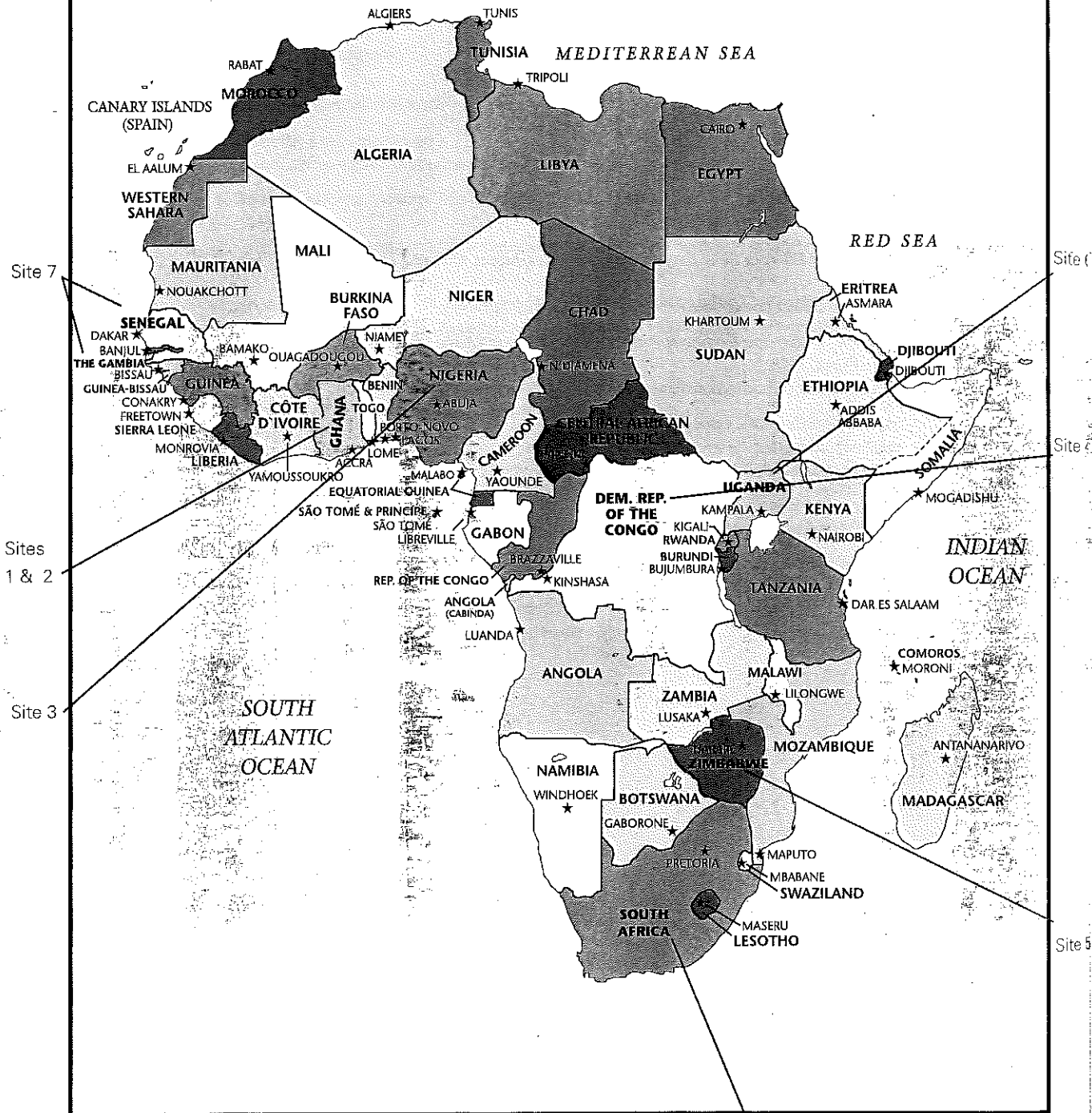


**Sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, Nigeria,
Central Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Senegal,
The Republic of South Africa**

10

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NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN



Site 7

Sites 1 & 2

Site 3

Site 6

Site 5

Site 5

Site 8 and bonus track

Background Preparation

Africa, the world's second-largest continent, is home to nearly 3,000 separate ethnic groups spread across 11.7 million square miles (30.3 million square km). While Africa boasts many densely populated urban areas, most other areas remain rural with limited infrastructure. Farming is the primary occupation of most Africans, although many people living in areas rich in natural resources, such as diamonds and coal, are employed by large mining companies and related industries.

The continent is customarily divided into three cultural zones: the pan-Arabic zone in the north, including the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea; the Sahel zone, including those areas dominated by the vast Sahara desert; and sub-Saharan Africa, the rest of the continent south of the Sahara desert; the latter is the focus of this chapter. Western, eastern, and central Africa are equatorial and therefore quite hot and humid. Rainforests dominate the central interior, whereas the red-soiled Kalahari Desert typifies the arid landscape of southern Africa. Few mountain ranges exist, though several dormant volcanoes, the most famous being snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro in northeastern Tanzania, provide a contrast to the vast rolling plains seen throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa. Wildlife preserves are scattered throughout much of the continent, which are home to such well-known animals as the African elephant, lion, zebra, giraffe, and rhinoceros.

While the ancient Egyptian pharaohs ruled the most famous kingdoms of North Africa, the kings of sub-Saharan Africa also held dominion over vast territories for numerous generations. In western Africa, the earliest known kingdom was the Kingdom of Ghana, which controlled the trade routes of West Africa from roughly the fifth to the eleventh century C.E., when Muslim militants from present-day Mauritania overtook it. Other important empires prior to the colonial era included the Mali kingdom (mid-thirteenth to late fourteenth century), and the Songhai kingdom (fifteenth to late sixteenth century), both

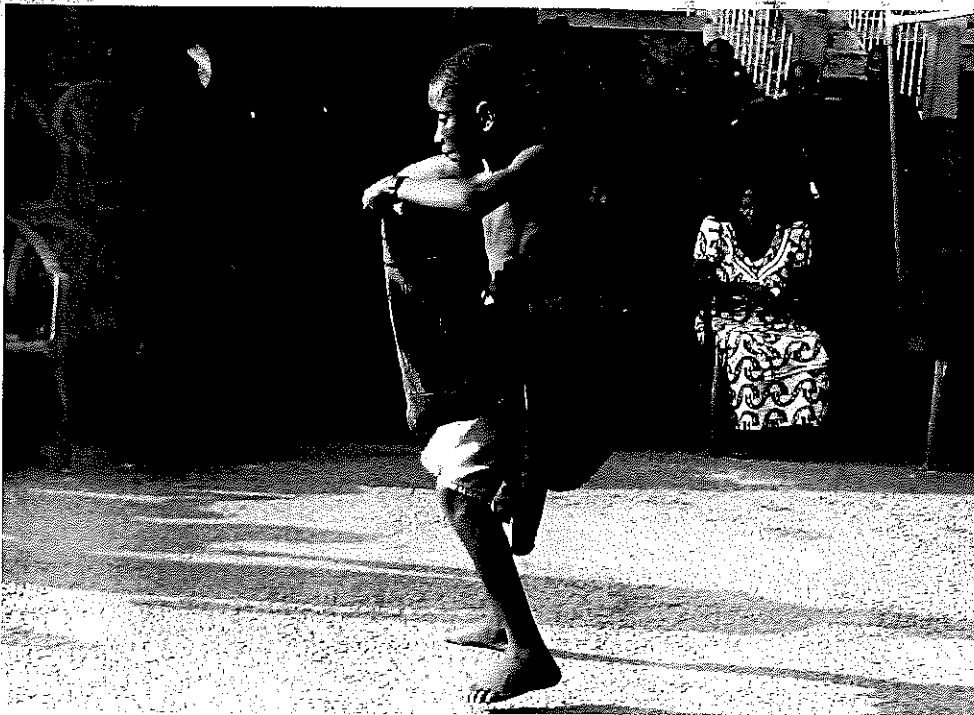


Zebras in a South African game reserve, one of Africa's visual icons (Max T. Miller)

Islamic. In southern Africa, the Zulu King Shaka (1787–1828) is best known, having organized a powerful military machine that conquered many peoples throughout South Africa and as far north as Tanzania. Historical warriors and royal lineages continue to play a vital role in the cultural identity of modern Africa.

The political borders of present-day Africa, however, resulted from European colonial occupation. Throughout much of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, vast regions of Africa were claimed as colonies by several European powers. The 1884–1885 Berlin Conference is often cited as a decisive moment in Africa's political history, particularly for the Congo region. At this meeting, German, Belgian, French, British, and Portuguese officials, along with representatives of governments that had no colonial stake in the region, such as the United States, allocated territorial rights to most of central and southern Africa without the presence of a single African. Thereafter, based on these colonial entities, newly independent African nations were later formed with little regard for the cultural differences of the various peoples living within their borders. Consequently, many different ethnic populations, with diverse cultural traditions, often live in close proximity within a single country, while their brethren also live in neighboring countries.

Decades of European colonial rule left strong marks on African religious life, governmental structures, and languages. Travelers to Africa will encounter multilingual speakers who may speak multiple indigenous languages (of which there are nearly 800 in sub-Saharan Africa alone), as well as one or two European languages, the most common being English, French, and Portuguese. Though colonialism affected many of the cultural activities of African peoples, often oppressively, traditional practices still thrive throughout the continent, especially in rural areas. Islam and Christianity have long co-existed in sub-Saharan



Kete dancer at an Asante funeral in Kumase, Ghana (Joseph S. Kaminski)

Africa, though aspects of earlier animistic traditions have often been reinterpreted into the ritual activities of the mainstream institutionalized religions.

An emphasis on the collective community remains an overarching principle essential to the social organization and cultural identity of many African populations. Social identity is valued over individual identity, as expressed by the common proverb, "I am because we are." Each person serves a function within the overall group. In smaller villages, everyone is considered part of the same family, whether or not they are related by blood. A person's possessions are frequently "shared" with other members of the community, as if everyone lived in the same house. Furthermore, these "extended families" comprise not only living members of the community but also the spirits of ancestors. Even when a person is physically "alone," he is accompanied by one or more ancestor spirits who act as guardians and confidants:

Music is a vital aspect of the daily lives of people throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Even the most mundane tasks, such as canceling stamps at the post office, pounding millet, or walking are made enjoyable by putting them into the rhythms of music. Dance and singing are equally essential; indeed, music, dance, and singing, conceptualized as distinct from one another in the West, are described in many places with the same terminology, because they are considered inseparable. The importance of the collective community that characterizes traditional African life is reflected in three main activities associated with music: communal dance, call-and-response singing, and the use of **polyrhythm** in instrumental performance. Informal dance activity often takes place when large groups of people are gathered. An individual may spontaneously step out from the crowd to dance in conjunction with a musical performance. The crowd may respond with cheers, and others may be inspired to dance as well. Spontaneous dance participation, however, is generally brief, and the dancer will fall back into the group to make way for others. The individual thereby demonstrates deference to the community by only briefly asserting an individual identity within the context of a larger social scheme. Formal dance activity also tends to emphasize group participation, though dance in ritual contexts, such as trance dancing, often involves only a few specialized performers. In these instances, the performance requires a specific knowledge of tradition or that the individual dancers are of a specific social status, such as performers with royal patronage. The set choreography of these dances differs from dancing in informal contexts and may not include opportunities for individual expression. Formal dance activities are performed with some social function in mind, such as honoring royalty or inviting ancestral spirits to participate in community events.

Vocal performance can occur as part of religious ceremonies or other ritual activities, in the context of storytelling, dance, or royal functions, or merely as entertainment. Though many solo vocal traditions can be found, the majority of vocal performances involve group singing, generally with a call-and-response organization. In call-and-response, an individual sings a "call" and the group "responds" appropriately. (A familiar American example: *Call*: Give me a G . . . , *Response*: G!; *Call*: Give me an 'O . . . ', *Response*: 'O!'; *Call*: What's that spell?!, *Response*: Go!!!) This organization may also be thought of as a "question" by the caller and an "answer" by the group and is therefore clearly different from "prompting," in which the leader cues the group, which responds with the same words (as, for example, in the lined hymn to be studied in Chapter 13).

POLYRHYTHM

A term meaning "multiple rhythms"; the organizational basis for most sub-Saharan African music traditions.

Adesanya Adeyeye

AN INSIDE LOOK

My maternal grandmother was an Osun priestess (Osun is the Yoruba goddess of the river). During the usual Osun ceremonies at Ilesa, Osun State, normally held three or four times a year, children like myself were encouraged to partake in the ceremonies especially in dancing and playing musical instruments. I was about five years then, in 1957. Elders play the Lukorigi drums, an ensemble comprising three cylindrical double headed drums of varying sizes with two *agogo* (iron bells) of different sizes to accompany chants and songs in praise of Osun, who is believed to cure barrenness in women. The overwhelming atmosphere created by the festivities had a greater influence on my musical perception and interest and later served as an impetus in my taking up music and music technology as a profession. But even as a child I was part of the usual village children's use of pawpaw stems and bamboo pallets in making musical toy whistles. That was in my father's village, via Ilesa.

My exposure to formal musical learning only began when I left secondary school, after 1971 through 1981 in Lagos. After enrolling at the Nigeria Institute of Music headed by Taiwo Ogunade and Chris Ajilo in 1978, I passed the Grade 8 Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music theory examination. During these ten years in Lagos I also got musical training by playing guitar in *jùjú* and *highlife* bands. As a choir member of the Regina Mundi Catholic Church, Mushin, Lagos, I discovered that I was naturally gifted in playing the *sekere* (gourd shaker). Even though I had a keen interest in playing the *konga* drums (*agbamole* and *ogido*), choir master Mr. Joseph Osho was so much fascinated by the way I played the *sekere* that he would not allow me to play the drum but only the *sekere*. Thus seven years as a church choir member playing only *sekere* had a very strong influence in my musical life including later as a *sekere* maker. In 1981 I began undergraduate music studies at Kent State University, Ohio, United States.



