

# Missionary Education and Musical Communities in Sub-Saharan Colonial Africa

---

CLAUDIUS TORP\*

*Translation by Alex Skinner*

E-mail: claudius.torp@uni-kassel.de

This article explores the effects of music education carried out by Protestant missionaries on local forms of sociability in sub-Saharan Africa during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Based on a methodological framework of ideal types of musical communities, the examination focuses on examples of musical encounters between missionaries and the Yoruba in West Africa, the Lobedu in South Africa, and the Nyakyusa in East Africa. A closer look at the kinds of sociability facilitated by missionary music will reveal a colonial dialectic emerging from the contrasting forces of cultural hierarchy and belonging.

**Keywords:** African history, colonialism, education, missions, music.

## Introduction

Gunboats, whips, clocks, printing presses: the repertoire of colonial domination includes a number of technological artefacts that colonial historians have recognised as important for the creation of physical and symbolic hierarchies. Meanwhile, song books, reed organs, and brass instruments, which were carried across the globe by missionaries, and missionary musical education as a whole, have received at best marginal treatment. These seem to be fairly harmless “soft” phenomena peripheral to the “hard” regime of colonial discipline, a regime whose nucleus historians have portrayed as education for work.

At the same time, however, scenes of guided singing and playing are a recurring motif in the iconography of the mission<sup>1</sup> and in missionaries’ reports. Missionary schools’ curricula often included several hours of singing lessons a week.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this presence, puzzling at first sight, is that music fulfilled a crucial function within the framework of the civilising mission. In the nineteenth century, missionaries, who generally subscribed to the evolutionist distinction between nature and culture, primitive and civilised races, saw Western art and church music as symbolic of a

higher civilisation. As they sought to actively disseminate this music, they established a difference between European and non-European music that they interpreted hierarchically as a cultural gap. Historians must, therefore, understand music not just as an indicator of missionaries' sphere of influence, but also performatively, as a generator of difference. It was the missionaries' musical fervour that first imposed symbolic hierarchies privileging Western over non-Western music that were not, of course, inherent in the different musical traditions. Missionaries were so zealous in their desire to provide locals with a musical education largely because the music of the congregation was a standard component of religious practice, particularly within Protestantism.<sup>3</sup> In terms of their religious content, hymnbooks were regarded as the Gospel in miniature, a condensed version that must be disseminated at all costs. In 1892, the *Dictionary of Hymnology* listed translations of hymnbooks into 150 foreign languages and dialects just within the limits of British missionary enterprise.<sup>4</sup> Another famous example is the song collection *Sacred Songs and Solos* by American lay preacher Dwight L. Moody and his musical accompanist, the Methodist Ira D. Sankey, who popularised white gospel music at their legendary mass gatherings, first in England and the United States and subsequently worldwide. According to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, *Sacred Songs and Solos* eventually reached a circulation of eighty million copies, having first been published in 1873.<sup>5</sup> The attitude, which ascribed to religious songs a revelatory content and treated them as an external expression of inner religious convictions, stood within a Protestant tradition in which congregational participation was as privileged as the individuality and emotionality of religious commitment. All of this made music a hugely important tool of evangelism and proof of successful conversion.

A top-down approach to the musical side of the civilising mission, however, would fall short of the fact that music education had to be localised and embedded in religious practices on the spot. From a "glocalised" point of view,<sup>6</sup> a bewildering variety of cultural overpowering and expropriation, of indigenisation, adaptation, and resistance emerges. But how should the historian treat this patchwork of musical interactions, which often depended on the individual missionary's zeal and musical ability as much as on the locals' openness to cultural experimentation? To judge the effects of the transcultural missionary endeavours on local forms of sociability, we need an analytical framework that allows us to trace the different effects of musical education and their interplay on community formation. Such a framework helps structure the patchwork of musical encounters in the mission, which has barely been analysed on a systematic level so far.<sup>7</sup> It will equip us to disentangle the *mélange* of colonial elite formation, the missionary imposition of hierarchies, and anticolonial resistance linked with the presence of Western music. I would therefore like to adopt a typology brought forward, in a more general, ethnomusicological context, by Kay Kaufman Shelemay, who distinguishes between three types of musically mediated communities: communities of descent, dissent, and affinity.<sup>8</sup>

