and cattle are used in a prestige economy.

This Swazi performance is most probably a slow dance rhythm. Organized in 4/4 meter, the leader and chorus chant rather than sing their interlocking parts. The major rhythmic scheme for the chorus is:



with the leader filling in the various pauses:



The rhythmic chanting is accompanied by drums which are very simply tapped in even eighth notes or dotted eights-sixteenths, and by voice trilling as well as a considerable amount of whistling. Notable is the consistency with which the "melodic" accents fall between the percussion beats.

**BAND 3. CHOPI TIMBILA:** The Chopi timbila is a xylophone manufactured to be played in ensembles - treble, alto, tenor, bass, and double bass instruments are made. Parts of the timbila include the frame, gourd resonators, and keys; the latter are made from specially cured wood which is hollowed out from the underside until the requisite pitch is reached. The beaters are made from soft rubber. In this song, played by a timbila orchestra, the

melodic line follows a four bar pattern in 4/4 meter which is broken into units based a fifth apart; there is a certain "harmonic" feel to the Western ear with the first measure suggesting the tonic, the second and third the dominant, and the fourth, the tonic again, although it is not to be assumed that this song should be interpreted in the Western harmonic sense. Whistling, sometimes in rhythm and sometimes as simple trilling, is used, and it seems possible that the rhythmic pulse heard indistinctly in the background is raised by dancing feet since the song was recorded at one of the Witwatersrand Gold Mine dances in South Africa.

**BAND 4. AMAKWAVI SONG:** Begun by a strong masculine voice of extremely thready quality, this song moves from the leader-chorus pattern to a choral recitation. The melodic line is triadic in nature, that is, built upon thirds which are organized into linear units suggesting triads; at the same time, the chorus is divided into two parts which sing in parallel fourths. The group is clearly highly organized and the clean enunciation and impeccable unison, as well as the group increase in tempo, are handled with considerable skill.

**BANDS 5, 6. BUSHMAN SONGS:** The Bushmen, together with the Hottentot people, form a distinctive sub-racial group localized in the Kalahari Desert area in the southwestern part of the African continent. Living in a fierce desert habitat, the people have organized a mode of life which exploits the environment to its fullest advantage and which shows a remarkable adaptation to the difficult problems standing in the way of subsistence. The Bushmen are today a marginal group which has been pushed farther and farther into the desert by the encroachment of the European mode of life; relatively little of their music has been available on recordings until quite recently. This particular song, sung by male voices, is of a type not frequently heard in published collections. The voices are strained, the use of glissando is strongly marked, and heavy accent emphasizes the sliding from one note to another. The particular style employed makes it difficult to ascertain whether the occasional overlapping harmony is accidental or purposeful. In that a number of distinct melodic lines are present, sometimes parallel and sometimes not, the song can be called polyphonic.

The second Bushman song is more melodious in the Western sense of the word than the first. The leader's line is also more independently and fully developed, and the role of the chorus more clearly defined. Notice the wide range, and the regular recurring strophic form. There is less heterophonic effect.

**BANDS 7, 8, 9. BECHUANA SONGS:** The Bechuana are a Bantu group living in the Western Transvaal and parts of the Kalahari Desert, as well as in Bechuanaland proper in southern Africa; they are made up of a number of distinct tribes, each of which has its own autonomous political structure. This song uses the familiar leader and chorus pattern in the litany form, each unit of which occupies six beats in a moderate tempo. The chorus is divided into more than one section, using a polyphonic technique somewhat reminiscent of pygmy style. The first three steps of a major scale, as well as the major triad, are emphasized, and overlapping parts give a distinct harmonic impression.

The second song differs rather markedly from the first. It is begun by a single voice on such a high pitch as to suggest a falsetto technique; the melodic line drops rather sharply to a resting point in a middle range and is followed by a very rapid spoken line and the melodic line again. The leader then swings into the principle refrain and is answered by a chorus which hums its melody with sharp accentuation. Polyphonic overlapping lines are clearly marked, with the chorus sometimes divided into two parts and with two leaders singing, sometimes separately and sometimes together; the interval of the minor third, as well as of the fourth, is frequently heard. A generalized version of the melodic interplay, without attempt to reproduce exactly any single verse, is as follows:

The musical notation is presented in two systems. The first system consists of three staves: CHORUS (top), LEADER I (middle), and LEADER II (bottom). All staves are in 4/4 time. The CHORUS part is a single melodic line. LEADER I and LEADER II parts are also single melodic lines. The second system consists of three staves, which appear to be a continuation or a different arrangement of the first system, showing overlapping parts between the three staves.