Adesanya Adeyeye, professional musician

After graduation from Kent State I went to Los Angeles for nine months (January to September 1986) and became involved in instrument making. I turned to *sekere* making, and this was my starting point into music technology. I became financially secure and gained cultural recognition in Los Angeles and the suburbs, like Pasadena and Hollywood. I went on to exhibit my *sekere* in various black cultural festivals in Los Angeles where they were highly admired. I lived very comfortably on sales of *sekere* in Los Angeles

during the last six months of my stay. After that I returned to Nigeria in June 1987.

In Nigeria I embarked into research on the construction of musical instruments. Since my knowledge of the construction of *sekere* was limited to the *sekere ikanyere* (the type using plastic beads), I decided to learn the art of making *sekere aje*, which use cowrie shells.

That same year my father-in-law, a traditional Chief of Kajola in the Atakumosa local government of Osun state, introduced me and my wife to Pa Jimoh Omoleke, the leader of the *sekere aje* players in Osogbo, and he taught us the art of constructing *sekere aje*. Pa Omoleke also provided us with the historical origin of *aje*, which he linked with the Iba Ologbo compound in Oyo Alaafin.

Between 1989 and 1992 while I was also researching the *Tfa eerindinlogun* divination corpus in the cult of Osun in Ijebu-Jesa, I was able to learn how to construct *Lukorigi* and *Ukoko* drums. As noted earlier, *Lukorigi* are ritual drums in the worship of Osun. *Ukoko* is a set of clay pot drums used socially in various Ijesa traditional festivals. The art of making

Lukorigi and *Ukoko* drums was passed on to me by Pa Sunday Akunmudan, a close relation on my mother's side at Ijebu-Jesa.

I have also learned the construction of other musical instruments by disassembling and then re-assembling them. They include the Western classical guitar, the *bata*, *sakara*, *samba*, *konga*, *oja*, *atenteben*, and many more. I have also carried out innovative construction of instruments through inspiration from fellow music technologists. Such instruments include the Western descant recorder and flageolets. Between 1988 and 2000 while I was a lecturer and researcher at the Music Technology department of the Polytechnic, I was also able to learn the construction of yet more instruments from traditional instrument makers who came to instruct my students. Such instruments include *agogo ide* (brass gong) and *sawfo ide* (brass bell). In addition I have been able over the years to carry out my own original design of tools and machines used in the fabrication of innovative musical instruments, including circular saws, turning machines, and wood rolling machines.

Habib Iddrisu

I was born into the Dagomba/Dagbamba family of court historians and musicians in Gukpegu/Tamale in northern Ghana. There I was brought up under the tutelage of my grandfather, Mangui-Lana Adam Alhassan, chief drummer in Tamale, and was inspired by my great uncles, many of whom were famous Dagbon musicians, especially Jabling (Fuseini Alhassan).

Like many of my cousins, I started playing both the *lung-a* (talking drum) and *gungong* (supporting drum) at age six. By age eight, I was renowned throughout the region for my dancing and drumming in styles such as Takai, Bamaya, and

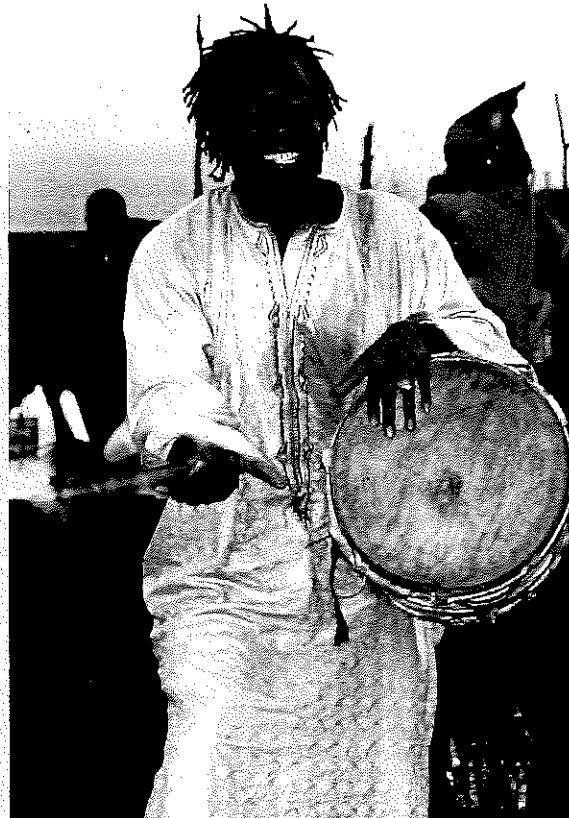
AN INSIDE LOOK

Atikatika. As a young man I studied traditional Dagbamba music and dance as well as other genres from across Ghana and West Africa. The wealth of expressive styles that I encountered sparked my interest in sharing and teaching this material to as broad an audience as possible. Soon I was coaching in Ghana's largest cities, especially in Accra where I taught and performed with some of the city's finest cultural groups. Then I traveled extensively around the world to perform, and I won Ghana's Best Dancer Award in 1992.

Between 1999 and 2004, I studied at Bowling Green State University where I received undergraduate and graduate

degrees in African Studies and History respectively. I also coached a variety of African music and dance classes. In 2002, my choreography was selected and presented at the National American Dance College Festival at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. My studies have significantly enriched and broadened my artistic and analytical thinking. The music of Dagbamba *Lung-si* (drummers) is completely filled with language. Its rhythmic nature may lead an outsider to think the music is entirely improvised, but the reality is that almost every drum phrase represents Dagbamba spoken language (Dagbanli).

The music of my tradition is very intricate, yet easy to understand. It is intricate in that performance depends entirely on a person's ability to listen and memorize all the drum language that accompanies each occasion. Because drummers are storytellers, they must be able to talk (on their drums, of course) about the history, politics, and economic lives of the people. The drum language dictates the mood of not only the listeners but also the musician. When we drum in weddings, naming ceremonies, for the enskinment of a new chief, or just for a commoner in the marketplace, the atmosphere at the time is quickly absorbed by the *Lung-si*. For instance, when we drum during funerals, we react to the mood around, not like actors or actresses taking roles but as those whose heartbeats are attached to the messages the *lung-a* is sending at the time. The *Lung-si* role is quite versatile within the context of the community's needs. At any occasion when we drum, someone may fall into trance. When this happens, we assume the role of the "healer" who controls the mediums responsible for trance, thereby sub-



Habib Iddrisu, Dagbon drummer and dancer

ducing the spirits and leading the person out of the trance at the appropriate time. Our main role in the community is to keep the history of our people alive and exciting, and this is what makes us *Lung-si*.

Polyrhythm is the predominant structure for organizing instrumental (as well as some vocal) musical performance in sub-Saharan Africa. For centuries, the polyrhythmic music traditions of sub-Saharan Africa were largely incomprehensible to outsiders. Missionaries and foreign explorers often characterized the rhythmically dense drumming traditions of western Africa as "chaotic." Colonial governments suppressed these musical practices and often labeled the "wild" playing associated with "pagan" rituals as evil music that corrupted the soul. Ignorance of how the complex polyrhythmic music organization worked was a primary factor behind these negative attitudes. Since the 1950s, however,

ethnomusicologists, both foreign and African, have developed a better understanding of the inner musical workings of these traditions, which are some of the most complex on the planet, and helped to disseminate this knowledge to others. The old ethnocentric discrimination of African music has given way to great enthusiasm for these many vibrant musical traditions.

While drumming is assumed by many Westerners to be the primary African musical activity, much other music occurs involving aerophones and chordophones, either with or without accompanying idiophones and membranophones. Unique vocal traditions, many of them polyphonic, are common, and both storytelling and recounting the histories and genealogies of many of Africa's ethnic groups are passed from generation to generation via oral tradition.

Planning the Itinerary

Our survey of musical performance in sub-Saharan Africa is of necessity brief and highly selective but seeks to illuminate some of the key elements of African music-making. An examination of drumming traditions from Ghana, the type of African music perhaps most familiar to the outside world, begins our tour. We then make a stop in Nigeria to hear the popular music genre known as *juju*. Our visit to Senegal-Gambia will introduce the renowned poet/praise-singers/oral historians of the Mandinka, called *jali*. We will then consider the music of the Mbuti Pygmies of Central Africa, a xylophone tradition from Uganda, and lamellophone performance in Zimbabwe. Finally, we will examine a Zulu choral tradition from South Africa known as *mbube*, which has a musical organization that contrasts with that of much music found in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

GHANA

Arrival: Ghana

The Western world is perhaps most familiar with the cultural activities of West African populations because this region is geographically closer to both Europe and the Americas than is any other area of sub-Saharan Africa. The bulk of Africans forced into slavery by Europeans and sent to the Americas during the colonial period (roughly early 1500s to late 1800s) were taken from this region, and as a result the cultural traditions of West Africa were disseminated throughout the Caribbean and the Americas. The spiritual traditions of the Dahomey people from Benin and of the Yoruba from Nigeria, for example, are found throughout the "New World" in various permutations, namely as *vodou* (voodoo) in Haiti, *candomblé* in Brazil, and *santería* in the United States and Cuba. Textiles and clothing used by African Americans to represent their African heritage frequently draw on the stylistic features of West African formal attire, and characteristics particular to music traditions from western Africa, especially the prominent use of drumming, have come to represent—incorrectly—all music from the sub-Saharan region. The reductive Euro-American characterization of African music as "drumming," while not accurate for the continent as a whole, is thus understandable, as drumming is so prominent in West Africa. Ghana, a former British colony (with English as its official language) and nearly equal to the United Kingdom in size, was one of several colonies—most others being French—on Africa's "Gold Coast." Its twenty-

four million people speak around seventy-five different African languages along with English.

Site 1: Polyrhythmic Instrumental Ensemble

First Impressions. Polyrhythmic music can seem bewildering on first listening. The music does not follow "a beat" in the Western sense of the term; that is, no consistent pulsation seems to articulate an easily identifiable meter. The complexity of the interwoven rhythmic patterns creates a dense sound that agitates some listeners while hypnotizing others. High-pitched and low-pitched drums, rattles, bells, and voices all combine to create a multifaceted kaleidoscope of sound that continuously spins the same musical elements into an energetic torrent of "rhythmic melody." While these polyrhythms are difficult to grasp analytically, their effect can be powerful and immediate. Even many novice listeners will be inspired to dance along with this vibrant music.

Aural Analysis. Polyrhythm is a system of musical organization that may be challenging to those steeped only in European harmonic musical creation, where rhythm is organized into simple units of 2, 3, 4, or 6 beats most of the time. In the African polyrhythmic tradition no conductor articulates the basic beat for everyone to follow, and there is no need for notation telling the musician what to play. Each participant plays a rhythmic pattern that in and of



The Nsuase *kete* drum group performing at an Asante funeral in Kumase, Ghana (Joseph S. Kaminski)

itself is generally not difficult. Each pattern follows its own time—or what some scholars refer to as a timeline—without respect to the kind of underlying meter found in Western music.

The simplest example of polyrhythm is the “two against three” cross-rhythm. In this example, one pattern follows a timeline pattern of two pulses while another pattern provides three pulses within the same time span. You can try this yourself or with a friend. Pat your left hand on your knee with an even duple pulse, “1-2-, 1-2-, 1-2-. . .” Now, tap on a book with your right hand to an even triple pulse, “1-2-3-, 1-2-3-, 1-2-3-. . .,” making sure to sound the “1” beats of both pulses simultaneously. As you will quickly discover, while each pattern is simple in and of itself, combining the two becomes a significant challenge.

When these two patterns are combined, they form a *rhythmic melody* that can be articulated as one idea, namely as a “1-2&3-, 1-2&3-, 1-2&3-. . .” pattern, in which the “&” falls between the last two pulses of the triplet. Try the cross-rhythm again by starting with the right-hand triple meter tap, and just pat your left hand on the “&.” This should be easier. Once you’ve gotten that down, add a pat on the “1” beat as well. The resulting rhythm is the same as the “two against three” pattern you initially tried, but the difference is that you are no longer thinking in terms of separate rhythms (duple vs. triple), but in terms of a unified whole (see Table 10.1). This latter conception is more in line with the way African musicians approach performance: for them, each individual musical element is part of the collective whole. Of course, however Africans themselves perceive of polyrhythmic music, understanding the intricacies of individual timeline patterns leads to a greater appreciation of the music’s complexity.

Oftentimes it is easier to recognize the individual timeline patterns when the musicians can be seen. In our cross-rhythm example, you can say the phrase “Look to the left” in rhythm as you play. Seeing your left hand play the duple pattern will help you to hear it more clearly. Now say, “Look to the right” in rhythm and watch your right hand sound the triple pattern. Your ears will focus on that pattern more clearly. The absence of visual references requires that you listen for different timbres—for example, drums versus bells.

Our example of an Akan recreational band from Ghana features voices and several instruments: the *donno*, a double-headed hourglass variable-pressure drum played with a hooked stick and capable of producing more than one pitch; the *tom-tom*, a pair of tall, single-headed hand drums; the *afrikiyiwa*, an iron clapper bell; and the *axatse* (pronounced “a-ha-che”), a gourd rattle with external beaded netting. Together, the musicians create complex polyrhythms far more difficult to perform than our cross-rhythm example. In order for the musicians to collectively play the correct rhythmic melody, each individual musician must interlock his particular pattern very precisely with the other musicians’ patterns.

A helpful analogy can be made to a bicycle wheel. One rhythm typically functions as a density referent, a pattern that is like the center of a bicycle wheel. Because drumming ensembles tend to be loud, a louder instrument with a distinctive timbre, such as a bell or a rattle, usually plays this part. Once the central rhythm is established, the other musicians

DONNO
A double-headed hourglass-shaped drum found in Ghana and elsewhere in West Africa.