The collective dimension of a shared descent or background is made up of traditions, and these traditions are underpinned by a stock of spatially, ethnically, or

religiously defined forms of cultural expression. Whether they are handed down over time or invented traditions, musical practices are central to the culture of communities of descent because they help to define the collectivity's outer boundaries and to stabilise it internally. The music cultivated in diaspora communities illustrates this, sometimes in a virtually pure form. A classic example is the history of the innumerable singing societies patronised by German immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century.

Communities of dissent, meanwhile, are based on culturally and musically articulated resistance. This is accomplished from a position of subalternity vis-à-vis a culture perceived as hegemonic. Music, understood as dissent and consciously deployed—to win over more supporters for one's cause for example—can easily take on a political dimension. The American folk music revival of the 1950s and 1960s, with its revolutionary rhetoric and valorisation of amateur music, is a prime example of this.

Shelemay's third form of music-based sociability occurs through the avowal and cultivation of shared musical affinities. Central to these affinity communities is an irreducible element of individual taste. This is why we so often read of individuals being virtually *converted* in their predilections the first time they hear a piece of music or an exceptional musician. At the same time (and after Simmel and Bourdieu this should come as no great surprise), taste entails a need for social affiliation and demarcation. So, affinities cannot be understood in isolation from class-specific, generational, gender, and other identities. But musical preferences can by no means be derived from social circumstances. This is evident not just in the vast and varied terrain of musical styles and their devotees, but above all in the dynamics of individual taste. Ultimately, particularly in the modern age, the boundaries of taste have been repeatedly breached in unpredictable ways, a process reinforced by migration and the media.

So, descent, dissent, and affinity are ideal-typical terms, and they inevitably overlap. The typology is useful for an analysis of music education and its consequences because it allows one to investigate missionary strategies together with local agency, and cuts across the missionaries' pretensions to represent modernity and musical progress as opposed to African traditionalism. The following examples of musical encounters under the aegis of the mission demonstrate how in each case different kinds of musical communities emerged and eventually clashed with each other. The examples are taken from three widely different contexts: the South African Transvaal around 1900, Lagos Colony west of the Niger delta in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the British mandate of Tanganyika, formerly German East Africa, in the early 1930s. The sampling is not an arbitrary one. It serves to show that whether a global soundscape of Western religious music emerged was not so much a question of the hymns' musical and religious content as it was a matter of the social circumstances in which they were embedded. The three cases are meant to represent different stages through which missionary music education in Africa passed between the late nineteenth century and the interwar period. The stages can tentatively be described as the establishment of cultural hierarchies, the formation of

indigenous colonial elites, and the Africanization of music education. This is not to say that the politics of music proceeded by the same logic and rhythm everywhere, but as an overall pattern, drawing attention to the unintended consequences of musical practices and communities, it may serve as a guide for future research. Thus, if we look beyond the global dissemination of hymns, which no doubt was impressive, to the subsequent local adaptations of Western church music, we begin to detect something like a colonial dialectic emerging from the contest over music as a vehicle of cultural hierarchy and belonging.