Sung in a strong three-pulse rhythmic unit, the third Bechuana song is again markedly different from the two preceding it. Here the leader sings two pulses in a thick voice, accenting the second more than the first; he is answered by a phrase sung either by a second man or by himself which begins a half tone lower and drops a perfect fifth. A third singer adds the major third and the triad is firmly established. Again the style is basically polyphonic.

BAND 10. LUCHOSI SONG: This song from Angola is sung by a strong male voice and male chorus in the call and response pattern. In the background two, and possibly three drums may be heard; the beat established is quite clearly based on the simultaneous use of two meters. As frequently happens in West African song, the tonal organization is centered about a major-minor (to Western ears) usage in which the three initial tones of a major scale are sung followed by the sixth degree of scale below which is, of course, the related minor tonic. This major-minor usage, which involves the interval of the third, is found frequently also in New World Negro music.

BAND 11. GANGELE SONG: At the beginning of this Angolan song the drums are heard much more clearly than in the preceding selection; the concept of multiple meter is again central. The leader-chorus pattern predominates with male leader and mixed chorus; the two lines overlap consistently with the leader constantly increasing the length of his line as the song progresses. Parallel fifths and parallel thirds are heard, partly because the leader frequently sings the chorus phrase a fifth above the chorus itself. Note the consistent use of the leading tone interval of a major rather than minor second, the latter characteristic in the Western idiom.

BAND 12. TUTSI SONG: The Tutsi, (Watutsi, Watussi, etc.), probably one of the best known tribes in Africa to Westerners, are cattle herding peoples of Hima stock, who migrated to their present habitat in the countries of Ruanda and Urundi probably four to five hundred years ago, taking political control as they occupied the geographic area, and reducing to a dependent status the Bantu and pygmoid peoples they encountered. Physically, the Tutsi are Nilotic, characterized by considerable height, slimness and sharp facial features. The song is sung by a chorus of girls and women who use a style more frequently associated in a modified form with the Twa, or pygmies, than with the Tutsi. In it, the melodic line is, so to speak, never allowed to die down, and a semi-canonic form results in which one group starts the melodic

line on a high pitch, slowly working its way down; a second group enters on the high pitch followed by the first again. The melodic rhythm is accentuated by rattles, sounded in a simple series of beats. The range is an octave, the scale essentially pentatonic, and some parallel thirds and fifths are heard.

BAND 13. TUTSI DRUMS: Probably no drum choir in Africa is better known than the Royal Drums of the Tutsi in Ruanda. The Tutsi drums have almost become an American household word and have been often used as the example of African drumming par excellence. Yet all things considered, they are probably of less significance musicologically than much other African drumming, especially that of West Africa. The major contrast between the drumming of the two areas lies in that misty realm of the concept of "hot" rhythm which seems to involve subtle shades of rhythmic phrasing and probably the use of multiple meter. The Tutsi drumming, viewed from the standpoint of these concepts, is in no sense "hot" -- it does not "swing" in its rhythmic phrasing as does most West African drumming, and while it employes polyrhythms, it is certainly not as polymetric as is West African drumming. At the same time, it remains exciting, probably because of its upright and extremely powerful directness that forces the beat on the listener; certainly a session of listening to the powerful battery "in person" is an exhausting physical as well as emotional experience.

