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TOWARDS A NEW HEARING OF OF MUSIC FROM THE WORLD OF ORALITY: THE CASE OF SUB-SAHARAN AND CARIBBEAN-GUYANESE MUSICAL CULTURES

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ABSTRACT

Music is a multifaceted, pluridimensional notion, with complex dimensions. It is governed by the written tradition and/or oral which defines its creation of rules, but also its practices, usage, symbols, meanings and stakes. It is a form of organization of social behavior and communications. It is a culture of life, but also social representing, sharing and exchange. Of its shares, references and many achievements result all kinds of speeches and descriptions, through which broadcast also varied musical and extra-musical knowledge. By this knowledge also define the characteristics identities. How to translate such a polysemic reality? To date, analyzes of scholarly musical thought westernized tools to study the prevailing various world music. These analytical methods are not always suitable to elucidate the true nature and reality of oraliture music. Attempting to meet this challenge requires that we dedicated to new analytical experiments. This is the task that I am working here, through the study of cases from the sub-Saharan and Caribbean Guyana music, which will serve me of illustrations.

1. INTRODUCTION

In most of the World cultures, music is a multifaceted, pluridimensional notion, with complex dimensions. Depending on place and context, oral or written tradition are defined its essence and the creation by specific meaning and uses. For instance, in the case of Western written music, the context of production and diffusion can be related to a historically defined place, especially related to the use of written documents which allow us to examine how music is made. The tools for its analysis are also well defined, if still under going modifications.

In musical systems grounded in oral tradition, as in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, music is made through practice and a creation process which can be called "3D analysis". It is a combination of several layers of facts, acts, and interpretations, which can be seen from many perspectives, but still remain in strong interrelation. Music in these areas is never a single, simple event or fact. It is always a combination, but not necessarily a construction which could be described from its elements and their relations. The network of relations between music, the musicians, and the cultural environment gives birth to music as a total event. It includes sound, gestures, movement and instruments, with emotion organizing it as a whole, in building relations links, and in filtering, feelings, and memories through sensations. Actions and reactions as well as discourses are just a small part of the knowledge about music, in describing some of its characteristics.

The performance of music is therefore often a complex of traditions and singularities, built on a socio-cultural system where the art of saying through music is a common and specific basis. Each act of creation, each performance, has its own dynamics, its own origin and goal, its own effect and meaning: day-to-day or sacred, tangible or imaginary realities. The musical "ideas" which emerge one proffered, not just to be heard, but also to be seen and verbalised. Meaning is only achieved through a process which is both collective and individual and which includes perception and culture, extratemporal dimensions and living movements.

To show the structural dimensions of this moving complex, such correlations and effects can not just be enumerated. One needs to cross the various layers at various angles, and this will be achieved by pluridisciplinary methods and tools. The position of the observer must also be included in the process.

The challenge that the analysis of African and Caribbean music offers to analytical tools developed for Western written music is a perfect occasion to renew presents general knowledge and methods. A series of case studies will offer a look into this new perspective.

From this point of view, it is proves necessary first to clarify the essence of these musical expressions. I will start from the general move on to the specific, to reflect the global context and the representation of music as a phenomenon which encompasses a multifactor notion and complex dimensions.

The second step will allow us to understand the process of creation and the practice of concretisation of a work, a stratified process that I called stereotomic.

The third step will ask questions about the analysis we can do and with what means. And, lastly, for what result.

Given the magnitude of the task, this article will only refer to a partial and experimental conclusion. Further research, we hope, will provide more definitive answers.

2. MUSIC?

Today, music is a generic noun used in the singular, and in an almost universal way, to describe which reflects a reality both artistic and cultural. Complex, as music is indeed a universe of interdependencies based on sound frescoes that are submitted to the coherence of diverse realities and to the sum of multiple production experiments. These latter ones involve also a variety of protagonists.

gonists: individuals or groups of individuals, community, society, nation or civilization.

Music consists of analogies of parameters that are multiple (technical and esthetical, physical and metaphysical, philosophical or ideological). Their functioning stays linked to the balance between the unity and the diversity of components that generate them inside a given culture and era, in specific contexts.

This set of factors intertwine and clarify one another to give meaning to the produced musical work. The act that guides this musical work then becomes, in essence, a political and social act in the wide meaning of these terms. Through this act, and through the underlying behaviors and practices, the individual takes part in social life, music then becoming for him a way of sharing and exchanging as well as of communicating and interrelating. Through music, soothing, to relieving, irritating, transcending, strengthening and other emotional acts (physical or intellectual), are then possible.

So, through music, man acquires as well his power of action and life as imagination, dream and vision. It is used as an act of individual or collective pleasure. It gives him a physical or spiritual comfort. It allows him to communicate with his kind as well as with other beings, including extrasensorial powers. It is also used as a way to transmit knowledge and values.

3. FROM THE NON-EXISTANT TO THE FINISHED WORK: TOWARDS STEREOTOMIC MUSICAL CREATION

“Man does little but invent” Paul Valéry said (1944:87) about human creation. And in the field of arts, music is made through a *savoir-faire* and a creative process that I will call stereotomic invention. Stereotomic, as it involves, as already mentioned in the introduction, a stratification of data or layers of musical and cultural factors with plural elements. These elements, both of form or of substance, remain in a strong interrelation, and so allow multiple readings.

This is a process ruled by various musical gestures, fruit of the interconnexions and of the equally varied interactions, which, expressed in dynamic sounds and movements, are carried out in the time and space of the “Tuning of the World”, in the words of R. Murray Schafer (1977).