Table 10.1 Two against Three Cross-Rhythm

Left Hand	1			&		
Right Hand	1		2		3	

play their parts in relation to it; held together by this central reference point, these other parts are like the spokes of the wheel. (Complicating our analogy, however, is the fact that musicians often use more than one reference rhythm to play their part, and thus interlock their pattern with multiple instruments at once.)

Once all the patterns are added together, forming the collective analogous to the rim of the wheel, the music spins along without trouble. If, however, one of the patterns falls out of sync, then the wheel might start to wobble. The music starts to feel unbalanced, and if the troublesome part does not drop out and reenter correctly, the entire ensemble is in danger of "crashing." This frequently happens when amateur ensembles in the United States attempt to play African music. The music may spin easily for a while, but a slight distraction may cause one musician to lose concentration and fail to play his or her simple pattern in sync with the complex whole. As a result, the music falls apart like a house of cards, and the musicians must start over, typically by reestablishing the density referent and then gradually adding the other patterns until the music flows again.

The musicians in our recorded example are obviously quite skilled. The vocal parts follow a call-and-response pattern, while the instruments perform polyrhythm. It is not necessary to know what the specific rhythms are to appreciate the music as a whole. Representing all the parts of the music in metrical notation, as is frequently done by Western musicians, will mask the way African musicians generally perceive a rhythm as a timeline pattern. Nonetheless, focusing on specific instruments and parts can be a helpful way of explaining how polyrhythm works in a complex example such as this.

Turning to the bell (*afirikiyiwa*) part first, we hear a rhythm that could be written as "1-2-3-(4), 1-2-3-(4), 1-2-3-(4), . . ." This three-pulse pattern with a silent fourth pulse can be heard as a reference point for the handclaps, which sound only once in the course of the bell pattern. When is the clap heard? The clap follows its own timeline, which is just one clap per cycle. If you think in terms of meter, then the clap in isolation can be considered to follow a duple meter, "1-(2)-, 1-(2)-, 1-(2)-. . .," in which the second pulse is silent.

Alternatively, you can consider the clapping as falling slightly ahead of the "&" after the third bell pulse. But the tempo of the music is moving very quickly. Trying to count "1&2&3&4&, 1&2&3&4&, 1&2&3&4& . . ." in order to clap in the correct place is difficult and quite unnecessary. If you forget counting and just listen to the bell, you can "fit" your part in much more easily. Sometimes it also helps if you think of a phrase that suggests the rhythm as a whole. For example, try thinking of the rhythm as the phrase, "What do you think?" with the bell part sounding on "What do you" and the clap falling on "think." Easier? It should be, because when you do this you are hearing the rhythmic melody created by the combination of bell and handclaps.

While this discussion places the bell pattern as the reference point in order to more easily hear how the handclaps work in relation to it, the central density referent in our audio example is *actually* the handclaps themselves. The bell pattern, as well as the rattle's three-note pattern, anticipates the claps, leaving space for them to sound and thus be heard clearly. The call-and-response form of the voices also references the handclaps to fit their "timeline" into the performance correctly, by emphasizing the third syllable of the vocal phrase in conjunction with the handclaps. The drums (*donno* and *tom tom*) alternate between high-pitched and low-pitched sounds in a duple pattern, with the lower drum corresponding to the handclaps. The alternating drum sounds may either be created by a single drummer, or

by two drummers in tandem. Without seeing the performers, it's hard to know which is the case in our example.

Throughout the performance, the drummers slightly alter their patterns to make the performance more dynamic but then return to their initial pattern. The music spins like a bicycle wheel, or perhaps the aural equivalent of a kaleidoscope: it uses the same "pieces" but changes them just enough to make the music different each time the cycle repeats. Once you can identify each part individually, try listening to the whole ensemble again as a collective performance.

LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.19 (1'45")

Chapter 10: Site 1

Ghana: Polyrhythmic Instrumental Ensemble

Vocals: A single male lead and a single female lead. Also, a mixed male/female ensemble response

Instruments: Drums (*donno*, *apenteng*, *pate*), metal bells (*afirikiyiwa*, *dawuruta*, *aggre*), rattle (*akasaa*). Also, handclaps

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	Example fades in with instrumental activity. Listen for the varying timbre of the drums, rattles, and bells. Refer to above discussion for more complete discussion of individual rhythms.
0'02"	Male lead vocalist enters.
0'19"	Group response, repeating the verse of the lead vocalist.
0'36"	Female lead vocalist enters.
0'41"	Male lead vocalist returns.
0'46"	Female lead vocalist returns.
0'52"	Group response.
1'08"	Male lead vocalist returns.
1'25"	Group response.

Source: "Fante Area: Vocal Band" performed by the Odo ye few korye kuw Vocal Band, recorded by Roger Vetter, Abura Tuakwa, Ghana, 1984, from the recording entitled *Rhythms of Life, Songs of Wisdom: Akan Music from Ghana, West Africa*, SF 40463, provided courtesy of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. © 1996. Used by permission.

ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.19): Choose a rhythmic pattern, such as that made by the bell or the handclaps, and play it throughout, singing along with the group response.

Cultural Considerations. Polyhythm is the basis for musical creation throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. For those who grow up in cultures where polyrhythmic music is common, understanding comes “naturally” because these insiders are surrounded by it in various contexts, such as festivals, funerals, marketplaces, and so on. For outsiders, however, polyrhythm is one of the least penetrable forms of musical organization found anywhere in the world.

Our example is typical of music performance among the Akan—whose language is part of a family of languages that includes such ethnic groups as the Asante (Ashanti), Fante, and Denkyira—as well as among non-Akan speaking peoples of Ghana, such as the Ewe and the Igbo. Even though the performers are ordinary villagers from a small farming community, the musicians nonetheless display a high degree of musical skill. Such “recreational bands,” as they are often called, play at wakes, funerals, and for annual festivals, as well as for social clubs, special community events such as weddings, and purely for entertainment.

Polyrhythmic ensembles often have a master drummer who oversees all aspects of a performance, including vocal performance and dance. The master drummer knows a multitude of rhythms that work within the performance and is responsible for helping each musician to “fit” within the group. He may briefly play specific “timeline” patterns that correspond to those of other instruments, establish a new pattern that someone will then follow, or play within the overall polyrhythmic activity, frequently “speaking” with his drum to communicate with the other musicians, dancers, or audience.

The majority of musicians who play in polyrhythmic ensembles learn their craft in an informal manner. Continual exposure to polyrhythmic music throughout childhood gives most an intuitive sense of rhythm and timing, though only a few become specialists capable of leading an ensemble.



Adzewa group performing at a funeral at the Asante court in Kumase, Ghana (Joseph S. Kaminski)

Site 2: "Talking Drums"

First Impressions. This example alternates short sections of a text spoken by a young woman with drum passages that seem to mimic the girl's words, both tonally and rhythmically. What we are hearing are the famous "talking drums" (which usually are not coupled with spoken word passages; we have chosen this example because it makes the drumming's relationship to speech particularly clear). This is not music for dancing but for listening. In fact, it is not considered music at all but is rather a speech-substitute (also called "surrogate speech") in the context of a music performance.

Aural Analysis. Language is an integral part of music performance in Africa. Many African languages are "tonal," meaning that the intonation of the voice (for example, high/low tones or rising/falling tones) is as important to the meaning as the phonemes used.

Although tonal languages are encountered in many cultures, such as China and Nigeria, no European languages are tonal. One way to understand how intonation can change the meaning of a word is to listen to the different ways the word "yes" is pronounced, depending on whether it is used as a question or an answer. When it is used as a question, the speaker's inflection has a rising tone, whereas when it is used as an answer the tone is level or slightly falling. Unlike inflected languages, however, tonal languages make the contoured or level inflection an integral part of the word regardless of context.

In Ghana, a drum capable of tone-bending is used to imitate the rising and falling inflections of the voice, in order to communicate words through music. Double-headed hourglass pressure drums, such as the *donno*, are especially equipped to accomplish tonal variation, as squeezing the strings that secure the faces and thus changing the tension of the drum can alter the pitch. When the drum only produces a single fixed pitch, two drums of differing pitches can be used to imitate the direction in inflection; for example, a low pitch followed by a high pitch would convey a rising tone. Additionally, drummers replicate the "speech rhythm" of the words they imitate. By coupling the tones and rhythms of specific phrases, drummers can create surrogate speech comprehensible to native speakers of the language who are additionally familiar with the conventions of drum language.

A non-native speaker will not always recognize when linguistic meaning is being conveyed through musical performance. Musicians may do this in a variety of contexts: while praise-singing a chief or king, announcing the passing of a royal family member, recounting historical events, and so on. These performances may be solo or occur in the context of ensemble playing.

The "talking drums" played in this example are *atumpan*, a pair of large, goblet-shaped hollow logs with heads of tightly stretched animal skin, typically antelope. The particular piece praises a king and may be performed with or without the vocalist. In this case, the musician speaks in Twi, a common tonal language found throughout Ghana, before playing each phrase on the drums. The novice listener may perhaps be better able to appreciate the musical relationship between the language and music by first listening for the drummer's imitation of the speech's tonal aspect. Keep in mind that rising and falling pitches require two consecutive drum strokes, going from low to high or high to low, respectively.



The *mpintin* drum group of the Asantehene, Kumase, Ghana. The *mpintin* consists of several *donno* (hourglass pressure drums) (left), *mpintintoa* (membranophone with gourd resonator) (right), and other drums (not pictured) (Joseph S. Kaminski)

LISTENING GUIDE



Chapter 10: Site 2

Ghana: "Talking Drums"

Vocals: Single female

Instruments: *Atumpan* (pair of drums played with wooden angled-sticks)

TIME LISTENING FOCUS

The complete translation for this example is found on pages 343–345. This guide refers to some key points to note.

- 0'00"** Example begins with the vocalist speaking the text, followed by the mimicking *atumpan*.
- 0'28"** Start of the section featuring drum language glorifying the king of Denkyira. Listen for the drum's manifestation of the spoken phrase "Adawu, Adawu."
- 0'34"** The phrase "*Ma wo ho me ne so*" ("Come forth in thy light") is used several times throughout this example. Listen for the manifestation of this phrase on the drum at 0'38" and try to identify it each time without referencing the text.

0'38" Drum manifestation of the phrase "*Ma wo ho me ne so.*"

0'44" Listen for the drum's manifestation of the spoken phrase "*Kronkron, kronkron, kronkron.*" Note that the drum sounds four times per word, indicating that the speech rhythm in performance is determined by more than merely the syllables of a word. (Two syllables, yet four drum strokes.)

1'47" Final drum manifestation of the phrase "*Ma wo ho me ne so.*"

Source: "Talking Drum" by Elizabeth Kumi, and Joseph Manu from the recording entitled *Rhythms of Life, Songs of Wisdom: Akan Music from Ghana*, SF 40463, provided courtesy of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. ©1996. Used by Permission.

ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.20): Imitate your own speech rhythm and tonal inflections using a drum or other instrument that has a high or low sound.

Cultural Considerations. In Ghana drums are used as a surrogate for speech to give the words more power and to enable the praise-singing to be heard by ancestral spirits as well as the living. "Talking drum" performances often occur to honor someone of royal lineage or to praise a powerful ancestral spirit. Because royalty may be considered descendants of powerful spirits, praise-singing or praise-drumming frequently accomplishes both objectives simultaneously. Prior to the colonial period, chiefs customarily included in their entourage musicians capable of rendering poetic performances in honor of the chiefs and their lineage. This practice has diminished considerably but is still found among some groups, especially the Asante.

Here is a transcription and translation of the words in our example, first recited in honor of the king of the Denkyira people and then echoed by the *atumpan*:

Greetings to Those Present

*Me ma mo atena ase, Nana ne ne
mpaninfoo*

*Owura dwamtenani,
Enanom ne agyanom
ne anuanom a yeahyia ha,
yegye me asona*

*Saa atweneka yi fa Odeefoo Boa
Amponsem, Denkyira hene ho*

Odomankoma kyereima, ma no nko!

I welcome you, Nana and his elders

Mr. Chairman,
mothers, fathers
and brethren here gathered,
the response to my greeting is "asona"

This drum language is about Odeefoo Boa
Amponsem, King of Denkyir

Creator's drummer, let it go!

*Actual Drum Language Glorifying the King of Denkyira**Adawu, Adawu, Denkyira mene sono.*

Adawu, Adawu, Denkyira the devourer of the elephant.