The Royal Drums, of course, are the symbol of kingship in Ruanda, and other drum batteries -- with the exception of that owned by the Queen Mother -- are not tolerated. As a consequence, little drumming is heard in Ruanda in any other situation. The actual Royal Drums are kept in a private store place and are played only on the occasion of coronation of a new Mwami, or king of the country; the "substitute" Royal Drums are, however, played fairly frequently on public occasion. Six drums are used, one of which is a small and high-pitched lead drum; all drums are played by sticks with a spoon-shaped striking head. The drumming patterns are divided into units, each of which is given a special name, frequently thought to have an affective association with the sound produced. In this selection, the lead drum is clearly heard, with four of the remaining drums laying down a background pattern against which the sixth drum stands out as a solo voice.

BAND 14. TWA SONG: Of the three human groups living in Ruanda at the present time, the Twa (Batwa) occupy the lowest social position, looked down upon by the Tutsi and Hutu



as something not quite human. Pygmoid hunters and potters primarily, they occupy special status at the court of the Mwami of Ruanda and are favored as his professional musicians. The song presented here is quite typical of the Ruanda Twa style; it is in the leader-chorus pattern. The leader starts the song, characteristically beginning his melodic line very high, sometimes in falsetto, and allowing it to move downward rather sharply. Clearly evident in the song is a technique whereby the chorus is forewarned of its entrance point; since this is sometimes puzzling to Western listeners it is specially noted here. In this case, after finishing his phrase, the leader in every instance, reaches a kind of melodic plateau followed by a short and seldom varied phrase which is the signal to the chorus. The phrase is approximately:

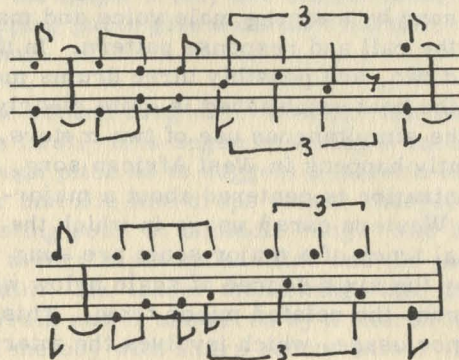


The chorus line is strongly heterophonic; it, too, starts high, and cascades downward, with the individual voices free, within a fixed framework of course, to improvise on the major melodic outline. The result is a powerful cascade of sound which involves much harmonic overlapping, and considerable dissonance as well as consonance. Although not present in this song, most Twa songs are also accompanied by handclapping.

**BAND 15. HORORO FLUTE:** The name of this song is Rwatyokori, the name of a local chief, and it is played by a Hororo man to praise the leader "because he is a good man." The Hororo are a group of Bantu people who wander between Uganda and Ruanda, and who stand in the same relationship to the Hima proper as do the Hutu to the Tutsi in Ruanda. The instrument is a four-holed flute, umukuri, made from a light reed. The holes, ubgasha, and the V-shaped notch in the blowing end of the instrument, ikinimba, are burned into the wood with any suitable piece of hot metal; the instrument heard in this recording is approximately sixteen inches long and end-blown. The burred tone used by the instrumentalist is desirable, or as he put it, "to my will." In the background the feet of a dancer are heard stamping the ground.

**BAND 16. SHI KASAYI:** This song, Flora, is played by Masirika Pimapima, about eighteen years old, on the kasayi, a plucked idiophone consisting of a wooden resonator to which are fastened metal keys played with the thumbs. Among the Shi (Bashi) of the western shores of Lake Kivu in the eastern Belgian Congo, the instrument is called kasayi when a gourd resonator is added, likembe when the

resonator is built into it. The instrument in this recording has seventeen keys, eight played with the left hand and nine with the right; the instrumentalist showed considerable style, lifting his thumbs smoothly from the keys, and stroking rather than plucking. Musically, the song is an excellent example of the coordination required between the two hands in playing this type of instrument; the two lines are frequently of considerable rhythmic complexity both alone and in relation to each other as indicated in the following excerpts:



**BAND 17. KIVU BAMBUTI SONG:** This song, Nakabuya (the name of a woman) is sung by a group of Kivu pygmies of the eastern Belgian Congo; they call themselves Bambuti and at the time of recording were working as professional musicians for a local Shi chief. Included are three drums and two rattles which are used to accompany a chorus of seven or eight men and women; the head drummer is also the chief singer. The text of this social dance song concerns a woman who has been married a long time but who has never had children; then a child starts. She feels it in her body and asks her mother what it is and why she has this funny feeling. Her mother tells her that it is a child and later finds her daughter in a wild state. Finally the baby is born and there is great rejoicing when it turns out to be a boy. The singing style of the Kivu Bambuti is very direct and forceful, in the leader-chorus pattern.