Thus occurs a process of blossoming of the sounds acting inside man or surrounding him. Captured, perceived and organized through his artistic experience, our artistic creators explore the different possibilities of these sounds to give them a musical meaning. To do so, several approaches are possible and sometimes necessary. This is particularly true about the awareness allowing an analysis that gives meaning to the significant specific elements, as well as bringing to light the substantiality and the coherence of their entity. Such an analysis is necessary even for the creator of music. It elucidates the unities through which he conceives the appropriate style of language, and on which he founds the reality of his work. This language

is ruled also by the way of thinking and the values that are the basis of the culture (individual and societal) of the artistic creator. The musical meaning that his creation will take on depends on these ways of thinking and these values. In a more general way, the specificity of the musical creations, as well as the choice of genres, styles, esthetics, and even philosophies and conceptions that one may have of a specific musical work also depend on them. The same is the case with the technical and expressive means that are used (language, gestures, graphics, signs, symbols, representations, behavior etc.) as well as the aim of the work produced.

4. TO ANALYZE? WHAT, HOW AND WHY?

The limited scope of this paper will certainly not allow me to exhaust the question on the series of questions raised both here and in the introduction: what are the relevant musical readings that can be adopted for the cultures that I use as an illustration, and for what analysis and to what end? What is the position to be adopted by the analyst, and for what observations?

However, preliminary observations are an indispensable precondition to open research pathways that, later, will lead to meaningful answers. These observations on the subject with I started now, that should be developing in the future, will be based this time on examples from the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese musical culture.

As with all other musical expressions of the world, let's first remark that the cultures that rule them are protean in their essence as well as in their achievements, these Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese musical cultures have close links of interrelations and interdependances, that are stratified and complex. Thus they constitute a real cultural sound stereotomy.

Furthermore, the notion of music that these cultures express does not have –in the locally used languages- a single noun that would depict or translate only the exclusive meaning: the art of organizing technically and esthetically the sounds (cf. Anakesa 2007). However, a word or a group of words mostly express a vast idea and a multi-layered concept, through interrelations and interdependances combined or overlapping. In general, this concept essentially underlies the very close link between music and dance events, the Word (linked to the human language but also to the language of the spirits), and all sorts of other extramusical interconnections.

So the musical act takes on a communicative importance that is comparable to the one of spoken speech. As a corollary, the musician is supposed, not to play- in the first meaning of the term- his instrument but to “make it speak”, to make it “dialogue” or “say things”.

Here, music is the parallel of the spoken word and the dance. Music also serves as a true metalanguage modeled on the spoken language. The musical's codes and discourses have value of the spoken word, and the underlying meaning then becomes the musical verb to be exploited for all kinds of exchanges and communication. These latter are archived through musical instruments

(voice included) that are not merely thought in their simple organological and acoustic nature. So, zoomorphic, anthropomorphic or the ordinary instruments are raised to the rank of cultural beings, equivalent to humans and to the spirits of ancestors or deities etc. Their disposition at the core of the group or on the stage is made in consideration of their “social” status, but also of their purely musical role inside the orchestra. The sound of each instrument, too, is a major factor in this real and symbolic consideration and organisation of musical achievement.

Here, the anchoring sound materials simultaneously form semantic elements. They also know an atypical structure. Combinations of a double expression coming from spoken language come from it. This typical and coded expression respects a structure with an appropriate grammar. Musically, arrangements are made, which are as singular for the style, or the aesthetics. All these musical expressions are conceived as being the human experience that expresses the order of inner life. Therefore, music is here one of the major factors that contribute to the regulation of this life and allow man to have a connexion with the environment, be it cosmic, natural or human.

All this justifies why, among other things, Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese musical productions are at the same time the echo of social organization and the set of underlying roles.

5. AN EMPIRICAL READING OF THE MUSICAL REALITY OF THE SUB-SAHARAN AND CARIBBEAN-GUYANESE ORALITURE

Before proceeding with my analysis, I would like to say that the use I make of the concept of oraliture is linked to the meaning given by Patrick Chamoiseau (1992:425), who defines it as everything that, in the order of discourse, but also of culture, is linked with oral and not written literature. Is it necessary to say that, nowadays, oral and written combine and are of equal value, as much as for what they mean individually as for the effectiveness of their respective systems of organization. This system allows for significant communications, able to translate all kinds of realities and representations.

Let's go back to the study of cases that concern us, and let's consider to begin with the *Kasékò* of the Guyanese Creoles. Among them, this word, that literally means “to break the body”, is a word that is linked with a reality of multiple interdependencies. Indeed, this one word refers at the same time to songs, entertainment music, dance, musical instruments and the night or the time of the performance when they are practiced. By extrapolation or by analogy, this word refers as well to values, a system of a way of thinking and of life, a way to share and communicate, but also to a system of alliances that echoes a peculiar organization of the Guyanese Creole society. *Kasékò* thus consists of a stratification of musical and extramusical interdependent parameters. These parameters operate under several levels of relationships, either hierarchic or egalitarian, but in all complementary. The production space of a *kasékò* musical performance, called *swaré kasékò* or *bal kasékò*, has four major music scenes:

The space of singers, predominantly women. It is ruled by *Larèn* (the queen, main female singer and soloist). Her special status allows her to play the role of conductor, and her stick is the *chacha* rattle that she uses wisely and in timely fashion.

The space of dancers (male and female). It is ruled by a *commandeure*, a kind of foreman who, through the circumspect strikes of his *tapèt* (two wooden pallets, with a square shape) announces the start of the choreographic intervention, and leads the steps while directing the movements of the dancers (male and female). He also announces the change of choreographic figures, as well as of the couplets or the tune to the female singers, and even of the tempo to the whole orchestra, or the end of the party, etc.

The space of musicians, traditionally male, even if, women participate more and more. Here, the *dòkò*, the drum master, is king. He plays the solo drum. He is remarkable for his playing and his playful (virtuoso) improvisations.