*Adawu, Adawu, Denkyira pentenprem,
Omene sono, ma wo ho mene so*

Adawu, Adawu, Denkyira the quicksand, devourer of the elephant, come forth in thy light, exert yourself

*Pentenprem, ma wo homene so,
Ma wo ho me ne so*Quicksand, come forth in thy light,
Exert yourself, in glory*Kronkron, Kronkron, Kronkron;*

Your holiness, holiness, holiness;

Amponsem Koyirifa, ma wo ho me ne so

Amponsem Koyirifa, come forth in thy light in glory

Ako nana ma wo ho mene so

Grandsons of the Parrot, come forth in thy light

*Ako nana a ho a ne mframa mene boo,
ma wo ho me ne so*

Grandsons of the Parrot whose winds sweep and devour even the stones, come forth in thy light

Wo a wofiri dodoo mu,

you who came from many,

*Wo a wutu a ewiemu den se asamando,
ma wo ho me ne so*

You who fly and the skies become still like the cemetery come forth in thy light

*Amponsem nana a "odi sika to,"
atomprada, ma wo ho me ne so*

Amponsem's grandson who "eats mashed gold dust," and uses only freshly mined gold in his daily transactions, come forth in thy light

*Agona adegyekan nana
Wo a wode osee ye oyo*First grandson of the Agona line,
You promise and you fulfill it*De nkoden akyekyere Denkyiraman,
de ape no sibre, ma wo ho me ne so*

Having fought hard to establish the Denkyira state, and having found it a place among the nations, come forth in thy light

Ayekra Adebo nana

Grandson of Ayekra Adebo [first ruler, fetish priestess of Denkyira]

Ahihi Ahaha nono

Grandson of Ahihi Ahaha

*Wirempi Ampem nana a owo ntam na
yenka, ma wo ho me ne so*

Grandson of Wirempi Ampem whose oath is not to be sworn, come forth in thy light

*Otibu Kwadwo nana*Grandson of great King Kwadwo Otibu,
[accompanying audio ends here]*Wo a wode Denkyiraman firii
Abankesieso baa Jukwaa, ma wo ho me
ne so*

who led the Denkyira people in their great migration from Abankesieso to settle in Jukwa, come forth in thy light

Odeefoo, ma wo ho me ne so

Ma wo ho me ne so Agona,

Denkyiraman da wo ase,

Yeda wo ase a ensa,

Esie ne kagya nni aseda

Benefactor, come forth in thy light

The Agona clan,

The Denkyira state,

Expresses its endless,

Gratitude to you

(Text and translation from *Rhythms of Life, Songs of Wisdom: Akan Music from Ghana, West Africa*. Smithsonian Folkways SF 40463, 1996, pp. 17–18.)

This translation provides the literal meaning of the message conveyed by the “talking drum”—but these words also have a deeper level of symbolic meaning that is unintelligible to cultural outsiders. Understanding the extra-musical aspects of musical performance is one of the most fascinating challenges of ethnomusicology, and of linguistics and anthropology as well.

Arrival: Nigeria

Nigeria, smaller than Egypt, is Africa's most populous country with nearly 160 million inhabitants, twice that of Egypt. Nearly half of this population lives in urban areas such as Lagos, the nation's largest city. With massive deposits of oil, the country has been a promising prospect for investors at the start of the twenty-first century despite the political challenges faced by its budding democracy over the past decade. Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups with the dominant ones being the Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Nigeria's linguistic and musical tapestry is therefore quite diverse, leading to an incredible array of vocal and instrumental music traditions. The “talking drum” is also a common feature of music from this region where there are many types of hourglass pressure drums, such as *gan gan*, *dun dun*, and *kalangu*. These drums are heard in a variety of rural and urban contexts, particularly in association with festive and royal events, as well as the popular music style known as *jùjú*.

Site 3: *Jùjú* Popular Music

First Impressions. *Jùjú* blends the traditional foundation of polyrhythmic percussion and storytelling with modern elements of instrumentation and concert performance. The music has immediate appeal for its easily discernable “beat” but also an undercurrent of complex rhythm that requires a deeper appreciation of the music's Yoruba roots.

Aural Analysis. *Jùjú* music flows like a river with many ripples and eddies to attract the attention of even the novice listener for several minutes and beyond. Holding interest in an unfamiliar music is often a challenge when exploring world music. Modern audiences are accustomed to three-minute pop songs, a supra-cultural conditioning due to the early limits of recording technology that have continued to dominate the popular music soundscape. Music outside the popular music sphere, however, is typically not bound by such time



limitations; for example, an Indian *raga* performance or a Western symphony. By and large, however, popular music around the world still follows this expectation of short performance. Not so with *jùjú* music, where a single song performance can easily last several hours.

Jùjú music first appeared during the 1920s and is considered to be an innovation of Tunde King (Abdulrafiu Babatunde King). This early style utilized an acoustic guitar or banjo with a drum, gourd rattle, and tambourine as rhythmic accompaniment. Vocals were presented in a call-and-response pattern with a repetitive refrain and vocal harmony. Short instrumental solos were interspersed between verses, which included lyrics typically rooted in Yoruba proverbs and poetry, as well as praise-singing. This basic structure continues to be the primary form for modern *jùjú* music, even though the use of polyrhythmic percussion has become a more essential element.

Rhythm, as with most music from sub-Saharan Africa, is fundamental to *jùjú* and a primary reason a performance can hold the listener's attention for so long. While melody and harmony are more central in popular music in other parts of the world, the continuous undercurrent of complex polyrhythms drives this music. The duple meter provides a central, almost hypnotic, pulse surrounded with complex and subtle variations of rhythm and a multitude of percussive timbres.

Atop this polyrhythmic canvas are the vocal and melodic instruments, which punctuate, rather than dominate the *jùjú* sound: electric guitars, synthesizers, pedal steel guitars, sometimes saxophones or other melodic instruments mixing with local instruments, such as "talking drums," known as *gan gan* (hourglass pressure drums), *sakara* (frame drums), and *shekere* (gourd rattles) as well as a plethora of other percussion common to Western popular music idioms. The vocal parts similarly enhance the atmosphere with short phrases rather than extended melodic lines. Weaving its way through these musical elements is the lead electric guitar, or sometimes the *gan gan* or *iya ilu* (also an hourglass pressure drum), again sounding succinct passages that accentuate, rather than distract from the focus of the underlying rhythmic foundation.

LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.21 (3'58")

Chapter 10: Site 3

Nigeria: *Jùjú* Popular Music

Vocals: Single male lead (King Sunny Adé, aka KSA), male vocal group

Instruments: Electric guitars, electric bass, Hammond B-3 organ, drum set, *gan gan* ("talking" drum), *sakara* (frame drum), *shekere* (shaken idiophone)

TIME

LISTENING FOCUS

0'00"

KSA establishes tempo with a four beat count, followed by instrumental introduction. Note the undercurrent of polyrhythmic percussion sounding throughout the example.

- 0'20" KSA then male chorus enter on title refrain, "Oro Yi Bale." Melody instruments stop during this opening phrase. *Gan gan* is also heard leading into vamp phrase.
- 0'27" Organ and guitars play the primary "vamp" phrase.
- 0'36" Vocal refrain.
- 0'43" Instrumental vamp. The *gan gan* features more prominently in this section.
- 0'51" Vocal refrain.
- 0'58" Instrumental vamp. The lead electric guitar features more prominently in this section.
- 1'07" Vocal refrain.
- 1'14" Instrumental vamp.
- 1'25" *Gan gan* leads into new vocal lyric.
- 1'34" Instrumental vamp.
- 1'43" Extended vocal verse.
- 2'09" Instrumental vamp. The *gan gan* features prominently before crossfade.
- 2'20" Example edited to crossfade into organ solo. Lead electric guitar plays in background.
- 2'56" Lead guitar becomes aural focus. Organ plays in background.
- 3'50" *Gan gan* sounds just before the example fades.

Source: "Oro Yi Bale" from *Bába mo Túndé*, composed and arranged by King Sunny Adé and his African Beats. © 2010 Mesa/Blue Moon Recordings/IndigoDisc. Used by permission.

ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.21): Listen to King Sunny Adé's recordings via the Internet (iTunes) to hear how his style develops over time. Compare his music to that of other popular artists from West Africa.

Cultural Considerations. After World War II, musicians in Nigeria began incorporating electric instruments into their *jùjú* recordings. Innovators such as Ebenzer Obey and I.K. Dairo expanded the musical elements further by adding other instruments, such as the accordion, and introducing a greater variety of Yoruba percussion, the "talking drum" in particular. Nationalism was at its peak during the late 1950s and early 1960s when Nigeria achieved independence from the United Kingdom. *Jùjú* was an important musical means of expressing Nigerian cultural identity, especially for the Yoruba population.

As rock music became increasingly popular around the globe throughout the 1960s, *jùjú* incorporated musical elements from various Western genres. By the 1970s, funk and reggae were also important musical influences on *jùjú* musicians, such as King Sunny Adé (b. 1946), the reigning monarch of modern *jùjú* music. Modeling his early performances on those of I.K. Dairo, KSA (as he is known in Nigeria) made his first local recording of *jùjú* in 1967. By

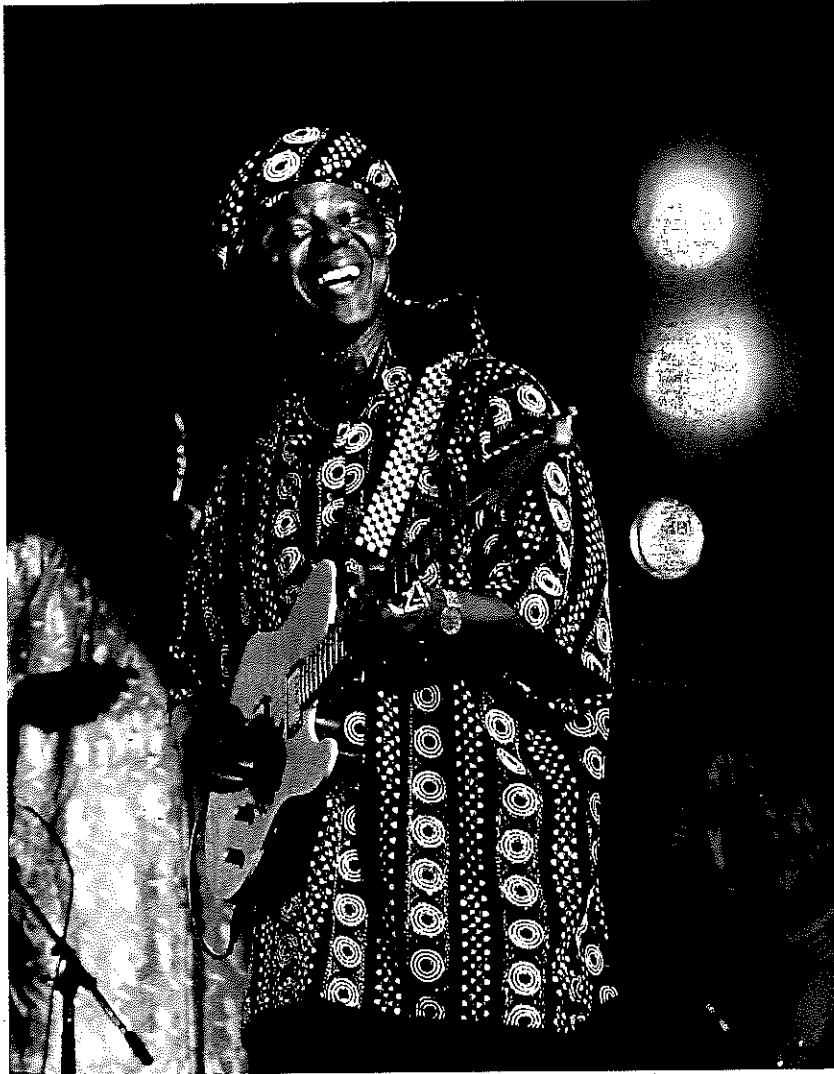
the mid-1970s, he had become one of the primary figures in the style's development, highlighting the use of the "talking drum" as a soloist, dropping the accordion in the instrument line-up, and featuring the pedal steel guitar, synthesizers, and electronic effects, such as "wah-wah" pedals. KSA was highly acclaimed for his guitar skills and on stage performances.

KSA also achieved prominence in part due to his royal lineage, which created some controversy due to his career path as a professional musician, traditionally regarded as a low status occupation. In many ways, this enhanced his popularity among the masses, who admired his willingness to resist social convention in order to pursue his passion for music. His fans also lauded the moral themes prevalent in his music, which encouraged people to live with high ideals and respect their cultural roots. Many of his lyrics are based on traditional Yoruba poetry and storytelling, as with our listening example, which deals with the subject of female infidelity, a "heavy topic" (*Oro Yi Bale*) in Yoruba culture.

KSA achieved international recognition with his seminal recording, *Jùjú Music*, released in 1982 on Island Records, founded by Chris Blackwell in Jamaica. Blackwell was betting on KSA to become a successor to the deceased Bob Marley (1945–1981), who had elevated Jamaican reggae music into a fixture of the mainstream music market. KSA toured the United States and Europe, fueling interest in Afropop, which until then had achieved limited interest. While this exposure established KSA as a world music icon, *jùjú* music itself did not achieve the popularity Blackwell had hoped for, and he was soon dropped from the label. Nevertheless, KSA continued to record for local and other international labels, producing more than 100 albums over the course of his career. The listening example, "Oro Yi Bale" is from his recent release, the highly acclaimed *Bábá mo Tándé* (2010), an homage



Nigerian musician and singer King Sunny Adé and his band (Al Pereira/WireImage/GettyImages)



King Sunny Adé
(Jack Vartoogian/
FrontRowPhotos)

to the founder of *jùjú* music. KSA continues to be the watermark for *jùjú* musicians from Nigeria and is rivaled in stature only by Fela Kuti, the founder of *Afrobeat*, another of Nigeria's most successful popular music styles.

Arrival: Central Africa

Modernization's spread to Central Africa beginning in the twentieth century has led to the destruction of much wildlife, most notably the endangered silver-backed gorilla, probably the best-known animal inhabiting the Congo basin rainforests. Even so, this region still maintains some of the most pristine areas of tropical vegetation on the planet and is home to one of the most intriguing and talked-about peoples of Africa, the Pygmies.



PYGMIES

A general term describing the many ethnic groups of forest-dwellers in the rain forests of Central Africa.

The total Pygmy population is unknown. Whatever their true numbers—estimates range from as few as 40,000 to nearly 600,000—they are spread across several countries in Central Africa, including The Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gabon, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic (CAR). *Pygmy* is a generic term for a diverse population of forest-dwellers who are short by Western standards, being on average less than 5 feet tall. Contrary to popular belief, many Pygmies live in villages and farms, interacting with surrounding ethnic groups on a daily basis. Other **Pygmy** cultural groups, however, still live within the forest and maintain a nomadic lifestyle. Our focus is on a specific cultural group known as Mbuti.