**BANDS 18, 19, 20. BAMBUTI SONGS:** The Bambuti, or pygmies, are centralized in the heart of the tropical Ituri Forest region of the Belgian Congo where they are believed to have been pushed by successive migration waves of Bantu and Sudanese peoples. They are hunters and gatherers, living on the products of the forest but at the same time trading with their non-pygmy neighbors for various other products and, of course, trading and buying for staple goods such as clothing and salt in the general stores in the area. Colin Turnbull divides the music of the Bambuti into five categories; two types of religious songs,

the Lusamba and Alima which correlate roughly with the religious groupings of the men and women respectively; hunting and gathering songs which, of course, deal with certain phases of the economic life of the people; and finally play songs. Musical instruments are used infrequently, although flutes, drums, musical bow and gross xylophones are sometimes found. Rhythm sticks are used a good deal, and are sometimes frayed out at the end and used as "brushes."

The three songs here differ considerably from those of the Twa of Ruanda and the Kivu Bambuti illustrated elsewhere in this album, and from that of Ruanda Bambuti as well; somewhat more affinity is seen between Kivu Bambuti and various pygmy groups of French Equatorial Africa, especially in the third of these three songs.

The first song, sung by a rather large group of men, is accompanied by rhythm sticks which suggest, at least, a polymetric technique although this could only be substantiated by on-the-spot observation. A singing technique is used which is rather widespread in pygmy music in various parts of the world; this is the so-called hocketing or durchbrokene Arbeit technique in which each individual involved sings a particular, short melodic phrase, consisting of from one to five or six notes, which is then timed to form a continuity with the similar short patterns sung by other individuals. The end result may be in one of two forms -- a single melodic line may appear, made up of the small bits of melody, or a heterophonic-polyphonic "mass of sound" may appear in which lines are discernable but overlapping. The latter result is not unlike that of the Ruanda Twa songs, although the technique involved differs in the two groups. There are, further, in this song, discernable leaders whose melodic lines are longer than most of those sung by the other members of the group.

The second song, also sung by male chorus accompanied by rhythm sticks, is of a somewhat different type. In this case, the song is begun by a clearly defined leader singing a long solo line after which he assumes leadership of the chorus. The chorus itself is organized in this case into a cohesive unit which deals with a specific melodic line at given intervals in time; this line is strongly descending over the range of an octave, and is triadic in nature. Leader lines are handled by three men who sing different melodies thus establishing a strongly polyphonic pattern.

Sung by male leader and chorus without rhythm sticks, the third song is again of a different type from the others in this album. In this case, a straight call and response pattern is

established which is carried on throughout the song without deviation from the basic refrain. The chorus line covers a range of an octave and a minor third, and is sharply descending in character. Falsetto yodeling is used in this song, as in the others; this technique is similar to that used by various pygmy groups in French Equatorial Africa. Again, one or two voices can be heard in the background using the falsetto yodeling technique; although not part of the major singing group they add considerably to the effect of the song.

**BAND 21. PENDE XYLOPHONE:** The Pende (Bapende) are an agricultural group occupying territory in the Kwango region of the western Belgian Congo. Among the Pende, the xylophone is constructed of wooden keys which are carved flat on top and curved on the bottom; these are carefully cut and carved to the specific length and thickness required. Beneath each key is mounted a hollowed gourd which acts as a resonating chamber for the tone; these, too, must be carefully selected as to the size of the cavity if the tone is to be properly amplified. The keys are beaten with wooden mallets tipped with balls of gum; the instrument is ordinarily played by one man, although two men may sometimes play sitting at opposite sides of the instrument. In the present selection the tempo is fast, which seems characteristic of many Western African xylophone performances, and the melodic line in the middle and higher registers is played over repeated short ostinato melodies in the lower register. After a long introduction, the musician begins a song which is composed of short phrases; a second musician acts as something of a chorus. Another instrumental interlude follows, and the vocal is picked up again.