The space of the audience, and its extension, *the public restaurant space*. Here, meals, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks feed the body, allowing individuals to stand for the duration of a *swaré kasékò*, which start at 9 pm and end the next morning around 7 am.

These spaces are not partitioned. They are interrelated, and the individuals who compose them circulate inside, going freely from one to the other, while respecting the rules of this musical representation. So, they can become in turn, audience members, musicians or singers.

Nowadays, this music is more and more musical show and concert during various festivities (festivals, wedding ceremonies or other occasions of entertainment, public or private). The configuration described above is then adapted to the context and the circumstances.

Musically, the singing has a responsorial structure: the choir answers with the refrain the soloist who sings the verses. The singing is generally monophonic, but may, because of the diversity of the vocal registers of the members composed of Youngs and adults, cover a heterophonic tone.

Among instrumentalists, the currently most common style is the one of the *kasékò* with three drums: the *tanbou koupé* (solo drum played by a master, the *dòkò*) is in the middle. To the left is the *tanbou plonbé*, an accompanying drum with a low tone, equally *tanbou bass* whose role is to strengthen the harmonies and the tone of the ensemble. On the right of the solo drum, the second assistant plays the drum with a medium tone, the *tanbou foulé*. To the left of this drum is the idiophonist *bwatiè*, the *tibwa* player. This idiophon is made of two hardwood sticks and a stool-shaped wood drum, which the musician strikes. It gives the tempo, and zest to the instrumental ensemble.

Tanbou plonbé, *tanbou foulé* and *tibwa* play short, and repetitive motives with a quite dynamic *ostinato*. Through their respective instrumental playing, they keep a strict relationship of complementarity. To maintain the harmony of the ensemble, each one carefully listens to the neighbouring musician and does not lose the harmony of the group. They look as well at the gestures and facial

expressions of the neighbour, to which, through a complementary instrumental playing, they must answer by meaningful and challenging movements. Listening, hearing and seeing are thus capital acts to be observed. They allow for complicity in the individual instrumental playing and the partners. They enliven the imagination of all, and give sense to the values, the symbols and the repre-

sentations underlying the *kasékò* musical show. Special attention is given to the instrumental or vocal tone, symbolically able to represent the voice of a human being, an animal, or an ancestor or a deity when one is in an initiatic or ritual context.



Figure 1. Guyanese *tanbou kasékò* and *tibwa*



Figure 2. Guyanese *tanbou yangwé* (male & female)



Figure 3. Martiniquese *tanbou bèlè* ©Simone Vaity



Figure 4. Guadeloupean *tanbou ka* (gwoka)



Figure 5. Lewoz performance with *tanbou ka* (Guadeloupe)



Figure 6. *Kasékò* performance (French Guyana).

There is a hierarchy of position and role in the musical organization of the *kasékò*. The *dòkò* is at the centre of the system, a master musician with multiple and varied skills (auxiliaries musical and extra-musical knowledge). As for the *kasékò* dance, women and men are engaged in a constant game of seduction. The steps and the basic dance movements function lasciviously, with a repetition

with slight variations for the women. The men show their prowess, especially through the *nika*. In this style, all kinds of acrobatics, including the imitation of the postures of animals, add to the beauty of the choreography and embody the first meaning of this music: “to break the body”.

Two major technics govern the sound organization mode of the *kasékò*: the repetition by all kinds of cyclical *ostinati*, and the improvisation of the soloists (singer and instrumentalist), but also the prowess of the dancers. Inside this organization, in the systematic analysis areas, appear melodico-rhythmical practices built in short cells. Syncopations and back beats alternate and/or overlap inside one or at least two meters. They contribute to polyrhythm. Despite their repetition, the slight variations inside the rhythmical cycles increase the vitality of this repetitiveness, and avoid the impression of weariness of a less dynamic repetition.

This music, born in the universe of the slave plantations, is steeped in history. It has its roots in Africa at the origin of the ancestors who gave birth to it.

This results in a relation linked or to reflecting the social values of respect and consideration of others, of the care with which each dance movement, instrumental play, greeting, courtesy and respect of the rules govern the function of each one of the underlying actions of this musical activity as a part of the basic values. They belong to music and society, culture and identity.

Many things remain to be said about the subject of *kasékò*, and many as well about the following examples. I will treat them in new ways, but which are complementary, to follow my reflection about the questions raised in the introduction, as the limits of this article do not allow me long developments. So I will shorten my point, by restricting myself to the necessary minimum for the relatively better known cultures (like the Martinique *bèlè* or the Guadeloupe *gwoka*). I will thus be able to give a little more detail about the *bushinengé* culture, or that of the Maroons of Guyana.

6. FROM MUSICAL REALITY TO SUB-SAHARAN AND CARIBBEAN-GUYANESE CULTURE PATTERNS: MUSIC AS AN ART AND CULTURE OF CONCEPTION, COMMUNICATION AND LIVED SOUNDS EXPERIENCE

In the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese universe, music is in no way a word restricting the meaning of art to only the technical and esthetical factors, like the domi-

nant Western thought which, in this regard, is tending to become universal.

In Sub-Saharan Africa and in Caribbean-Guyana, music is everywhere woven into the social web of daily life. The production that comes from it thus forms a system of nested social relations and related to nature and sacred. At the core of their practices, and beyond the technical principles of musical creation, are interrelations of distinct social relations (gender, generational, political, festive, ceremonial, magical-religious or festive).

In Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, the diversity of the languages or of the sound systems is a reflection of its numerous traditional societies, hierarchical or not. The major part of their musical processes resemble rituals. Here, sound combinations contain specific prototypes or features often linked with scales, rhythms and dances, to which refers the produced genre. That is, every musical system has an organization that depends on an inner logic very often conditioned by external factors.

