

to stimulate trade by finding new markets, since we know what misery-trade depression brings at home. (I, p. 381f.)

In sum, then, this is an uneven book. It is untrustworthy as history and boring as autobiography. Yet it is a useful work in so far as it reflects European attitudes at that time towards Africa and Africans and must be warmly welcomed as such. Further, it is a handsome production technically, with large fold-out maps, photographs, and a multitude of line drawings and diagrams, and one about which the publishers may feel proud.

H. LEROY VAIL

*Department of History  
University of Malawi  
Limbe, Malawi*

**Chopi Musicians.** HUGH TRACEY.

London, Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1970. 193 pp., 2 maps, 15 plates, 7 diags.

This book, first published in 1948, is a study of the music of one of the smaller tribes in southern Mozambique. The xylophone orchestras of the Chopi have achieved fame throughout southern Africa and, indeed, since the publication of the first edition of this work, throughout the world. For this second impression Dr Tracey has written a brief new Introduction and has included revised musical transcriptions by his son, Mr Andrew Tracey.

It must be stated at the outset that this reviewer is unqualified to criticize the book from the point of view of musicology. The main thrust of this review will therefore be aimed at an examination of whether or not the author succeeds in relating the songs to their social context, which the dust cover (and Tracey himself) claims to be one of the main themes of the book.

The first criticism relates to the brevity of the new Introduction. One feels that the author should have used the opportunity to rectify a number of inaccuracies that appeared in the first edition. Examples include numerous references to the "Paramount Chief of the Chopi" (pp. 2-22), a non-existent figure. Chopiland comprises about fifteen autonomous chiefdoms, acknowledging no over-all superior. One feels that the maps of Chopiland at the back of the book might also have been modernized. They perpetuate the error that H-P Junod propagated that the northern border of Chopiland is the Inharrime River. This excludes one third of Chopiland (six chiefdoms) which lies to the north of the river. Then, too, Tracey's use of the term "village" is misleading. The Chopi live in scattered homesteads, in the Nguni style, which are organized into headman's districts, sub-chief's districts, and chiefdoms.

The above comments perhaps reflect upon the style of fieldwork undertaken by the author. He informs us that he enlisted the aid of the local Portuguese Administrator, and appears to have come into contact only with chiefs' orchestras. He also studied orchestras on the South African gold mines, and one group that he

took to Durban. The reviewer's own fieldwork suggests that this is a somewhat superficial and unrepresentative sample. The impression is gained from the book that only chiefs have orchestras. No mention is made of the fact that almost every headman's district has its own orchestra, and certainly every sub-chief does. In fact, members of the chief's orchestra are drawn from sub-chiefs' orchestras, which in turn are recruited from the orchestras of their subordinate headman's districts (in much the same way as, say, a national cricket side is selected from the provincial sides, which in turn are selected from club-teams). It appears that music is composed with the universe of the headman's district in mind. Indeed, most lyrics incorporate a social commentary on the events in a headman's district (Tracey's "village"?). But most important is the occurrence of joking relationships between districts, couched in terms of obscenities and insults aimed at prominent members of neighbouring districts. The chiefs' orchestras perform far less frequently than the headmen's orchestras, and then usually only on special occasions: chiefs' celebrations, the arrival of an important visitor, Portuguese national holidays, and so on. The songs sung on these occasions tend to comprise the everyday lyrics with suitable modifications and some new material especially composed for the chief's benefit.

Tracey's choice of title for his second chapter, "The Lyrics: Poetic Justice", is particularly apposite. The songs he presents and analyses show how the songs are potent social sanctions for, if a barb is accurately aimed, the recipient is made aware of public opinion by the roar of laughter from the crowd. Tracey shows the lyrics to be a social commentary and relates them to their social setting, although, as argued above, inadequacies of fieldwork prevent him from pushing his analysis far enough. The author appears, despite his claims, to have neglected the social structure of the Chopi. He relied on the explanations of the composers, who might easily have omitted information that an objective observer would consider vital. A hypothetical example is that an individual who is the butt of a joke may have been selected because he represents a neighbouring headman's district, and is part of an institutionalized joking relationship, but the informant may not mention this to the fieldworker.

The book's strongest point is that the author provides an excellent and detailed description of the method of manufacture of the xylophones, the implements involved, the types of wood used and the tuning of the instruments. Also, despite some mistranslations (poetic licence, perhaps?), the author presents as direct a translation of the lyrics as possible, avoiding the common pitfall of many translators of African prose and verse of slipping into pseudo-romantic Shakespearean language.

To conclude, despite weaknesses that result from the method of fieldwork, this is an important book for students of music in Africa. The volume is enhanced by good plates and diagrams, the latter being particularly informative and clear. There is a more than adequate glossary of Chopi musical terms, and musical transcriptions for students of music and musicology.

DAVID J. WEBSTER

*University of the Witwatersrand  
Johannesburg*