**BAND 22. PINDI SANSA:** The Pindi (Bapindi) are one of the tribes in the Kwango complex, agriculturalists, recognizing a pantheon of gods, organized into clan units, etc. The sansa played by the Pindi musician in this recording is apparently a large instrument with metal keys; the pattern played is low in pitch, rather slower in tempo than is usual, and fairly simple in outline. After a brief instrumental introduction, a leader and chorus pattern in the litany form begins and is continued throughout the piece. The rhythmic organization is strongly oriented toward units of three which is not characteristic in most African music.

**BAND 23. SUDANESE HARP:** Recorded in the Gura Valley of Eritrea, this song is sung by a group of migrant Sudanese workers whose home originally was in the upper Nile valley;

the singers are male and are accompanied by a small harp characteristic of the area and plucked primarily with the thumbs and first two fingers of both hands. The song is divided into two parts by a change of leaders which occurs approximately in its middle, although the overall form remains the same. The call and response pattern provides the main framework, with handclapping accenting the duple meter. In the first part of the song, the harp is played only while the chorus sings its phrase; in the second part, it is played throughout both leader and chorus melodies. The two parts of the song are further marked by the contrast in pitch of the leaders' voices; the first is medium-pitched, the second high-pitched, almost falsetto.

**BAND 24. SUDANESE SONG:** This song is again sung in the leader-chorus pattern by Sudanese men, in this case accompanied by drum apparently played with sticks rather than hands. The rhythmic scheme is basically duple but with the duple beat subdivided into triplet patterns. Thus the handclapping, which also accompanies the song, is a simple single unaccented series of pulses, while the drum is played in units of three to each single handclap; the melodic rhythm is also in a duple, subdivided into triple meter which would probably best be notated in 6/8 time in the Western system. Whether by accident or intention, the drummer frequently falls behind the handclap beat causing some disturbance in the listener's subjective metronome.

**BAND 25. MAHAFALY SONG:** The Mahafaly are a tribe in the extreme southern end of Madagascar. While the island is primarily influenced from the Oceanic side, the Arabic imprint is also strong, as is the African as well in certain areas. This particular Mahafaly song is sung by a single strong and thready male voice, accompanied by a harp or lyre and what appear to be rhythm sticks. The singer sings a fairly extended series of melodic phrases which occupy usually some 10 to 12 beats, and then allows the harp or lyre 6 to 8 beats. The instrument is played in an almost never varied melodic pattern which, with the sticks, sets up a metronomic beat. The melodic accents of both voice and harp or lyre coincide, while those of the sticks fall regularly between; thus, if notation is in 4/4 meter, the stick sounds fall on the second and fourth beats of the measure.

**BAND 26. IBANI SONG:** This West African song is begun by a small sansa which has a very tight and clean tone; it is joined by what appear to be resonant hardwood sticks clapped together, and possibly a drum. All three are

in the same basic duple meter, but elaborate it in different ways. The sung portion of the music is begun as a single litany-type phrase repeated by the singing group; later a leader appears. Toward the end of the song, the rhythmic pattern is abruptly changed as is the vocal melody which returns to a straight chorus refrain.

**BAND 27. YORUBA SONG:** The Yoruba are one of the largest African tribal groupings with a population of between three and a half and four million; they provided large numbers of slaves for the New World where their language and culture remain strong, particularly in Cuba. The Yoruba have an extremely complex Guinea Coast culture which is based upon an agricultural economy, strongly organized political and social units, a highly sophisticated series of theological concepts, and a complex and beautiful artistic tradition which has contributed some of the world's finest sculpture. In this song, sung by male voices, a harp or lyre as well as rhythm sticks, or possibly handclapping, and drum provide the accompaniment. Multiple meter is present sporadically, and the song in general shows the Arabic influence which has long since invaded the African West Coast rather than traditional Yoruba song.

