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Title

'Are' Are Music and Shaping Bamboo

Permalink

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Journal

Ethnomusicology, 40(1)

ISSN

0014-1836

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Publication Date

1996

DOI

10.2307/852462

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Peer reviewed



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the society for
ethnomusicology

Review

Reviewed Work(s): 'Are' Are Music and Shaping Bamboo by Hugo Zemp and Frank Dobbins

Review by: Robert Garfias

Source: *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter, 1996), pp. 171-174

Published by: University of Illinois Press on behalf of Society for Ethnomusicology

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/852462>

Accessed: 16-05-2017 21:53 UTC

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'Are'are Music and Shaping Bamboo, by HUGO ZEMP, CNRS, Paris. Translated by FRANK DOBBINS, Goldsmiths College, University of London. Published by the Society for Ethnomusicology (No. 1 in the Audiovisual Series of the Society for Ethnomusicology. Series editor: JOHN BAILY). 1994. With study guide, 72 pp. written by HUGO ZEMP. Part I: **Prelude: The Feast and 'Au, Music for Bamboo Instruments**; Part II: **'O'o, Slit Drum Music**; and Part III: **Nuuha Songs**. On two video cassettes. Parts I and II on video cassette I (99 minutes). Part III on video cassette II (43 minutes).

It is difficult to resist superlatives when considering the entire volume of Hugo Zemp's 'Are'are work over the years. From the early 1970s, when the *Vogue*, *Musée de l'Homme*, and Ocora audio recordings appeared, it was clear that a remarkable music tradition had been discovered. By this time, there had been a steady, if erratic, sound documentation of the many musical genres of the world—a process steadily taking place since the end of World War II. Even to those of us who had been observing the gradual increase in sound documentation, the uniqueness, complexity, and articulation of this heretofore little-known musical culture existing on one of the Solomon Islands was a phenomenal surprise, and this revelation was further enhanced by the clarity and thoroughness of Zemp's documentation of it.

Zemp did his initial work in the Solomon Islands in 1969 and 1970 in collaboration with anthropologist Daniel de Coppet. In the Study Guide accompanying the video, Zemp explains that he initially came upon the procedure of documentary filming when he discovered a 16mm camera and some film left by De Coppet after his departure from the Solomons in 1969. Upon returning to Paris, Zemp began to study the technique of cinematic documentation with increased dedication. In 1974 Zemp returned to the Solomons and focused his work largely on documentary filming.

I first saw the 16mm format version of these videos in 1980, by which time I had been long familiar with the stunning audio recordings of 'Are'are music. The impression of now witnessing the added physical context of the performances together with Zemp's remarkable documentary filming and presentation was once again riveting. Film documentation technique had clearly by this date taken two philosophically distinct paths. One was characterized by the poetic and interpretive narrative as exemplified in the classic works of Gierson and Flaherty. The other, a more objective ethnographic document, was widely used as a basic method in the vast compendium of films making up the work of the *Enciclopedia Cinematografica* of Göttingen. Zemp's work decidedly belongs in this latter category of eth-

nographic documentary; as he himself once said, some ethnographic film makers attempt to do in film what might be better accomplished written in a book.

The *Encyclopedia Cinematografica* of Göttingen, however, serves as a good point of comparison when we consider the ultimate objective in this type of ethnographic film—that is, of allowing the filmed subject to present itself as clearly as possible, and to minimize the intrusiveness, to the degree possible, of the ethnographer. The Göttingen Institut began its ethnographic film library by filming the process of bread making throughout Europe. At its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s the well funded ethnomusicological film division, under A. M. Dauer, sent large film crews throughout Central and West Africa. They shot footage using three state-of-the-art cameras and 16mm synched sound and even constructed collapsible wooden platforms which permitted the placement of a camera view as much as three meters high—excellent for high angle shots even in completely flat terrain.

How then could a lone ethnomusicologist attempt to make an ethnographic documentary in the field with a single camera? In this regard, the Göttingen films were both discouraging and inspiring for aspiring ethnographic film makers in that they represented a distinct high point in the art of cinematographic ethnography of that period and an ideal to which many of us subscribed. But in this same light, the Zemp 'Are'are films are exemplary and outstanding in several regards. Bearing in mind that these videos were produced long before the advent of the portable video camcorder, Zemp was limited to a single camera and a high quality reel-to-reel tape recorder, each of which required a separate operator. What he did was train a local assistant to do the audio recording while he filmed. To overcome the limitation of the single camera, Zemp filmed the music performances more than once and later edited them to form a single combined multi-camera effect. Clearly, this could not have been accomplished in a culture in which the musicians did not have such a solid and steady sense of tempo to such a degree that variations between takes are unnoticeable.