### **Cultural Hierarchies and Belonging: the Missionary Friedrich Reuter and the Lobedu of South Africa**

The Berlin Missionary Society had maintained the mission station of Medingen among the Lobedu of northern Transvaal in South Africa since 1881. In the archive of the Missionary Society we find a typical piece of edificatory literature entitled “The Trombones of Medingen,” a report that appeared in the *Neue Missionsschriften* series in 1909.<sup>9</sup> The missionary in charge, Friedrich Reuter, undertook a journey to Germany in 1897, accompanied by sixty-five Lobedu whom he had recruited with a view to their potential financial yield as exhibition objects at the Berlin Transvaal Exhibition being held that year.<sup>10</sup> The story presented in this text begins with Reuter’s subsequent visit to a missionary festival in the Pomeranian town of Gartz an der Oder and remains silent about this backstory. Reuter used the festival to fundraise by baldly requesting a donation of 400 marks for the acquisition of brass instruments for a planned brass choir in Medingen. In Pomerania, Reuter was accompanied by one of the converted Lobedu, assistant teacher Joseph Mokitimi, who made a great impression on the congregation primarily through his performance of “Lobe den Herrn, den mächtigen König der Ehren” (Praise to the Lord, the Almighty). His efforts paid off: the following year, thanks to a private (female) donor, the Medingen station received a delivery of eight instruments—horns, tubas, and trumpets. According to this narrative, there was great excitement over this gift among the Lobedu who visited the station. Everyone would have “liked to have been among the brass players,” and it was no easy task for Reuter to pick the eight who “were to be permanently appointed to carry out this honourable service to God.” He chose a further eight as a “substitute team.” The next challenge, we are told, was mastering the instruments. The “Africans” had a “good ear,” so they were soon able to sing in harmony, but every novice brass player inevitably produced discordant notes. Before long, however, under the missionary’s guidance, and with regular practice, the diligent learners began to rack up their first successes, producing their first passable renditions of various tunes, and “with this success their pleasure in their new occupation grew as well.”<sup>11</sup>

The next section is dedicated to letters of thanks sent soon afterwards to the congregation in Pomerania. The teacher Mokitimi describes the joy and gratitude of the Lobedu in broken German, while Reuter’s “long-cultivated wish to have a brass

choir in Medingen” had now been granted. Next, we are told of the special events at which the choir performed in 1898: a memorial ceremony in honour of the recently deceased benefactor in Germany was “one of the first occasions on which the instruments opened up their brass mouths and . . . began their work in a foreign land.” They also played at Mokitimi’s wedding and the great missionary festival in Medingen in January 1899, in addition to Sunday church services. Overall, the missionary work had gained momentum following the arrival of the instruments and a far greater number of converts and pupils had been registered than ever before.<sup>12</sup>

The report concludes with an incident that occurred during the Second Boer War, one of particular relevance to the forging of musical community. Reuter, who clearly sided with the Boers, had long feared that he might be forced out by the British. His time appeared to be up in 1901 when a unit of British soldiers, followed by several hundred non-Christian Lobedu, advanced on the station. The author identified the Lobedu as the real threat; he suspected they were poised to plunder the station should Reuter depart. The missionary, who had himself fought in the Franco-German war of 1870, resolved the situation with the help of a musical manoeuvre. He commanded the “trombone choir with its shiny tools” to hurry along immediately and take up a concealed “position” at the side of the road.

They opened their music sheets, he gave the sign, and as the troopers drew close, they began to play at full blast “Heil dir im Siegerkranz” [Hail to Thee in Victor’s Crown], which is, of course, the same melody to which the English sing their “God save the Queen.” No sooner had the first notes been played than the unit came to a stop, all the soldiers doffed their caps as if on command and, now bareheaded, sang all three verses in their language, while as many of the people of Medingen as were able sang the German text. When the heathens saw this, they were transfixed by the trombones’ impact and achievement. . . . One of them said loudly to his comrades: “What are we doing here, let’s go home! The English are a bunch of holy Joes just like the Medingen folk!” He thought they had sung a religious song and uncovered their heads out of respect for God.<sup>13</sup>

So, the “Trombones of Medingen” incident is conceptualised as a success story for the Christian mission. The musical transfer is evoked quite explicitly as a means of overcoming the spatial and cultural distance between Pomerania and Transvaal. The new cross-border community of the faithful is seemingly constituted through communal playing and singing.