**BAND 28. BULU SONG:** The Bulu are one of the group of related tribes and sub tribes which together make up the Fang peoples of the southern Cameroons, Spanish Guinea and the northern Gabon in West Africa. This song is sung by male leader with mixed chorus; it is unaccompanied either by instruments or by handclapping. The call and response pattern is here used in the "classic" sense, with short phrases by both leader and chorus emphasizing the litany form. The chorus uses parallel thirds in its response. Noteworthy is the overlapping on the part of the leader who consistently begins his own phrase considerably before the chorus has finished its melodic line.

**BAND 29. BAMBARA SONG:** The Bambara are a tribal group of agriculturalists in the Western Sudan to the north of the Guinea Coast proper; their culture has been part of the series of great Sudanese kingdoms, specifically that of Segou which lasted from approximately 1600 to 1893. Heard in this recording are two flutes made from bamboo and with five finger holes each, a locally made iron bell which is struck with a warthog's tusk, and two small drums. It is probable that the group of musicians is a wandering minstrel troupe and that the song is a dance song. The music shows strongly the impact of Arabic culture on the Bambara.

**BAND 30. EWE SONG:** The Ewe-speaking people inhabit large portions of Togo and the Gold Coast, and are part of the complex Guinea Coast culture area. This song was recorded among the Gold Coast Ewe. It is sung by a male leader who begins the song, and male chorus, who answer; the opening phrases are presented in a recitative-like style which does not keep to a steady rhythmic tempo. At a given signal, a percussion unit consisting of two drums, a large shaken calabash, iron gong and handclapping enters abruptly and continues, in this case throughout the remainder of the song. Multiple meter is used fairly extensively.

**BAND 31. ACOLI SONG:** The Acoli are an agricultural tribe of Uganda; they are a Nilotic people who also keep cattle. This pleasant song, is sung by a male musician who accompanies himself on a harp or lyre type instrument, probably the latter. The melodic phrases of both instrument and voice are short, the former with little variation, the latter somewhat more varied. Harmony in thirds is played in the instrumental part. The song is probably of a social type, perhaps relating contemporary events.

**BAND 32. BAKWIRI SONG and MUSICAL BOW:** The Bakwiri live on the slopes on Mt. Cameroon in the Cameroons of West Africa. Laura Boulton has described the musical bow played by these people as "an ordinary archer's bow. The musician . . . holds the lower end of the bow firmly by the second, third, and fourth fingers of the left hand. This leaves the first finger and thumb free to hold a stick which is pressed from time to time against a certain preselected place on the string. In his right hand, the player holds a small stick or reed with which he strikes the bow string with a staccato action. The bow is held so that it vibrates between the open lips but does not touch them. Single overtones are amplified by the cavities of the head by changing the form of the mouth. . . By leaving the string free or by stopping it with the stick in his left hand, the player can produce two different fundamental tones in succession. However, since these two tones are constantly accompanied by amplified overtones, they may be said to produce the effect of two consecutively progressive chords."

In the selection at hand, a deep-voiced singer uses a fast vibrato and thick tone in singing his short musical phrases, while the musical bow backs him up with a spanking rhythm.

**BAND 33. MBOKO ZITHER-HARP:** This song, recorded in French Equatorial Africa, is sung by a male performer accompanied by a zither-

harp and rhythm sticks. Gilbert Rouget has described the main instrument as "a huge zither-harp, made from the central nerve of a palm, of which the fibers stretched by means of an easel form the strings. The musician, seated on the ground, scratches the strings of the instrument which rests on his knees. To his right and to his left, sitting next to him, two others strike the harp with a small stick." The song is in a litany form, in which the short musical phrase is repeated over and over in almost exactly the same way. The musicians sing very softly, partly in falsetto, allowing the zither-harp to take the prominent musical position.

**BAND 34. MAKWA SONG:** This strong Makwa song from French Equatorial Africa is sung by two female leaders (at different times) and female chorus. The form, in a fairly fast 4/4 meter, is established by the leader who sings a two-bar phrase followed by a second, complementary phrase of the same length. The first of the two short phrases ends, as heard by the Western ear, in a semi-cadence, the second in a final cadence; that is, the first gives the impression of ending on the unfinished sound of the dominant of the "key," the second on the tonic. The chorus repeats the same melodic phrase as the leader; the leader, however, varies her text each time, while the chorus tends to stay with its first words. The song is probably a work song since a pulse is struck, apparently by handclapping, every eight beats; it is interesting to note that this pulse appears on what seems to be the third beat of the "measure." Parallel seconds are heard fairly consistently at the end of the chorus phrase.