Some Western anthropologists, including Colin Turnbull, have been intensely interested in the typical social structure of nomadic Pygmy groups, which provides one of the few examples of an egalitarian society. An egalitarian society is one in which every member of the community is considered equal. Certain individuals may take a leadership role depending on the context—for example, a strong young man may lead a hunting party—but there is no formal hierarchy. Cooperation rather than competition guides the social interaction within a Pygmy community, because each person is dependent on the others for his or her survival.

Site 4: Mbuti Pygmy Music from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

First Impressions. The aspect of Mbuti Pygmy music that generally strikes the listener first is the intricacy of the vocal performance. The “hoots and hollers” swirl around the listener

Performance of the Wunga dance by Pygmies of the Bangombe ethnic group in the forests of southwestern Central African Republic (Gerhard Kubik)





Batwa Pygmy dancers perform for visitors to Bwindi National Park, Uganda (Shutterstock)

as the vocalists sing, yodel, and clap. Few instruments are heard in Mbuti music, usually only flutes, an occasional rattle, a pair of clapsticks, or small drums.

Aural Analysis. Mbuti Pygmy music is dominated by vocal performance. Although Mbuti singing frequently employs a call-and-response organization like many other African traditions, it also features a unique polyrhythmic vocal style that makes it quite distinctive. As with other African traditions, polyrhythm is central to the structure and creation of Mbuti music. Since few instruments are used, the voice creates the basic timeline patterns that would otherwise be produced instrumentally among non-Pygmy ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa.

In our example, performed by a group of Mbuti Pygmies from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a set of clapsticks plays a repetitive rhythm with minor variation that acts as the aural referent. If you consider it to be in a duple meter (though the musicians by no means think in terms of meter) with eight pulses, the basic clapsticks rhythm would be 1 2-4-6 7-. A lead vocalist provides the essential lyrical content necessary for the ritual, while the rest of the singers interweave their voices to create a complex polyrhythmic structure. As with instrumental performance elsewhere in Africa, each person performs a short repeating melodic pattern. Some performers may sing a basic theme, while others sing variations. Each pattern interlocks with and overlaps those of the other performers, resulting in the unique rhythmically dense layering of melodic lines typical of Mbuti vocal performance. Handclaps or instruments may function as a density referent, as in our example, but often the basic theme acts as the aural center for the performers. Though soloists are not always set apart, call-and-response singing often occurs in addition to the polyrhythmic singing.

LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.22 (1'39")

Chapter 10: Site 4

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Pygmy Music

Vocals: Single male lead and mixed male/female ensemble
 Instruments: Clapsticks

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	Listen for the "duple meter" with eight-pulse subdivisions of the clapsticks. Note the varying accented rhythms, loosely emphasizing a 1-2-4-6-7- pattern.
0'04"	Note the rumbling thunder in the background. This performance is part of an animistic ritual intended to bring rain.
0'06"	Listen for the lead male vocal declamation.
0'11"	Lead male vocal returns. Listen for his reappearance throughout the performance.
0'14"	Listen carefully to the varying parts of the vocal melodic-polyrhythm. A prominent upper female voice is briefly heard at this point.
0'22"	Note the return of the upper female voice.
0'33"	Lead male transitions to speaking.
1'03"	Clapsticks rhythm noticeably shifts to a new rhythmic pattern loosely emphasizing a 1-3-4-6- rhythmic pattern.
1'32"	Loud thunderclap ends the musical activity. Exclamations by the performers are heard as the example fades.

Source: "Elephant Song" performed by Mbuti Pygmies from the recording entitled *Music of the Rain Forest Pygmies: The Historic Recordings Made by Colin M. Turnbull*, Lyricord LYRCD 7157 (original recording, 1961). Used by permission, Lyricord Discs Inc.

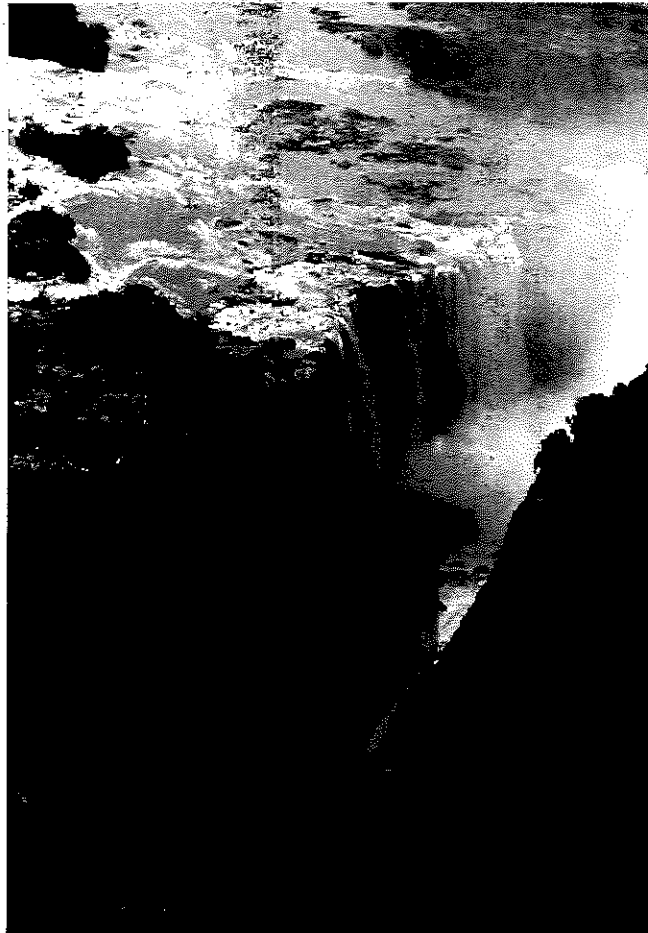
ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.22): Choose a recognizable vocal timbre and sing their part throughout the performance.

Cultural Considerations. The nomadic lifestyle and egalitarian social structure characteristic of Mbuti Pygmies are reflected in their musical performances, which are considered community activities. Each person plays an "equal" role, contributing his or her individual talents to the collective performance. The creation of complete melodic lines and thick rhythmic density requires the interlocking of parts and thus a dependency on other performers. The Mbuti's nomadic lifestyle is also reflected in the music's emphasis on the voice; after all, large instruments are not easily transported, but the voice can travel anywhere.

Communal performances among the Mbuti usually include dance as well as music, especially circle dances. These dances may be performed for ritual occasions, such as puberty ceremonies, or in anticipation of an important event, such as a hunt. Because animism predominates in the Mbuti spiritual belief system, music is often sung in conjunction with related ritual activity.

Arrival: Zimbabwe

Much of Zimbabwe, located in east Africa and being the size of Japan, consists of vast grasslands inhabited by a variety of animals, such as impalas, hippopotamuses, crocodiles, hyenas, and baboons. The rainy season occurs from November to March, creating an average annual rainfall of between 23 and 33 inches (58 and 84 cm). Mining is a major industry, though most people earn a living as farmers, growing tobacco and various foodstuffs. The great Victoria Falls is found in Zimbabwe's western region bordering Zambia and is one of the most attractive tourist destinations anywhere in Africa.



Victoria Falls
on the border
between Zambia
and Zimbabwe
(Max T. Miller)

Known as Rhodesia until achieving independence in 1980, Zimbabwe had been a colony of the British. Consequently, the official language is English, though many native languages are spoken as well. The predominant indigenous languages include Ndebele and Shona. The Shona ethnic group, who constitute more than 80 percent, has been of particular interest to ethnomusicologists due to a distinctive musical instrument they play known as the *mbira dza vadzimu*.

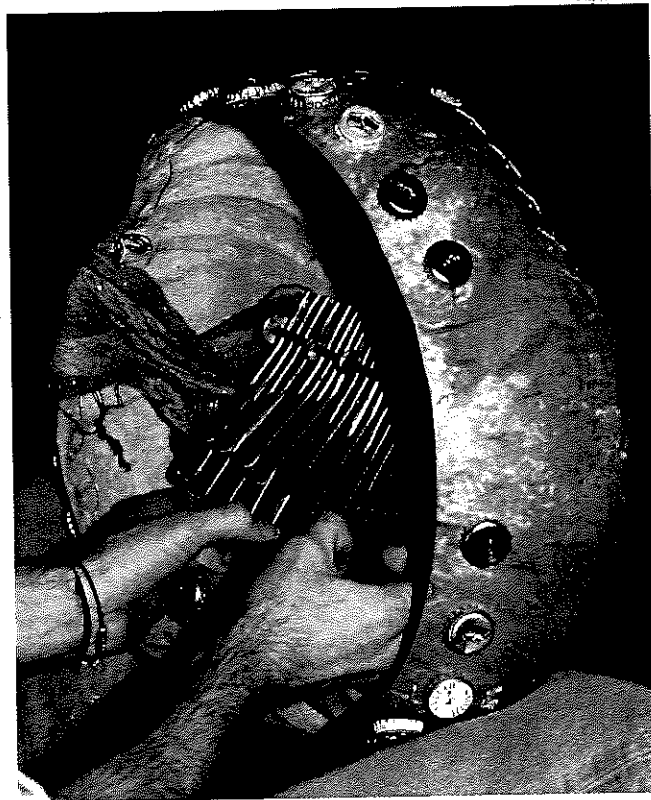
MBIRA

A general reference to lamellophones found throughout Africa, in particular those common to the Shona and other ethnic groups from Zimbabwe.

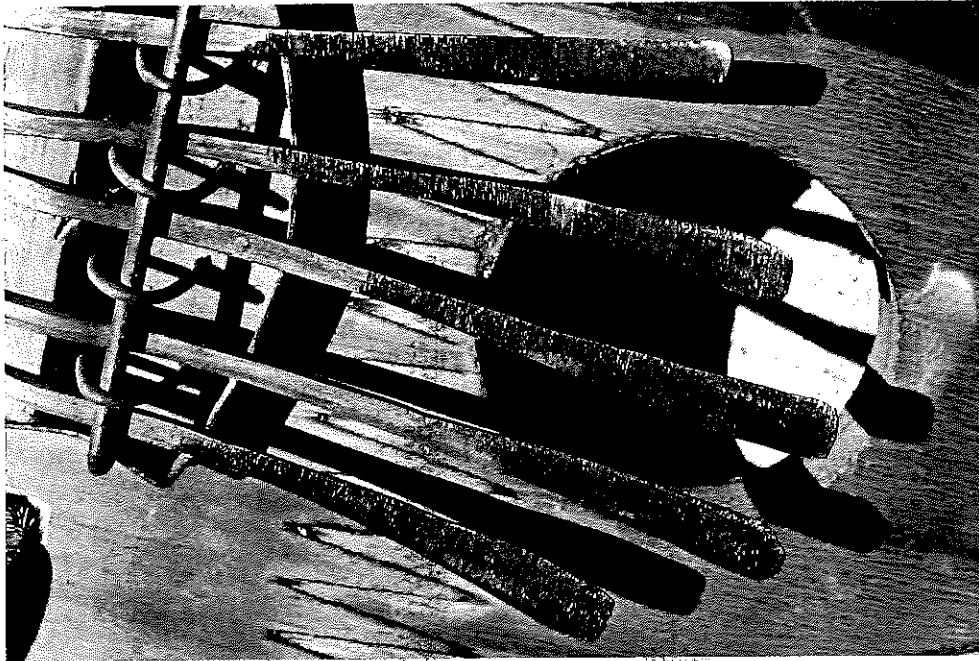
Site 5: *Mbira Dza Vadzimu*

First Impressions. The gentle sound of the *mbira dza vadzimu* (often simply referred to as *mbira*) is much like that of a child's music box. The music seems to float in an endless cycle, punctuated by an occasional somber cry from the performer. The sound of a small rattle helps maintain a steady pulse, while a distinctive "buzzing" sounds throughout the performance. This is hypnotically soothing music that might make you feel as if you were rocking in a chair on the front porch watching and listening to heavy raindrops fall from the eaves to puddles of water below.

Aural Analysis. It is accurate to describe the *mbira dza vadzimu* as a music box. As with a Western music box, tones are produced through the plucking of flat metal strips of various lengths. Such instruments are known as lamellophones, a subclassification of the idiophone



Mbira dza vadzimu
(lamellophone)
from Zimbabwe



Close up of
lamellae (springy
metal tongues)
(Shutterstock)

family. Similar instruments are found among many other ethnic groups throughout sub-Saharan Africa and are called by various names, such as *likembe* or *kalimba*. The term *mbira* has become generalized in the Western world to denote all African lamellophones.

Performers pluck the long, narrow tongs of the *mbira dza vadzimu* with their thumbs and forefingers. A large, resonating gourd with one portion removed amplifies the quiet tones, making them audible to a small circle of listeners. Small seashells or pieces of metal, such as bottle caps, are usually affixed to the resonator to create the “buzzing” timbre, a characteristic sound of many instruments found throughout the continent. Often bottle caps are also found on a metal bridge attached to the keyboard of the *mbira*. The percussion instrument that enters shortly after our example begins is the *hosho*, a gourd rattle with internal beads. Usually, two *hosho* are used to maintain a steady cross-rhythm (two against three) throughout a performance.

Mbira dza vadzimu music has a minimum of two parts. The lead part, known as the *kushaura*, is most often played in the higher range of the instrument and is more easily heard. The *kutsinhira*, or “following” part, is typically played on the lower-pitched keys of the instrument. These two parts interlock and overlap to create polyrhythm. In our example, the higher *kushaura* pattern plays with a triple pulse, while the lower *kutsinhira* pattern follows a duple pulse. The accents of the *hosho* fall on the duple pulse with a deemphasized interlocking pulse.

The *hosho* reinforces the “following” part, and thus helps clarify the underlying harmonic rhythm of the piece. Harmony is a term most commonly associated with European music traditions (see Chapter 9), but a kind of African harmonic movement can be perceived in *mbira dza vadzimu* music as well. A *mbira dza vadzimu* piece often has four harmonic segments that repeat with seemingly endless variations. In our example, each segment has four beats articulated by the lower *kutsinhira* pattern and the *hosho* accents.