Technically, the structure of the parts often rests on little simple melodic and rhythmic units. Some are repetitive, others include variations, notably through improvisation. During the development of the musical discourse, generally based on a pivot, the variation of these basic elements may be of intervallic, rhythmic or accentual order that have an effect on the periodicity of length and metric. The changes also concern tones, one of the essential parameters of Sub-Saharan traditional musical systems.

In the case of vocal, instrumental or mixed group, all of these elements contain synchronisms and criss-cross producing complex combinations. The musical data are then often linked with the socio-religious circumstances to which they are integrated. The cultural data are often linked with symbolism. They remain meaningful and also bear out strictly technical musical criteria.

This also explains the fact that the names of the musical genres derive from denominations of rituals, ceremonies, instruments or other contexts and social interactions, as types of communication that are transmitted musically in association with some event, symbol or ideology. For example, puberty rites of the Aka of Ghana have the same name as the musical genre that is associated with them: *dradwom* (puberty songs).

To name a ritual musical genre, for instance horn music, one can add a word before or after this name to determine the nature of the ritual and the kind of horns used (animal tusk or wood).

So, be it voice, instruments or their combination, the African musical sound systems include sounds with a determined pitch as well as those with an undetermined pitch, often with a functional character. These sounds may sometimes be symbolically linked with the voice and the rank of individuals or of the spiritual beings. So we may encounter instruments producing male or female sounds, sounds associated with the voice of ancestors and deities, the voice of father or a mother etc.

Although unwritten, the musical expressions of Black Africa include very sophisticated sound textures as well as rather complex structures. These textures are generally rich in tones, thanks, among other things, to the accesso-

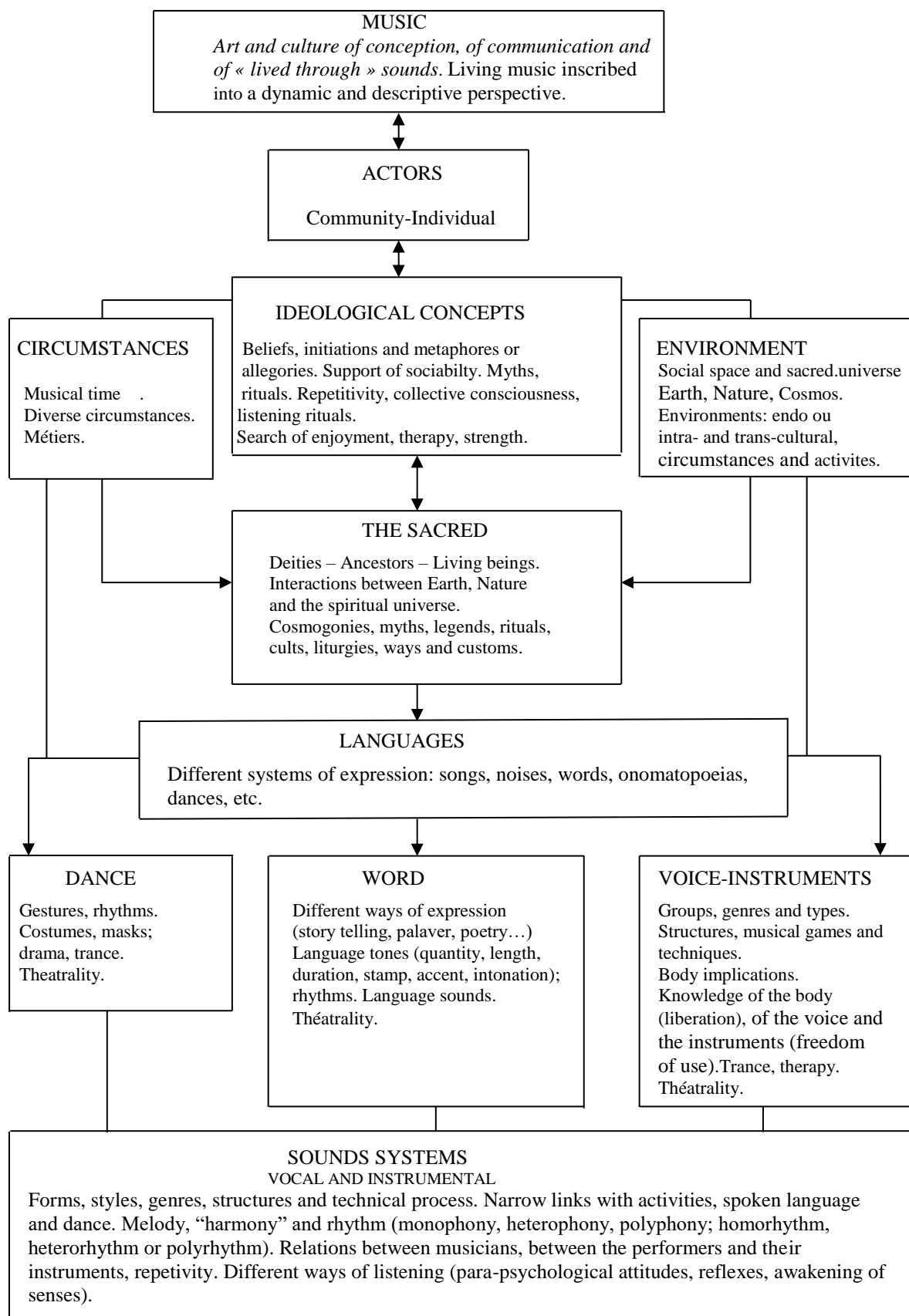
ries or surrogate that performers have. These accessories are generally attached to the forearms, wrists or feet or attached to the main instrument.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, as in the Caribbean-Guyana, the musical organization is conceived as a chain with multiple links (musicians, singers, dancers, audience), inter-linked and having a keystone, which can be a leader female singer as among the Creoles, or a master drummer among the Bushinengé and the Sub-Saharanans. Through their gestures and their performance, they produce a chain of speech the value of the meaning of which is similar to that of the spoken language. In this context, some instruments (anthropomorphic or zoomorphic or wearing some symbolic representation on their body) produce sounds that are assimilated either to the human voice, or to that of an ancestor or a deity represented by the instrument in question, the ancestor or deity is also able to possess a person in trance, through whom they will express their voice.