**BAND 35. BOUNGOMO SONG:** A rather long vocal solo sung by a female voice introduces this Boungomo song, which again comes from French Equatorial Africa. The leader is finally answered by a female chorus singing in the upper register, after which rhythm sticks are heard. At a signal from the leader two, and possibly three, drums enter playing in multiple meter. The song is then fully underway, with the leader singing a rather slow melodic line, answered by a chorus melody which is first exactly half and later two thirds as long as that of the leader. The chorus sings for the most part in parallel thirds, both major and minor.

**BAND 36. BABINGA SONG:** The Babinga are a pygmy group living a semi-nomadic life in the forests of French Equatorial Africa; their economic basis rests on hunting and gathering and a good many of their songs are directed toward magical practices which will assure them of success in these pursuits. In this song, the

male leader begins with a long solo introduction which is accompanied by rhythm sticks and, later, by a gong-like instrument; these percussion instruments are played in a polyrhythmic but not polymetric scheme. The chorus enters late in the song, singing in a modified yodel, as well as a typical pygmy polyphony. Gilbert Rouget has suggested the following as characteristic of pygmy (and Bushman) music: a concentric melodic-rhythmic development, yodeling, distribution of vocal timbres so that individual lines are clearly distinguishable, relatively wide vocal range, frequency of melodic development by disjunct intervals, processes of imitation, augmentation, contraction and extension of intervals, repetition in echo and in ornamented counterpoint, the use of the tritonic, tetratonic and pentatonic, the superimposition of diverse rhythmic structures on a basic rhythmic ostinato. It is interesting to listen to the Babinga song, as well as the other pygmy songs in this album, with these points in mind.

**BAND 37. WOLOF DRUMS:** The Wolof are an agricultural people living in the Senegambia region of West Africa; their music is striking for its intermingling of aboriginal, West African Negro and Muslim styles into a coherent musical system. The drums used by these people include the *sabar*, a long narrow open-ended drum, slightly concave in the middle and with a cow or goatskin head; the *tama*, a type of pressure drum; three sizes of upright log drums;

special drums, called *hin*, which are reserved to the chief and which are destroyed at his death; and the *tabala*, sacred drums kept in the mosque and played only to praise God. These drums are not made by the Wolof, but are purchased from a neighboring group, the Fulbe. In this selection, the various kinds of drums are fairly easily distinguished; notice especially the drums of variable pitch.

**BAND 38. WOLOF HALAM:** In describing the Wolof musical instrument, *halam*, David Ames writes that it is a "five-stringed instrument . . . with an oval-shaped resonator, hollowed out of wood and covered with hide, from which issues a 'neck' as on a guitar, over which horsehair strings are stretched to a bridge on the resonator. The 'neck' is a rounded stick, to which the strings are attached by leather thongs, and the *halam* is tuned by raising or lowering the leather thongs on the 'neck.' The strings are plucked by the finger nail on the thumb, forefinger and the middle finger of the right hand, and the professional entertainers keep their finger-nails long for this purpose . . . The two longest strings are stopped with the fingers of the left hand without aid of frets. The three shorter strings are not stopped but are left 'open' and are plucked in a constant pitch." In this song a short melodic theme is stated and then varied throughout; handclapping and quiet, almost falsetto singing are heard in the background sporadically. Note particularly the deliberate use of dynamics for musical effect.

RECORDINGS IN THIS COLLECTION WERE  
MADE BY LAURA BOULTON (1, 5, 6, 7, 8,  
9, 10, 11, 29, 32), HOWARD COYLE (2),  
MYRON SOBEL (3, 4), LEO VERWILGHEN  
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(15, 16, 17), COLIN TURNBULL (18, 19, 20,  
30, 31, ), HAROLD COURLANDER (23, 24),  
WILLIAM H. WILLIS, JR., AND GATES  
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