Three types of lamellophones
(top, left to right)
mbira dza vadzimu
and *karimba*,
(lower) *matepe*
(N. Scott Robinson)



Try to hear the four four-beat segments of this *mbira dza vadzimu* song. Tap the duple pulse of the *hosho* with your right hand. Once you have established this reference point, listen closely to the upper *kushaura* melodic pattern. The melodic pattern starts in the high end of the instrument's range and then switches to slightly lower pitches. When you hear the melodic line of the lead part lower in pitch, start counting to four with your right-hand fingers. This change in the melody of the *kushaura* part marks the middle point of the four segments. The theme begins when the melodic line rises again. When you hear the melody return to higher pitches, use your left hand to count each segment as your right hand counts the "1" pulse again. The first two four-beat segments of the song use higher notes, while the second two segments use lower notes before the entire theme is repeated.

The *kushaura* and *kutsinhira* parts provide the basic structure of the music. Variations are often added, especially to the lead part. A single musician may even add a third "middle"

part to increase the rhythmic density of the music. The ability to add variations and rhythms is the sign of a skilled performer. A second *mbira dza vadzimu* performer may also add variations and interlocking rhythmic patterns to the basic theme, as is heard in the background of this example.

The musicians may also sing. In our example, the musicians' voices enter just after the second pulse of the first harmonic segment and drop out at the end of the four-segment theme. In most *mbira dza vadzimu* performance contexts, the singer, not the *mbira*, is the primary focus. Call-and-response is common in group singing, but solo vocal performances are frequent as well.

LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.23 (1'41")

Chapter 10: Site 5

Zimbabwe: *Mbira Dza Vadzimu*

Vocals: Single male. Secondary vocalizations also appear.

Instruments: Pair of *mbira dza vadzimu* (lamellophone), pair of *hosho* (gourd rattle)

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	A single <i>mbira</i> enters to establish the referent melodic-rhythmic pattern. Listen for the contrasting range of high pitches interlocking with the lower pitches. Also note the buzzing timbre that accompanies each plucked tone.
0'04"	A single <i>hosho</i> (rattle) enters, marking the basic pulse twice before the second <i>hosho</i> is added to complete the rhythm (0'06"). A second <i>mbira</i> enters at this point as well. Note that the melody is halfway through its content and that the tempo increases.
0'09"	The overall melodic content repeats at this point. Listen for the division of the melodic content into four equal sections of four pulses each.
0'10"	Listen for the high-range descending melodic scale of the second <i>mbira</i> .
0'16"	Overall melodic content repeats again.
0'20"	Vocalist enters.
0'24"	Overall melodic content repeats again. Listen for this repetition with subtle variations throughout the performance.
0'36"	Secondary vocal declamation.
1'09"	Ululation is heard in the distance.
1'20"	A faint percussive timbre (wood tapping) is heard in the background, contributing to the polyrhythmic structure.
1'24"	Listen for the high-range descending melodic contour of the second <i>mbira</i> .

Source: Shona ancestral spirit song, "Nyama musango," performed by Elias Kunaka and Kidwall Mudzimirema (Uharadzina); recorded by John E. Kaemmer, Jirira, Zimbabwe, 1973. Used by permission.

ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.23): Play the *hosho* pattern heard throughout this example using a pair of gourd rattles or similar-sounding idiophones. For a real challenge, construct your own *mbira*.

BIRA

A spirit possession ceremony of the Shona ethnic group from Zimbabwe.

Cultural Considerations. The Shona use the *mbira dza vadzimu* in a variety of contexts, such as storytelling, entertainment, and rituals. The most important ritual context is the Shona spirit possession ceremony known as *bira*. The example heard here is from a *bira* ceremony in which ancestral spirits are invited to appear to the community through the body of a spirit medium. These spirits are believed to guide and protect the community members in their day-to-day activities.

Perhaps because of this association with spirit possession, the Shona consider the *mbira dza vadzimu* a specialists' instrument, one that requires a high level of skill for performance in ritual contexts. Many *mbira dza vadzimu* musicians are "called" to learn the instrument by an ancestral spirit and thus feel obligated to become proficient at performance to help facilitate possession during these rituals. Certain pieces are only to be played for these ceremonies and are prohibited from performance in other contexts.



Arrival: Uganda

Uganda, along with Kenya and Tanzania, borders Lake Victoria, the second-largest freshwater lake in the world. The country has an exceptionally diverse population, with numerous languages spoken in addition to English. Chimpanzees roam through its jungles,



Karamojong women dancing in northeastern Uganda (Shutterstock)

and leopards hunt in its grassland regions. Most inhabitants are agriculturists, though fishing provides a significant income for those along the lake. Thatched huts can still be found in rural areas, though as the country develops they are becoming increasingly rare.

Uganda's known history dates to the fourth century C.E., when it was a major crossroads connecting northern Nilotic cattle herders and southern Bantu agriculturists via the Nile River, which flows from Lake Victoria through the region. The kingdom of Bunyoro became a powerful unifying force in the late fifteenth century but was eventually overshadowed by the kingdom of Buganda, which became the region's major power in the early nineteenth century. The kings of Buganda (known as *kabaka*) soon confronted British colonialists, who arrived on the heels of the Christian missionaries who had begun proselytizing throughout the region during the middle of the nineteenth century. By 1890 the kingdom and the areas around it had become a British protectorate, and Uganda's present boundaries were set.

After achieving independence in 1962, the country survived some rather notorious political and economic misdirection. Idi Amin, a brutal ruler, seized control of the government in 1971 and orchestrated a reign of terror that abolished the former kingdoms, ousted more than 70,000 "Asians," and massacred more than 300,000 Ugandan citizens. By the end of the decade, he was at war with neighboring Tanzania, whose forces, allied with Ugandan rebels, drove him from power. Since then, Uganda has struggled to regain stability and its footing as a regional power and trade partner.

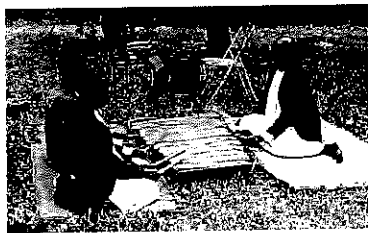
Site 6: *Akadinda*

First Impressions. This music is like a sped-up film of a busy New York City street corner during rush hour. Looking for "space" in this continuous welter of sounds is futile. It is crowded and unrelenting. This is, perhaps ironically, one of the types of music that inspired "minimalist" composers such as Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and Terry Riley, who in the 1970s and 1980s created music that wove simple, repetitive phrases into intricate, interlocking, densely textured patterns of sound.

Aural Analysis. The *akadinda* is a large, heavy log xylophone with between seventeen and twenty-two bars. The wooden bars are arranged over banana tree trunks that rest on the ground set at a 90-degree angle to the logs. Long sticks driven into the ground separate the bars and keep them from shifting sideways during performance. The largest bars can be more than 2 feet (61 cm) long, and the instrument itself is nearly 7 feet (2.13 meters) long. *Akadinda* are also found in sets, in which case each instrument produces pitches in different ranges, so that altogether they cover between four and five octaves. The lowest ranged *akadinda* is often placed in a shallow pit, which serves as a resonator and gives the instrument a deeper sound.

While most xylophones in sub-Saharan Africa have bars with a flat surface, *akadinda* bars frequently have a carved "dip" in the center, and *akadinda* performers may strike the center of the bar at the "dip," which gives the instrument its unique "hollow" timbre. Mallets are either made of straight pieces of soft wood or have a "hook" shape to better strike the center of the bars. *Akadinda* performance requires substantial interlocking of parts. Two groups of three men each sit opposite each other with the xylophone between them. The first group plays a repetitive rhythmic pattern, typically in octaves, while the second group

AKADINDA
A large, heavy log xylophone from Uganda that uses interlocking patterns that can approach nearly 600 beats per minute.



Performers on the *akadinda* xylophone of Uganda (Moya A. Malamusi)

fills in an interlocking pattern to create a thick polyrhythmic structure. *Akadinda* performance usually also involves a third group of performers playing yet another interlocking pattern, and consequently the resultant tempos of such music can approach nearly 600 strikes per minute. This triple-interlocking technique is unique to *akadinda* performance; other African xylophone traditions have fewer performers and are limited to double-interlocking of rhythmic patterns.

It is nearly impossible to decipher this fast-moving music merely by listening to it. To unravel the intricacies of the interlocking parts would require seeing the performers in action. Nevertheless, as with all polyrhythmic music, just by listening you can begin to hear some of the subtleties.

The music may initially strike you as chaotic, but if you focus on just one or two distinct sounds, you can start to hear how they work within the whole.

In our example, the highest-pitch strand is played with a steady pulsation on just one pitch in what can be thought of as a duple meter. While this pulse is part of a larger pattern, following it is a first step toward hearing individual parts. In the low-pitched patterns, a longer cycle can be heard that can be articulated as a pattern of high (H), center (C), and low (L) pitches, and can be rendered as: HC-HC-HL-HC-HCCC-. To put it in "Western" terms, the high pitch anticipates the main beat, which corresponds to the earlier single-pitch pattern in duple meter. This "beat" falls on the center pitches of the first two pairs, the low pitch of the next, the center of the following pair, and the first and third center pitches of the four-beat finish. You might sound this out as "&1-&1-&Low-&1-&123," with the main beat on the ones and three.

Again, keep in mind that this way of singling out particular patterns is not how the African musician thinks about musical creation. A Ugandan musician is concerned with how the patterns fit together rather than with how they can be pulled apart.

LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.24 (1'52")

Chapter 10: Site 6

Uganda: *Akadinda*

Instruments: *Akadinda* (log xylophone)

TIME

LISTENING FOCUS

0'00"

As mentioned in the reading, the triple-interlocking technique of *akadinda* performance is especially challenging to follow using your ears only. To begin, listen for the different ranges of pitch rhythms: high, middle, and low.

0'16"

Listen for the low-range melodic-rhythmic pattern. This is described in the reading as: HC-HC-HL-HC-HCCC- (H = high pitch, C = center pitch, L = low pitch).

Expressing the rhythm with minimal reference to pitch level helps to indicate where the basic pulse is: &1 &1-&Low-&1-&123-. The 1, Low, and 3 mark the basic pulse, indicating a six-beat cycle at a tempo of approximately 126 beats per minute.

0'19" The cycle at 0'16" repeats. Listen throughout the performance for this melodic-rhythmic pattern, which repeats after roughly every three seconds.

0'30" Listen for the high-range pitches played between two alternating pitches. You might express the basic pattern as "Up/Up-Down, Up-Down, Up-Down, Up-Down, Up-Down, Up-Down." The double "Up" falls on the first pulse of the melodic-rhythmic pattern described above. The remaining "Up" strokes reinforce the basic pulse.

Source: Buganda *akadinda* song "Gganga aluwa" ("Gganga escaped with his life"), performed by Sheikh Burukan Kiwuuwa and his group of royal *akadinda* musicians; recorded by Peter Cooke, Kidinda Village, Mpigi, Buganda, Uganda, 1987. Used by permission.

ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.24): Attempt the triple-interlocking pattern with two friends, labeling each person A, B, and C. Start slowly, alternating hands as you play. Each person should play on the following beats respectively: A (1, 4), B (2, 5), C (3, 6). Gradually increase your tempo and maintain the numerical order between players.

Cultural Considerations. Xylophones are among the instruments most common to sub-Saharan Africa. Many, such as the *balafon* found in West Africa, are small enough to be carried and played as solo instruments. Others, such as the *timbila* of Mozambique, exist in a variety of sizes and are typically played in larger ensembles. The polyrhythmic nature of xylophone performance combines with the use of melodic pitches to create exceptionally complex music.

Uganda is home to many xylophone traditions, but the *akadinda* is perhaps the most challenging and highly respected of them. Before the colonial period, *akadinda* musicians were part of the musical entourage that accompanied the *kabaka* (king) of Buganda. Their music was considered "royal" and was not played outside courtly functions. The melodies played on the *akadinda* are believed to be derived from vocal music; thus, through their association with specific texts, *akadinda* performances could convey a story or offer praise to the *kabaka* without needing a singer. Our example would be understood by Ugandans to have a specific meaning, despite being purely instrumental; according to the Africa volume of the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, it "celebrates the rough justice meted out to Gganga, a young page of the palace who was caught sexually molesting the Princess Nassolo" (p. 824). The *akadinda* is closely related, both physically and in its performance practices, to the *amadinda*, another xylophone found in Uganda and other nearby regions, though usually in less formal contexts. Whereas the *akadinda* has seventeen or twenty-two individual keys, usually played with three distinct interlocking parts, the *amadinda* has only twelve individual keys and is played with two interlocking parts and a third resultant pattern that includes elements of the first two parts.


 SENEGAL-
GAMBIA

Arrival: Senegal-Gambia

The Gambia, about the size of Connecticut or Jamaica, is a sliver of a country embedded into the southern portion of the much larger Senegal at the western edge of the African mainland. Approximately 200 miles (320 km) from east to west and only 30 miles (50 km) wide from north to south, the country runs along the mouth of the Gambia River, which flows into the Atlantic Ocean. Most Gambians are agriculturists, the primary crop being peanuts. Because the country was formerly a British protectorate, English is common, as is French, the national language of Senegal, the nation that surrounds The Gambia on three sides. Indigenous languages are commonly spoken as well, especially Wolof, Jola, and Mandinka, the languages of the predominant ethnic groups of the Senegal-Gambia region.