Music is at the same time a produced sound, conceived and constructed by an individual or a community, but also a received sound, perceived and interpreted by them through significant and varied representations and symbolisations. Musical instruments in particular are conceived and used following the logic which they refer. A traditional group is constituted of instruments that are generally arranged precisely on the stage. This disposition reflects as well technical factors (according in specific sounds and languages how music is made, but taking into account as well the overall sound) and also cultural factors (social status, symbolic representation, etc).

The musical gesture serves as a bridge. It generally helps to produce coded languages. So we can find an ordinary drum or a sacred drum. Their sound may be a plain sound expression that delights the ear and touches the soul. It may symbolize the voice of an authority, an ancestor or a deity.

ABOUT AFRICAN MUSICAL THOUGHT
CONCEPT OF « MUSIC » IN BLACK AFRICA: SUMMARY TABLE OF THE INTERACTIONS OF MUSICAL
AND EXTRA-MUSICAL FACTORS



SOME BASIC OF SUB-SAHARAN MUSICAL CONCEPT (Plurality of society- plurality cultures)

I. MUSIC:

- Complex phenomenon with multiple factors and strata, concrete and conceptual, of human existence.
- Art and Culture of conception, communication and lived sounds.

II. CLOSE LINK MUSIC - DANCE - SONG:

- Music = dance.
- Music = word (sung words, musical instrumental “verb” and “speech”).

III. REPPORT BODY – SOUND – VERB (SPEECH): On physical and metaphysical sense

IV. MEANING OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENT:

- Cultural Being.
- The luthier “give voice” to the instrument and the musician “make her speak”.

V. REPPORT MUSIC – NATURE – COSMOS :

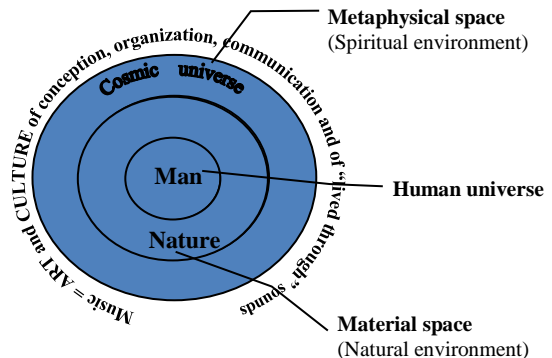
Sacralized musical universe

- para-ritual music (entertainment, trades and ceremonial);
- Sacred Music (ritualized).

ABOUT AFRICAN MUSICAL THOUGHT

1. Use of sound:

Broad concept involving fixed and indeterminate sounds, feature the acoustic properties of sounds exploited; search and selection of hybrid sounds and enriched stamps; based on a musical evocation of a destination, ritual or not.



2. Relation to the sound:

Direct impregnation
(sound received, sculpted and musically organized by man to express emotions, feelings and physical and metaphysical lives).

2. Sound production:

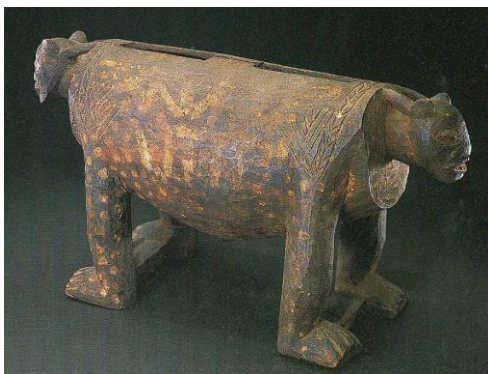
With the help of musical instruments, with direct reference to Nature and the metaphysical universe.



7.



8 (a & b).



9.



10.

Figures 7-10: Kongo drummers; sanza (Zandé anthropomorphic *likembé*); Mambila drum percussion (zoomorphic idiophone, Cameroon); Luba performers (mutwashi dance, RD Congo). ©Anakesa for pictures 7 & 10; photos 8 & 9:

<http://sanza.skynetblogs.be/archive/2011/07/11/bruneaf-2011-sanza.html>

Two principles related to intrinsic values are the basis of musical and extra-musical organization. They are repetition and improvisation, two main referents. The repetition symbolizes the permanent values, the cycles of facts and of phenomena as well as their permanence. It represents as well confidence and eternity. The improvisation, a metabolic element, is more linked with mobility, dexterity, virtuosity, but mostly originality, mastery and self-assertion, ability and *savoir-faire*. It comes from a certain experience, from the evolution of things and of their transformation in space and in time. Through it, the being asserts itself; through repetition it becomes wiser. Then it can move towards the ancestors and go into eternity, in the universe of the gods. Music is always there to accompany a human being.

Thus in this Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese universe, the production of a musical sound is rarely of no consequence. A musical performance is, indeed, a genuine area of creation and of freedom of expression that one enjoys in the respect of values and rules, for a social cohesion, a *savoir-vivre* in good harmony: to show the community and oneself to advantage. The value of the group generally takes precedence over that of the individual who gains thanks to the qualities of its contributions to that group.