Some might regard footage of a "single" performance created out of multi-takes as dishonest film making. Others have complained that the Göttingen three-camera technique (with cuts to different views during a single performance) is intrusive. Still others have argued that a single-camera point of view for an entire sequence is boring. In my view, the ideal film technique is to present the subject as clearly as possible while keeping the filming process as unobtrusive as is feasible. This requires compromises, and given the limitation of a single camera Zemp has struck upon a viable balance between clarity and unnecessary intrusion, although he does

note in the Study Guide that some ethnomusicologists concerned about the values of a “pure research document” might question the manipulation of performances.

'Are'are Music and Shaping Bamboo is contained in a three part video collection. The first video opens with a feast scene and a short narration in English. After this, the only spoken words are those of Irisipau, a member of the 'Are'are community whom Zemp has enlisted to give voice to the film. Irisipau narrates and explains the remainder of the film in 'Are'are with English subtitles. In the Study Guide, Zemp explains that he wished to keep the spoken introductions to the music as short as possible because he had only a small quantity of film stock. Without imposing his words on Irisipau, Zemp tells us that, just before filming, he asked Irisipau what he was going to say and then urged him to make it shorter. The result seems ideal for the film and Irisipau's introductions always are clear and concise as though by preference rather than necessity.

Zemp notes that when offering the video to a television station, the station producer, after noting that the spoken narration stopped after the initial minutes of the film, asked why Zemp he had not bothered to finish the video. Zemp writes in the Study Guide that he had to keep in mind the distinction between making a film for public viewing and as an ethnographic document. What he has done is create a balance of the two. One does note that during the long first part of the video, the opening short narration drops off entirely very early in the film. Rather than miss it, I wondered how the film might be without it. Later, however, during the “Shaping Bamboo” section, the narration seems necessary in order to follow the steps of the bamboo instrument-making process. Zemp states in the Study Guide that in spite of the controversy over the inclusion of spoken narration he decided that the viewer would be confused without it.

Footage following the feast scene examines each type of instrument and ensemble, each preceded by an explanation by Irisipau. The succeeding parts of the video series treat the music of the slit drums and vocal music. The overall effect of these videos is powerful: the viewer is transported into the scene of the culture and is riveted by its complexity and precision. In the end, one senses a virtually ego-less formulation of ethnography.

The accompanying study guide to *'Are'are Music and Shaping Bamboo* includes an in-depth introduction to the culture, as well as context surrounding the making of the films. Zemp explains the process by which each aspect of the filming came to light, from the careful planning necessitated by a very small supply of film stock to the necessity of making a two-day trip to charge the batteries whenever the generator broke down. Zemp also describes the discouraging difficulties faced in the making and presenting of ethnographic films and the unwillingness of the producers at the

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in France to include any written documentation to accompany the film. The Study Guide includes the complete spoken text and descriptions on each section of the film as well as information on the organization of the Are'are pan pipe ensembles, including placement of the musicians and other performance practices.

It is fitting that the first issue in the SEM Audiovisual Series should be devoted to these seminal videos. They are a model of thoroughness, imagination, and cohesiveness, and will remain valuable even beyond their considerable eminence as ethnographic documentation of this particular culture.

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Jali Nyama Suso: Kora Player of The Gambia. Produced by RODERIC KNIGHT. Video, color, 20 minutes, 1992. Original Music Inc., 418 Lasher Road, Tivoli, NY 12583.

Music of the Mande Parts I & II. Filmed in The Gambia by RODERIC KNIGHT. Video, color, 62 minutes, 1992. Original Music Inc., 418 Lasher Road, Tivoli, NY 12583.

Salif Keita: Destiny of a Noble Outcast. Directed by CHRIS AUSTIN. Video, color, 88 minutes, 1990/1991. Island Visual Arts/Polygram Video, Chancellor's House, Chancellor's Road, London W6 9XS, England.

Djembefola. Produced and directed by LAURENT CHEVALIER. Video, color, 65 minutes, 1991/1994. Interama Video Classics, 301 West 53rd St., Suite 19E, New York, NY 10019.

It would be unrealistic to expect the broad story of the music cultures of Mande peoples to be told in a single film because they are so widely dispersed in a number of West African countries and are integral forces in the varied musical lives of each of those countries. These recently produced videos of Mande music from The Gambia, Mali, and Guinea offer an indication of the diversity and depth of Mandinka and Maninka musical traditions. They all have shining moments and they are all recommended.

Roderic Knight's two video releases cover music of the Gambian Mandinka, the westernmost core Mande branch. *Jali Nyama Suso* was shot with two cameras onto 16mm film in a recording studio at the University of Washington when Mr. Suso was an Artist in Residence there in 1971-72. There is no false pretense of a natural documentary context, nor need there be. Jali instrumentalists are highly skilled professionals—one might say chamber musicians—and can adapt well to the recording studio.

The video presents Mr. Suso as a master of the *kora*, a twenty-one-stringed bridge harp, and documents his performance of four pieces that