Of particular musical interest in this region is the tradition of the *jali* (or *jeli*), a specialized musician associated with the Mandinka populations. In Mandinka society, the *jali* (pl., *jalolu*) serves as an oral historian, a role held by similar artisans throughout many parts of Western Africa. The history of most African populations is passed from generation to generation through oral tradition rather than through writing or other forms of empirical evidence. Though members of the community are usually familiar with the major events of their ethnic group's history, the responsibility of maintaining both this history and individual family genealogies is hereditary, usually falling on one particular family. In some societies, such as the Mandinkas, this activity is considered a family trade involving skills and knowledge passed down just as a blacksmith might pass on his skills to the next generation.

Site 7: *Jali* with *Kora*

JALI (Also, JELI;
pl. JALOLU)
A poet/praise-singer
and oral historian
from the Mandinka
of Western Africa.

First Impressions. The music of the *jali* offers proof of the diversity of African music, which is frequently stereotyped by outsiders as revolving around drumming. No percussion is heard, merely a vocalist and his instrument, a plucked chordophone known as the *kora*. The opening flourishes on this instrument lead to a steadily repetitive melodic "groove." This churning, repeated pattern underlies the rapid-fire delivery of the vocalist. He has something important to tell you and displays his virtuosity with words rather than melody. His shouted praises for the group's VIPs are meant for everyone to hear.

KORA
A harp-lute or bridge
harp played by a *jali*
during his poetic
recitation.

Aural Analysis. *Jalolu* play a variety of other instruments as well, especially the *balafon*, a small xylophone, or the *koni*, a lute, depending on their geographic location and preference. The *kora*, the most distinctive of *jali* instruments, is a type of bridge harp unique to West Africa. The *kora* is constructed of a large resonating calabash (a type of gourd), which is cut so that the face of the instrument can be covered with cowhide. The neck pierces the body and forms the tailpiece at the base of the instrument. The strings, now made of nylon fishing line but formerly from thin strips of twisted antelope hide, are stretched between rawhide collars on the neck and an iron ring in the tailpiece. Instead of ending in the string holder, they pass over a tall bridge standing upright in its place on the resonator.

As on all harps, the strings of the *kora* lie in a plane perpendicular to the face of the instrument, but on the *kora* there is an additional feature. Since the strings pass over notches on either side of the bridge, there are two planes, both perpendicular to the face or sound



(left) Malick Pathe Sow of Senegal plays the *kora*
(Shutterstock)

(right) *Kora* bridge

table (and approximately parallel to each other). A typical *kora* has twenty-one strings, ten on the right, eleven on the left, though players today often add others. The player holds the instrument upright, grasping two tall handgrips embedded into the calabash and flanking the neck, and plucks with forefingers and thumbs. At first glance, it appears that the playing technique would involve a right-hand part and a left-hand part, but this is not the case, for the ascending scale is distributed alternately on the right and left sides of the bridge, meaning that scalar passages are played by alternate plucking of right and left. This allows for rapid virtuoso passages. Some pieces include an additional sound—a flick of the forefinger against the right-hand grip, and if a second person is available, he may tap the back of the *kora* in a rhythm tied to the piece being played. An accessory consisting of a thin metal plate with wire loops threaded around the edge is sometimes mounted atop the bridge. Known as *nyenyemo*, this leaf-life plate vibrates in sympathy with the strings, adding a buzzing or sizzling-like sound, something typical of many African instruments. Today it has largely been replaced with an amplifier pickup instead.

The performer ideally sits on the ground to play, with the instrument resting on the ground for increased resonance. A performance has two distinct sections—referred to as *birimintingo* and *kumbengo*—that allow the performer to show his skills both as a musician



Kora (bridge-harp) performed by the late *jali* (praise singer) Bai Konte, from Brikama, The Gambia. (Roderic Knight)

and as a praise-singer. The *birimintingo* sections are marked by flourishing solo runs on the *kora*. A performer may solo for an extended period of time in order to collect his thoughts, to survey the audience, or merely for his own enjoyment.

During the *kumbengo* sections, the performer plays a steady repeated pattern on the *kora* while singing praises that relate the history of the Mandinka or of individual family lineages. The steady rhythm of the *kumbengo* is maintained throughout the performance and underlies both the *birimintingo* solos and the vocalist's melodic passages. The *kumbengo* rhythm is yet another demonstration of the tendency of African musicians to use polyrhythm in performance.

In our example, the *kumbengo* is established after a short introductory *birimintingo* "flourish." A low and high part can be heard. The lower part provides a root rhythmic pattern while the upper part interlocks with it to produce a cross-rhythm. The repetitive nature of the *kumbengo* allows the performer to focus on his singing without thinking much about his *kora* performance. During *birimintingo*

sections, the *kumbengo* is usually maintained in the lower part by the thumbs while the fingers play the upper melodic runs.

The melodic contour of the vocal part can generally be described as descending. The *jali*'s praises start high and fall to a long sustained tone at the end of the phrase. The performer does not sing continuously; rather, the vocal phrases are separated by instrumental sections that allow the musician to collect his thoughts before the next bout of praise-singing. The text setting tends to be syllabic with little or no melisma. A performance usually ends with a final *birimintingo* section.

LISTENING GUIDE



CD 3.1 (2'57")

Chapter 10: Site 7

Senegal: *Jali* with *Kora*

Vocals: Single male
Instruments: *Kora* (bridge harp)

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	Opening starts with <i>birimintingo</i> , a freely rhythmic improvisation. Note the absence of the underlying <i>kumbengo</i> rhythm.
0'32"	Vocalist quietly hums along with his instrumental melody until the <i>kumbengo</i> begins.
0'38"	<i>Kumbengo</i> rhythm begins. Listen for the contrasting low, middle, and high pitch ranges and the interweaving rhythmic patterns these produce. The low melodic-rhythm has a three-pitch

ascending melodic contour, while the middle and high melodic-rhythms provide complementary motives.

- 1'06"** Vocalist enters. Note the declamatory singing style that utilizes a syllabic text setting, as well as the overall descending melodic contour.
- 1'19"** Second phrase of opening verse.
- 1'32"** Extended instrumental *kumbengo* break.
- 1'50"** Vocalist returns, connecting two melodic phrases (the second at 1'59") with a generally descending melodic contour.
- 2'12"** Text setting becomes more strongly syllabic, nearing speech, until the example fades.

Source: "Kuruntu Kallafa," performed by Salieu Suso with *kora*; from the recording entitled *Griot: Salieu Suso*, Lyricord LYRCD 7418, n.d. Used by permission, Lyricord Discs Inc.

ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 3.1): Write a "praise" poem/song about an ancestor of your own. Trace your family history as far back as possible and note how many generations separate you from your most distant ancestor.

Cultural Considerations. Among the Mandinka, a person's surname will often indicate the nature of his family trade; Kouyate or Suso are well-known names for *jali*. Even if a person chooses another occupation, his family name indicates a link to ancestors who at one time practiced that trade. Once a *jali* learns the name of an individual, he can extemporize a musical performance that praises the contributions to the community of that individual, his family, and his ancestors. For example, Smith is a common surname in the United States. The name is derived from the word "Blacksmith," a common occupation among English-speaking settlers in North America. As a result, many of these early settlers from England, whether still in this trade or not, had the original name of Blacksmith shortened to Smith. A present-day "Smith" is not likely to be a blacksmith, but it is likely that his or her ancestors pursued such an occupation.

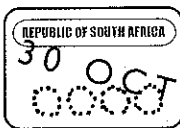
The texts of praise-songs are extemporaneously drawn from a pool of generic poetic verses learned over the course of a lifetime that can be customized for particular families and individuals. Praise-songs are most often reserved for members of royal lineages or, in modern times, for wealthy patrons, though almost anyone can be praised in this fashion. The person praised responds with gifts, usually money, which enables a *jali* to earn a living.

As already mentioned, the texts of *jali* praise-songs may relate to a specific individual, but frequently they deal more generally with the great deeds of the Mandinka people and with Mandinka history. In our example, Salieu Suso, the *jali*, sings of a Mandinka warrior who battled against the Fulani, another ethnic group in West Africa. The warrior, Kallafa (or Kelefa), captures many prisoners, who refuse to return to the Mandinka stronghold. Kallafa ties the prisoners together and has to "pull" them back home, and in so doing causes great dust clouds on his approach to the kingdom. The people mistake the dust clouds for smoke from fire until Kallafa is within sight. After recounting this episode, the *jali* then sings

of the great deeds Kallafa performs as he enters the city. While the *jali*'s praises are improvised, they are based on a stock set of phrases and images known as "Kuruntu Kallafa" (or "Kelefa") ("Kallafa Pulling"), passed down through generations.

Through such stories, the *jali* is able to pass on knowledge of historical events to future generations and enhance community pride in the accomplishments of the Mandinka peoples. More specifically, however, since it is the descendants of Kallafa who are especially honored in this song, the song's performance obligates those descendants to reward the musician for his gracious praises. This is done by "spraying" him, either by placing money on his forehead, usually after a performance, or by putting money in his instrument through the resonator hole.

"Spraying" is important not only for the economic subsistence of the musician but also for the well-being of the community. A common belief throughout sub-Saharan Africa is that ancestral spirits can be brought into the presence of the community by invoking their names. These spirits have the power to help the community by keeping people healthy, maintaining good crops, warding off natural disasters, and so on. If, however, the spirits are not respected properly, they may become malevolent and cause disease, drought, or harmful accidents. The *jali*'s ability to praise the names of so many hundreds of ancestors is viewed by the Mandinka populations as a kind of supernatural power. A great warrior spirit, such as Kallafa, can protect the community from outside evils, or, if not respected properly, reveal his anger by, for example, making community members sick or causing a fire to spread throughout the village. Thus, the *jali* must be appropriately compensated for his services as a praise-singer in order to help ensure the security of the community.



Arrival: The Republic of South Africa

The Republic of South Africa is the southernmost country on the African continent. Equal in size to Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona combined, and larger than Egypt in north Africa and having a population of fifty million, the country has a diverse landscape marked by tall mountain ranges that separate its high interior plateaus from its extensive shoreline. As with much of sub-Saharan Africa, wildlife, including unique small black rhinoceroses, ostriches, and baboons, are found in several large game reserves, such as the more than 7,500 square mile (2,900 square km) Kruger National Park along the Mozambique border. Parts of the Western Cape (north and northeast of Cape Town) so resemble the wine country of Europe that visitors often cannot believe they are in Africa. Indeed, much of South Africa belies any stereotypes anyone might have about Africa, including its temperate climate.

South Africa is home to diverse ethnic groups representing a variety of racial families. The main ethnic groups that comprise more than three-quarters of the population include the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho (North and South), Tswana, Tsonga, Venda, and Ndebele. White South Africans are primarily of British and Dutch descent. In addition, the country is home to more than a million people of Asian-Indian ancestry.

Archaeological evidence dates South Africa's earliest inhabitants, *Australopithecus africanus*, one of mankind's earliest ancestors, back more than three million years. More recent historical evidence indicates that hunter-and-gatherer groups, such as the San and Khoikhoi, inhabited the region along with Bantu-speaking peoples from West Central Africa, who settled as agriculturists and are believed to be the ancestors of the modern Nguni



Traditional round house as seen in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa (Shutterstock)

peoples, who include the Zulu, Xhosa, and other ethnic groups. Though explorers passed through the region in the late fifteenth century, the first colonialists to settle there arrived only in 1652. These settlers were Dutch and are known as the Boers, meaning “farmers.” They landed at the Cape of Good Hope where they established a fort and a provision station for the many trading ships on their way to and from Asia. In 1814 the British bought the Dutch territories, and within a decade thousands of British colonialists arrived, soon demanding that English law govern the region’s affairs. Many of the descendants of the Boers, known as **Afrikaners**, refused to accept the new government’s authority and began migrating north during the 1830s, shortly after the British abolition of slavery in 1833, with plans to reestablish their own colony. By this time, indigenous peoples had asserted their dominion over the northern territories, and thus the migrating Afrikaners became embroiled in conflicts with various African groups.

The best known of the African kings who held sway in the northern regions was the Zulu warrior **Shaka** (1787–1828), who had uprooted many indigenous groups in the process of establishing one of the area’s most powerful kingdoms. Shaka’s repressive ruling tactics and impressive war machine have made him one of the most important historical figures in South Africa’s history. Though viewed as a cultural hero by many, for others he is a tyrant whose remembered brutality still influences spiritual and social matters. The Afrikaners, who soon established their own independent territory where they maintained strict segregation of blacks and whites, defeated his successors.

Following the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and of gold deposits by 1886, the Afrikaner and British communities were continually at odds. By 1902 the British had overwhelmed the Afrikaner armies by pursuing a “scorched-earth” policy that destroyed Afrikaner farms and forced many women and children into concentration camps, where an estimated 20,000

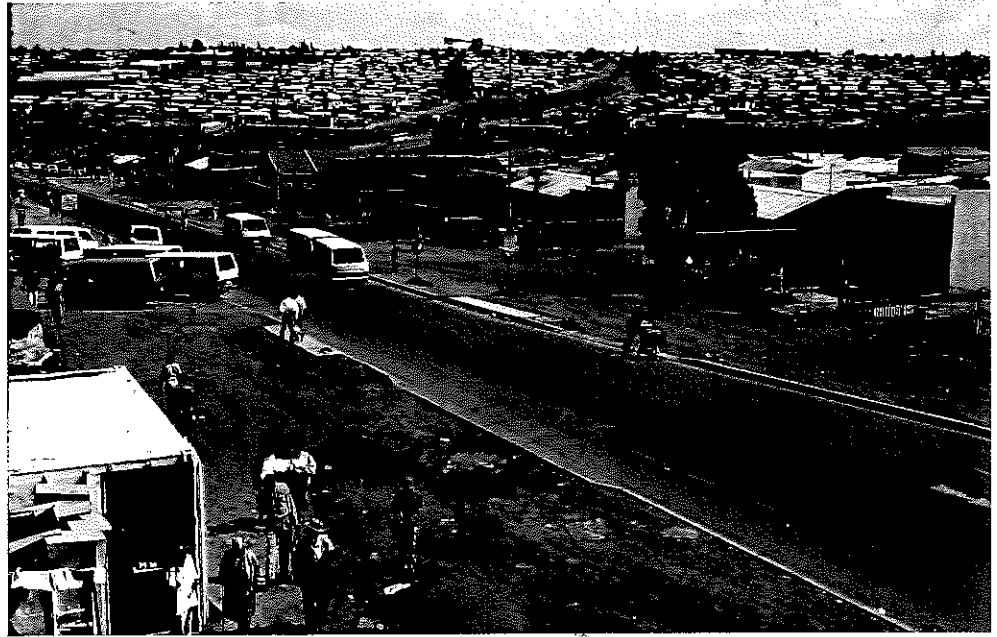
AFRIKANERS

The descendants of Dutch colonialists in South Africa.