The instrumental playing is materialized through the musical verb. Here one “makes the instrument talk” in the low, middle and high tessitura. To achieve this, one caresses or hits it, among other things. The Guyanese and Guadeloupean Creoles also do *plonbé*, *foulé* and *koupé* to produce the low sounds, obtained mostly thanks to the movement of the hand going from the top to the low part of the skin of the drum. The low and medium sounds are used as the base and support and accompaniment elements for the high tones of the soloist. Those high tones allowing him to distinguish himself, to put himself in highlight as a master.

In this space of creation, tensions and all kinds of emotions are released.

In Martinique, it is particularly in *bèlè* that music, dance and story-telling mix to transmit a certain conception of the world, an art and a culture of life, but, also, of communication by the art of sounds. Today, this art is realized through specific contexts, animated by songs, drum and some idiophones (*tibwa*, *chacha*, *labas*, *slyak*, *tryang*, etc), during the *swaré bèlè*. The context of performance or of production allows here gathering that is symptomatic of a way to be together, but also values of solidarity, of sharing and even of cultural resistance. *Bèlè* deserves its demonimation that specially means a beautiful place, a good moment lived under the auspices of a nice air.

In Guadeloupe, it is the iconic *gwoka* that, through music, dance and song, represents history and identity but also playfulness, a certain way of being, of seeing the world, communicating and living the daily life. *Léwoz*, *menndé*, *kaladja*, *graj wulé* (*woulé*) and *tumblak* (*toumblack*) are the main rhythms and styles of *gwoka*.

Among the Bushinengé of Guyana, whose ancestors escaped from Surinam in the time of slavery, two major ceremonies are celebrated that results in the artistic event

of great importance. They call them *pee*. They are funerary rituals, *booko dei* and *puu baka* (*pou baca*), entrance of mourning and lifting of mourning. Here, music and dance, that rule these events, result from the great dances organized before by the slaves of the plantations of Surinam from the XVIIth century. They are now structured in series of dance and story-telling.

The *mato* by which these ceremonies begin, is a session of storytelling featuring expert traditional storytellers. They compete amid a crowd gathered under the mortuary shelter, or at home, by the light of a lantern or a wood fire. During the ceremonies, historical, anecdotal, mythical tales and stories about ordinary social facts, often linked to the dead person, alternate or finish with the songs and the interventions of the drummers associated with the crowd. Singers, instrumentalists and audience react to the words of the storyteller, asking him questions, approving him or responding to all kinds of signals, including clapping hands, shouting, emitting spontaneous cries, doing some dance steps punctuated at times by gunshots in honour of the dead person. Then the music comes to a climax, before the drums become temporarily silent and give way to other story tellings that lead to other songs and dances.

The *susa*, successor to *mato*, is an acrobatic dance. Men dancers compete. Each one trying to perform the right movements and the acrobatic gestures that one must perform with dexterity and at the right moment. The rivalry takes place in a circular performance space, in front of the drummers. This circular stage is constituted by the musicians, the female singers and the crowd of spectators standing around them, among which the female singers who stand in front of spectators. The loser or the one “killed”, (they say “*kii*”), leaves his place for the next competitor. It is through this dance that in ancient times the fighters exercised to defend the community from the slave masters who pursued them during their escape.

After the *susa* comes the *songé* (*son-ngué*), also named *agankoi*. It is a mixed dance where, on the stage, a group of women alternates with a group of men, with *kaway* cowbells tied to the ankles. Occasionally, a female dancer and a male dancer, alone or together, exhibit their prowess in front of the drummer with whom they interact through gestures and coded sounds. The lead singer stands out through melodico-rhythmic flights that generally end with a spellbinding *vibrato*. The soloist drummer launches into improvisations with coded rhythms of his musical speech. The musical meaning that comes from it has the role of spoken words, intelligible for initiates. As with the dancers, they compete in skillfulness and acrobatic demonstrations. For instance, with the help of their calf, they can throw up into the air a stool that they will catch between their legs before it reaches the ground. It is also at this time that the main drummer, always with coded formulas, may honour a distinguished and gifted dancer. The person concerned, in recognition, raises a hand over his head and shouts his recognition. Then he lies in front of the drums. He then stands up to make a demonstration of his style in front of the audience as a thank you. And if this demonstration is still better appreciated by

the audience, the audience bursts into acclamations and exaltation.

The *songe* is preceded or followed by *awawa*. It is a session of songs originally dedicated to women, but in which men also participate. Through these songs, without accompaniment, are expressed all kinds of feelings and emotions that rule the daily life of the male-female relationships.

Here the song leaders succeed on music scene. Anyone can go on the frontline to sing a criticism, an insult or proclaim his rebellion or any other humoristic remark. Most often a man or a woman is accused of incompetence in performing household chores. Everybody has the right to speak, to answer, or to replicate other things to his rival, no connotation of animosity or revenge, everything happening in a friendly atmosphere filled with joviality.

The *awasa*, which closes this series of dances and storytelling, is a very dynamic finale. It consists of the demonstration and the virtuoso performance of stylized dance steps – enriched by the rustling sounds of *kaway* cowbells tied to the ankles –, of the rhythms of the solo drum and the flights of a soloist male or female singer. This creates a special communication between the various protagonists, mixing musical codes and social codes, picturesque gestures and coded sounds, imitation of and reference to Nature, evocation or representation of the sacred.

This dance exalts gestural beauty and dexterity of movement of the male and female dancers, as well as the balance and the strength of attachment of their feet on the floor. Thus among other things, by pointing the toes toward the ground as to « plowing » dust, these dancers become light as cats, twirling like fighting cocks. The traditional *pangui* loincloths decorated with various embroidered geometric patterns that evoke the *tembé* art, gird the hips of the female singers, while men are dressed in *kalimbé* (traditional loincloths worn as a shorts), thus adding more beauty to the show.