SHAKA ZULU

Zulu warrior king of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who reigned over much of South Africa.

Soweto
Township near
Johannesburg,
South Africa,
a place of great
contrasts



APARTHEID
A policy of racial
segregation and
political and
economic
discrimination
against
non-Europeans
in South Africa.

Afrikaners and roughly 14,000 indigenous Africans died. To help end the war with the Afrikaners, the British agreed to allow the Afrikaners to continue their practice of strict segregation. By the middle of the twentieth century, this social separation had been instituted as a set of laws, referred to as *Apartheid* (Afrikaans for "separation"), which resulted in the segregation not only of blacks and whites, but also of "Asians" (i.e., East Indians) and "Coloureds" (people of mixed racial descent). Many Afrikaners attained positions of political power and succeeded in promoting governmental support of apartheid legislation.

Apartheid policies were maintained for the next few decades in the face of increasing disapproval from the international community. During this time, several anti-apartheid organizations struggled to find ways to end the oppression by South Africa's white minority of the rest of its population. The African National Congress (ANC), in particular, began seeking non-violent means for ending racial and social discrimination in South Africa after its inception in 1912. Opposition to the apartheid government finally reached its peak in the mid-1980s after half-hearted reforms resulted in numerous riots and hundreds of deaths. The government found itself in a perpetual state of emergency as it tried to maintain order and eventually lost the support of nearly all its foreign investors.

Nearly bankrupt, unable to maintain civil order, and finding itself increasingly isolated from the international community, the apartheid government finally became untenable. In 1989 Frederick Willem De Klerk, soon after accepting the South African presidency, began serious reforms that eventually led to an end of apartheid in 1992. He and newly freed ANC leader Nelson Mandela received a joint Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their cooperation in ending racial segregation and apartheid rule. Mandela became the first truly democratically elected president of South Africa the following year.

Site 8: *Mbube*

First Impressions. The lush harmonies of Zulu choral singing are immediately attractive to most Western audiences. No instruments are heard, just an all-male choir with a dominant lead vocalist and bass-heavy backing vocals. The performance is obviously well-rehearsed, with precise attention paid to tone, timbre, and rhythm. Though these are amateur vocalists, they have a professional sound. This is music for the stage, not an informal communal event.

Aural Analysis. Though some female vocal groups exist, most *mbube* is performed by all-male vocal groups. A solo voice (referred to as the "controller") leads the group (called the "chord"), following the call-and-response organization typical of sub-Saharan African vocal performance. In this case, however, the responding group may also sing backing harmonies as the lead singer "tells his story." This is heard throughout this example, in which the lead vocalist laments the suffering of black people in apartheid South Africa.

By varying the interaction between the lead vocalist and the group, the performers are able to create definite changes in mood. In our example, the opening verse follows a call-and-response format, with the group responding to the leader's call in harmony. This section is then repeated. In the next section, the lead vocalist is featured, as supporting group harmonies establish a beat behind him. The third section models the first: the group responds to the lead vocalist, then blends with his voice in the concluding harmonies. This section is also repeated. In the final section, the lead vocalist makes his final declaration before the "bombing" harmonies of the group carry the music to its conclusion.

While Zulu choral singing existed prior to the colonial period, its harmonies and strong cadences (closing phrases) as currently heard reveal European musical influence. A distinctive feature of the *mbube* sound, however, is an emphasis on the lower vocal range. (The vocal ranges are described using European musical terminology; namely, *soprano*, *alto*, *tenor*, and *bass*.) The lead vocalist generally sings in a middle or upper register, though bass leads are found as well. One or two voices in the choir will represent the other upper parts, while the rest of the performers sing bass. For every one of the upper parts, there are often five or six bass voices giving the music its rich harmonic foundation. This distinctive emphasis on the lower range of voices is considered to be a characteristic of Zulu choral performance that predates the colonial period.

The *mbube* style is also distinctive for its frequent changes in tempo. The lead singer commonly begins his phrases in a "loose" manner approximating speech, that is, he does not emphasize a definite beat. The ends of vocal phrases often feature a slight slowing of the tempo and a short pause afterward that does not follow the established beat. The closing repeated refrain follows a tempo different than the rest of the performance, especially in competition pieces when the performers walk off stage (the footsteps of the exiting vocalists can be heard toward the end of our example).

LISTENING GUIDE



CD 3.2 (2'53")

Chapter 10: Site 8

Republic of South Africa: *Mbube*

Vocals: Single male lead with supporting male ensemble

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	Lead vocal ("Controller") enters and the group responds, followed by a second line with a call-and-response form and a closing call-and-response line. Listen for the use of harmony in the group responses and the emphasis on a low range of pitches.
0'09"	Listen for the harmonic tension-resolution of the closing cadence. Also, note that the tempo (approximately 104 beats per minute) slows at the end of the phrase.
0'13"	Opening verse is repeated, continuing in free-rhythm.
0'27"	Lead vocal is featured.
0'31"	Backing vocals return, articulating a regular beat (approximately 104 beats per minute).
0'41"	Closing harmonic cadence returns.
0'48"	Repetition of featured lead vocal part, supported by rhythmically regular backing vocals and followed by closing harmonic cadence.
1'10"	Return to call-and-response ("Controller" and "Chord") organization. Listen for the increased emphasis on the lower range of the group response at 1'20".
1'31"	Call-and-response section repeats.
1'51"	Lead vocal solo is featured in free rhythm.
2'00"	Lead vocal initiates the "bombing" section characterized by the "swooping" harmonies of the group response. Listen for the decrease in tempo (to approximately 84 beats per minute). Note that a second high voice adds another vocal line to contrast with the lead vocal and ensemble parts.
2'16"	Group harmony moves back to consistent pitch levels. Listen for the lead vocal initiating each repetition of the group response.
2'29"	Listen for the footsteps of the performers as the example fades.

Source: "Phesheya Mama" ("Mama, they are overseas") sung by the Utrecht Zulu Singing Competition and recorded by Gary Gardner and Helen Kivnick, 1984; from the recording entitled *Let Their Voices Be Heard: Traditional Singing in South Africa*, Rounder 5024, 1987. Used by permission.

ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 3.2): Research the music of South Africa in relation to the politics of the apartheid period. Search for music in your own culture that addresses political circumstances related to your own nation's history—for example, American music about the Vietnam War.

Cultural Considerations. As with much of Zulu traditional culture, the roots of *mbube* are thought to have originated during the lifetime of Shaka. Whether this belief is accurate, it is an indication of the degree to which Zulu people identify themselves with this great king. Shaka was regarded not only as a powerful warrior but also as a great dancer and strong singer. Much of the Zulu traditional repertoire is attributed to him, as he was said to have composed many songs to help keep morale high among his soldiers.

More recent influences on the sound of *mbube* are traceable to the 1920s, when migrant workers began holding evening singing competitions as a form of entertainment after long arduous days of hard labor in the gold and diamond mines found throughout South Africa. Many unique music traditions came from the labor camps, known as townships, in which most blacks were forced to live during the years of apartheid. The segregation was so strict that armed guards were often found at the gates leading to the townships. The townships were also divided into black and "coloured" (Indian or mixed descent) encampments. Soweto, meaning "Southwestern Townships," is a vast area near Johannesburg where millions of people still live in housing that varies from cardboard shacks to mansions. This area was home to Nelson Mandela before his imprisonment in 1962, as it still is to Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

By the late 1930s, nighttime *mbube* singing competitions had become characteristic of the Zulu encampments and hostels. One of the earliest recordings of this style of singing, "Mbube," was made by Solomon Linda and his Evening Birds vocal group. The single became very popular and later inspired two American hits, "Wimoweh" by the Weavers (1951) and "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" by the Tokens (1961). The song's title became the name for the "bombing" vocal style (so-called for its frequent descending melodic contour) exemplified by Solomon's group, with its deep four-part harmonies and soprano lead voice.

The best-known derivative of the *mbube* style is *isicathamiya* (a tongue "click" occurs on the romanized *c*, ISI-"click"-A-THA-MEE-YA), popularized by Ladysmith Black Mambazo, a vocal group from Ladysmith, South Africa, which gained international prominence after their collaboration with American artist Paul Simon on his highly successful *Graceland* album (1986), and soon after they won a Grammy for their own album, *Shaka Zulu* (1988). The name *isicathamiya* means "to walk like a cat" (i.e., stealthily), and is derived from a description of the dance that accompanies the singing. This style of dancing uses "tiptoeing" choreography and flowing gestures, in contrast to traditional Zulu dancing which frequently features hard stamping and vigorous "warrior" movements. The *isicathamiya* sound reflects this subdued dance style and tends to be "softer" and "smoother" than *mbube*.

Explore More

Ladysmith Black Mambazo

BONUS TRACK: CD 3.3, Source: Ladysmith Black Mambazo, "Because I Love You" from *Raise Your Spirits Higher*, Heads Up International, 2004.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo (LSBM), South Africa's iconic choral group, has remained one of the most popular of world music artists around the world. While their members often change, Joseph Shabalala (b.1941), the group's founder, has remained the driving force behind the group's success.

Shabalala formed his first group of *mbube* singers in 1960, following the conventions of the genre as exemplified in the audio site example. While successful, their performance was not otherwise unique among their contemporaries. In 1964, he writes that he had a dream that prompted him to create a new vocal group that would “cut down” his rivals in the local *mbube* “nightsong” competitions. At the time, *mbube* groups emphasized loud dynamic levels as a show of their strength and power over the other groups. Shabalala, however, took the opposite approach, creating the quiet *isicathamiya* style. His new group, Ladysmith (the name of his hometown) Black (a reference to the black ox—a symbol of strength) Mambazo (meaning “axe” with the implication of “cutting down” the competition) found rapid success throughout Durban and Johannesburg. Soon the group was able to travel as professional musicians and was frequently featured at nightsong events as non-competitors to help draw audiences; they had become so dominant in winning the competitions the other groups would refuse to participate.

In 1973, LSBM made their first recording on Gallo Africa, the nation’s largest record and broadcasting company. The recording, *Amabutho*, was historic as it was the first gold record (selling more than 25,000 copies) made by all-black musicians in South Africa to earn this award. The group continued to record throughout the decade and became particularly popular with religious community groups after their conversion to Christianity in 1976. Many of their songs then came to emphasize this spiritual orientation or have a moralistic theme. By the early 1980s, LSBM had accepted

invitations to perform in Europe, and their recordings made their way overseas to the American world music market as well. By the time they appeared on Paul Simon’s *Graceland* (1986) album, they were already one of the best-known artists in world music circles. The tremendous success of that album, however, catapulted them into the mainstream for several years. They have since earned numerous awards and performed for many famous international figures, such as Pope John Paul II (1920–2005), Queen Elizabeth II (b.1926), and fellow-South African, Nelson Mandela (b.1918), a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. LSBM continues to record and perform internationally. We have included a “bonus” track of their music, “Because I Love You” from their grammy-winning release, *Raise Your Spirit Higher* (2004), to present the contrasting styles of *isicathamiya* and *mbube*.



The well-known South African vocal group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, performing on stage in New York City. (Jack Vartoogian/FrontRowPhotos)

Questions to Consider

1. How do the principal musical manifestations found in sub-Saharan Africa reflect the collective community and encourage group participation?
2. How is polyrhythmic music created in sub-Saharan Africa?
3. What linguistic elements are required to make a drum “talk”?

4. In what ways do *Jùjú* and other types of popular music in sub-Saharan Africa draw on traditional music for inspiration?
5. What role does music play in maintaining oral histories and legitimizing royalty?
6. In what ways has music in South Africa reflected the particular history of the country?

On Your Own Time

Visit the textbook website to find these resources for further exploration on your own.

Africa

Book: Stone, Ruth. *The Garland Handbook of African Music*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415961028/>

Book: Chernoff, John Miller. *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
<http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/A/bo3638026.html>

Website: The African Music Encyclopedia
<http://africanmusic.org/>

Website: Afropop Worldwide
<http://www.afropop.org/>

Ghana

Audio: *Asante Kete Drumming—Music of Ghana*. Lyricord: LYRCD 7454, 2007.
<http://lyricord.com/asanteketedrumming-musicofghana.aspx>
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/asante-kete-drumming-music/id268781221>

Audio: *Rhythm of Life, Songs of Wisdom—Akan Music from Ghana, West Africa*. Smithsonian-Folkways: SFW 40463, 1996.
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/albumdetails.aspx?itemid=2377>
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/rhythms-life-songs-wisdom/id82056000>

Website: Ghana Nation
<http://www.ghananation.com>

Book: Younge, Paschal Yao. *Music and Dance Traditions of Ghana: History, Performance and Teaching*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2011.
<http://www.mcfarlandpub.com/book-2.php?id=978-0-7864-4992-7>

Internet: Popular Artists from Ghana
 E.T. Mensah Koo Nimo George Darko

Nigeria

Book: Waterman, Christopher. *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
<http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/J/bo3774389.html>