All these musical expressions, dances and ceremonial story telling are accompanied by percussions instruments

(three *doon* drums, one *kwakwa* idiophon, a *chacha* rattle and *kaway* cowbells). Musical instruments, certainly, but they evoke at the same time other beings and other relations. Their sound is in fact a « voice » and their melody and rhythm, speech, a stylized language rich in meanings. So one may distinguish the *gaan doon*, great drum or master drum, that plays the solo part, establishing a dialogue with the rest of the musicians. The *pikin doon*, little drum, marks the rhythm and the master drum with its ostinatos which define at the same time the genre or style of the music played and the identity of their authors. The *tun*, the « watching drum », marks the beat and the tempo with regularly kept hits from the beginning to the end of the number, like a metronome. This latter drum may also play even more complex rhythms in some forms of ritual ceremonies like *sebikede*, *pudja* and *atempa*.

Played alone, the *gaan doon* is also used as a ritual drum with a specific language: the *apinti tongo*, the language of the ancestors' spirits and those of the deities. In this context, this big drum changes its name and then becomes *apinti doon*, *apinti* drum, sacred drum. Every ceremony begins with its rhythms and sounds, as a prayer or greetings addressed to ancestors and/or to deities, so as to obtain their blessing to participants.

The *kwakwa* idiophone is a long board on which several musicians (six or more), using two sticks, play at the same time, each one a different rhythm. They are the power unit of the polyrhythm that will result.

The *kaway* cowbells are worn by the female and male dancers around their ankles. Underlying the steps of their dance steps, the sounds made by these bells, as well as the gestural elegance of the arms of the dancers, add to the sound and choregraphical richness of the ensemble and to the aesthetics of hybridation very popular among the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese universe.

The practice of the *chacha bushinengé* rattle is generally exclusive of the Obiama or Sabima: holders of knowledge who officiate in ritual practices.



Figure 21. *Pikin doon tun gaan doon*



Figure 32. *Agida* sacred drum



Figure 43. *Kaway* Cowbells



Figure 54. *Kuakua*



Figure 65. Bushinengé Youngs drummers



Figure 76. *Awasa* dance performance. ©Anakesa for all photos

7. CULTURAL ETHOS AND MUSICAL TASTE IN THE SUB-SAHARAN AND CARIBBEAN-GUYANESE UNIVERSE

The Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese musical reality is governed by an ethos that becomes an organizing principle of the social practices and behaviors, through the art of sounds, thanks to which various interdependencies are articulated. This articulation is also done by means of interactions (on the social area), significations, symbolisations and emotional (on the ideas, feelings and desires

area). The underlying cultural aspect is thus produced through adequate practices. Three major dimensions underlie the interdependencies and the interactions that come from it: “awareness of what is possible, conception of the normal and feeling of the sensitive, of the emotional”, to quote Remy/Voyé/Servais (1980:279).

So this music expresses a character, a way of being, a disposition of the mind, which are the basis, among other things, a way of being and of a certain conception of the world that rules them. It is as well the echo of a social configuration, a reference to belonging, an attachment, an identity.

During festivals or ceremonies, alone or collectively, music becomes the strong cement of the community. Through it an atmosphere of great conviviality and social cohesion is created. It constitutes the central moment and place for meetings that will initiate many relations and alliances.

At the same time, the opportunities for musical performances, such as the *swaré kasékò*, *bèlè* or *gwoka*, for instance, as well as being the contexts and the places of the musical practices, are real referents that evoke essential and existential factors such as identity, a way of thinking and of living. Beyond the pleasure that may come from the musical entertainment, the practice itself of music and its relative, dancing, prove to be a school for life and knowledge, and edification of the being through musical practice.

In the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese cultural world, music is thus a fundamental notion of social thinking. Mostly during the parties and *ad hoc* performances, among other things, music echoes the family and community organization. It is used at the same time as a place and a means of meeting and of political representation, in the wide sense of the word, under the authority of a physical or symbolic leader (a master instrumentalist or singer, an ancestor, a deity). From that comes a similar organization in terms of respect of the rules and of the social values and of all kinds of ability. It is the same with the learning of music and of instrument making, which generally take place in the family, to which are associated many social practices, the knowledge of nature, the exercise of the sacred.

8. WHAT CAN US ANALYZE IN THIS KIND OF MUSICAL UNIVERSE?

By proven principles and methods, analysis allows the decomposition of an organic whole into its parts, while making explicit the meaning. Thus can be distinguished, depending on the nature of the musical work, we can distinguish its different components mostly its tones and formantes, its rhythm and tempo, its themes and melodies, its modes and harmony as well as its forms ; the instrumentarium, the agogic elements, etc.

The means to achieve this are many and varied. For a precise purpose, it is thus possible to make use of musical writing and other schemas, sonagrams, photographs, videos or audio excerpts; new technologies and multimedia (with all kinds of software that allow a refined analysis of rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and tone components as well as other sound riches that were, until not long ago, still inexplorable). In this approach, one should not forget that, for a musical system of orature as the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese one, the factors of sound, the notions of listening and seeing are primordial. They concern both musical as well as extra-musical elements.

Ainsi les moyens d'analyse, à adopter, contribueront-ils à l'élaboration des modélisations qui répondent au besoin non pas d'une analyse comptable et mécanique, mais de celle capable d'une mise au jour efficace d'isolats signifi-

catifs, et porteuse d'une véritable explicitation des faits ou de la réalité musicale observés.

Thus, the means adopted shall not be used to perform a mechanical and accounting analysis. The methods to be adopted should instead be used to effectively uncover significant isolates. Consequently, this analysis must include an explanation of the true facts or musical reality observed.

For the music coming from the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese system, that constitute my examples, the units or the technical components that constitute them will only have real signification and analytical pertinence if they are understood individually, but mostly in a global way, to give a meaning to the musical realization concerned under analysis. To do this, we must take into account the previously mentioned interdependence, through associations of musical factors and of extra-musical or cultural factors that are linked to them and give them meaning. It may be a language, a myth, a dance, a dress, an image, a symbol, a significant referent or any element of representation. We can then report on these elements, among other things, by processes linked with hearing (sound extracts) and with sight (a transcription, a chart, a graphic, a diagram, a plan, a photography or a video), depending on the necessity and the relevance of the analysis.

This approach is justified by the fact that, in their process of musical creation of oral tradition, the creators working inside this system do not think about the different parameters as technical isolates to associate or accumulate. They do not search, for instance, to work at first only on a scale, in some tonality, to find first in what meter will be played such kinds of melodic-rhythmic cells or what intervals need to be worked firstly and what transposing instrument should be used to create the desired music work. In terms of consonance notably, for them, the hybrid sounds and all the richness of formantes they represent, and also the signification linked to them, are harmonious and pure. Thus, for their musical realisation, they think more in terms of globality of the autonomous or isolated factors that have to operate in narrow interrelation and interconnexion. It is moreover the same for the learning that happens through processes of globalization more than by a strict individuation based on small details ; if necessary, groups of details are often formed to reach the famous globality, while isolated factors being aware of the importance that must have every detail present in the system must have.

What matters more is the functioning of solidarity and interdependence between these isolates which each advance in a relation of reciprocal dependence. Thus it is a realization of independence inside interdependence are created. Independence and interdependence are also made in a logical consistency, of the technical, esthetical, ideological and meaningful elements. The intrinsic value of each of these elements does not constitute only the representative value, but is also a changing reality within the whole. It is also true to the specific characteristics that make their distinct reality.

Thus, musical reality does not have, in these cases, a unique organ as a substratum, as it remains diffuse in the social environment, the natural environment and in the metaphysical universe. Each of these universes give it specific characteristics that constitute at the same time a distinct reality. This, is close to the theory of Durkheim (1893:46) when he speaks of “economic and social reality”.

What can we conclude from all this of informations?

9. TOWARDS A PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION OF A NEW EMPIRIC READING OF THE MUSIC OF ORALITURE

As we have just seen, the music of the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese universes is at the same time a complex entity of interpenetrations of multiple links both internal and external, individual or communautary, physical and metaphysical that are inseparable.

As is the case in many cultures around the world, the music of this universe is at the same time an artistic art and a cultural and social art. It is as also a metaphysical phenomenon. Through this, the self and the other, the individual identity and the collective identity are defined. By this intermediary, exterior and more tangible relations are also determined: temporal and timeless, individual and collective, intracommunautary and intercommunautary, endo-factional and exo-factional. The result is what I call “musical endo- and exo-physiognomy” a face for oneself and a face to be shown to the other. These exterior relations have specific sound identities. These sound identities include choreographic characteristics. They present at the same time analogies linked to the body and to the status of the musical instruments. The tone of those sounds, a synonym of voice, evokes all kinds of representations and symbols. Thus the acts of musical performance that result are distinct and distinctive, in relation with the activity, notably initiatic.

Indeed, in the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese universes, construction and reproduction of social relations are not only found in the structures that underpin them. They are as well closely associated with musical practices, ordinary or ritual, because, here, everything is thought to be sacred. Thus the music promotes, among other things, reproducing social categories and the underlying relations, as well as their values (kinship group, community links in particular). Thus music here acquires a peculiar resonance through very dynamic technical and aesthetic elements that promote the social integration of the individuals and a conception of the world through specific means and vision.

In this context, the musical riches do not reveal as autonomous systems which can understand the nature only than from specifically musical parameters. Indeed, their systems are a set of stakes and of games that are differentiated and contrasting. Trying to elucidate them requires that one observes, defines and interprets relations and interrelations as well as interactions that rule all aspects not only of the music (sound objects, musical instruments

and their acoustics, technics of playing, structuration of the sound material, repertoires, genres, styles) but also of the extramusical : the actors create them, inside their sociocultural and even natural surroundings, without forgetting circumstances, representations, associated contexts and other factors.

It remains to emphasize a postulate. The language of the analyst is certainly not that of the musician. How to name the same facts and things related to music, remain different depending on whether one is a musicologist, a composer or a performer. Reading each of them made on these facts and these things are also different. In this regard, the organological work of François Picard is significant with a meaningful classification of the instruments. It reveals the different readings that all these actors have on a same object.

We saw that, in the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese musical systems, a close interdependence exists between musical performance and some aspects of social organization. Some musical genres and forms are also serve as tools of expression of multiple realities games, with temporal and intemporal referents. One can see clearly that in the *kasékò*, *bélé* and *gwoka* gatherings. Some words serve to illustrate this junction between the musical and the social through which reconciliations and exchanges one made, but also, in the heterogeneity, sharing, alternance, and even oppositions, complementarity and harmony of the individuals.

Here, as we have seen, making music is a major act of establishing and connecting of alliances. The musical performances then become regulators of social issues among men, but also generators of relations between human beings and the worlds of spirits and of Nature from which relations with the natural environment, the cosmos are created.

In this system, the music is perceived globally, in connection with a structuration of the dependencies and interdependencies relations.

However, the analysis proceeds by isolating the elements of an organic whole to observe and see the nature of those elements, identify concepts, relations, values, practices: define its effects and even the action and the causes.

For a good analysis of the music expressions of the Sub-Saharan and Caribbean-Guyanese oraliture systems that concern my research, I aim an articulation among its general principles, that allow a better decomposition of this organic world into its elements, and its complement, its synthesis in some way, that reconstitutes everything from these given elements to give meaning to it, to translate reality and therefore, elucidate it. I will be the aim of my future and analyses, furthering this direction of research.

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