Should we embrace this narrative and accept that Reuter the missionary succeeded in establishing an affinity community uniting Germans and Lobedu through brass instruments and church songs? Since we have no alternative account of these events, from Mokitimi’s perspective, for example, there is no way of answering this question definitively. Overall, however, what researchers have learned about Reuter’s impact and the history of the Lobedu suggests a different interpretation, one potentially substantiated by a careful reading of the text.<sup>14</sup>

Despite what one might think of the brass choir story, far from being interested in a musical dialogue of cultures, Reuter went way beyond the “soft” forms of

missionary work. Coercion and hierarchy played a central role in his activities from the outset. An authoritarian character with a racist worldview, Reuter found himself in a state of permanent conflict with the central authorities of the Lobedu, particularly with Queen Modjadji. She and her supporters long resisted Reuter's attempts to establish a kind of "religious manorialism"<sup>15</sup> around the mission station, and it was not until 1894 that she was defeated militarily by the Boers. The aggressive appropriation of land, in which Reuter himself engaged, intensified, and this dispossession had a terrible impact on the Lobedu, around a third of whom died of starvation over the next few years. The station was by no means a hotbed of cultural encounter during this period. Instead, with its roof armoured with sheets of metal and surrounded by guard posts, it seemed more like a military outpost. There Reuter governed through his preferred means of fines, and he immediately imposed an acoustic hegemony as well. A bell summoned people to work and injected a certain rhythm into the day; non-compliance incurred a fine.<sup>16</sup> The same applied to his prohibition on African instruments and dances that Reuter, like almost every missionary, enforced as soon as he arrived. Even the missionary narrative we have just heard is pervaded by a semantics of work and duty that runs counter to the notion of the irresistible force of music so central to the narrative of conversion: the brass players are appointed to a position of "service," are engaged in "work in a foreign land," take up a "position" on command, and are given an "occupation" and the "tools" to carry out their assignment.

So, it is at least clear that from the standpoint of the Lobedu, music and musical occasions were heteronomous, though this is not to say they felt no joy or that there was no voluntary element to their involvement in this brass ensemble established by decree. But there are good reasons to doubt the supposition, expressed in the missionary report, that more people were suddenly converted to the Christian faith because of the choir. The founding of the choir occurred during the famine of 1897, when work at the mission station began to seem more appealing as a means of sustenance because of the seizure of Lobedu land. Read against the grain in this way, this story illustrates that Reuter not only imposed music, but used it to undergird his hierarchy-establishing interventions in Lobedu society. The very selection of brass players and the allocation of instruments facilitated the attribution of recognition and changes in local status structures. The elevated position of Mokitimi the assistant teacher is one example of this. Another is the person of Johannes Khashane, who we see in the photograph of the brass choir (figure 1) holding the largest instrument, the tuba.

It is highly probable that this man, about whom I have been unable to find any further information, was a close relative of the identically named chief who, as a scion of the ruling family, challenged the power of Queen Modjadji in the 1880s. As a baptised Christian, this other Johannes Khashane refused to comply with the rituals and religious practices of the Lobedu, and allied himself with Reuter, with whom he worked to undermine royal claims to property and authority. After his murder in 1884, Reuter continued to support his followers by providing them with annexed land.<sup>17</sup> If none other than a kinsman and namesake of Johannes Khashane was now



**Figure 1.** Brass choir in Medingen (Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, ed. *Missions-Berichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft für das Jahr 1905*: 248).

playing the impressive tuba in the brass choir, this may well have been politically symbolic, a reward and distinction bestowed on Reuter's most loyal followers.

The formation of musical communities thus proceeded in a manner different to that suggested in the missionary report. The cross-cultural affinity community of the kind that the mission would have liked to establish extended only to a limited number of converts.<sup>18</sup> Their musical performances remained alien to the great majority of Lobedu, as evident in the passage on the British soldiers' musical pacification. Here the excluded were not the political opponents, who revealed themselves as participants in a Western musical descent community, but the Africans, who felt no connection with the European music either through taste or tradition. The brass choir appears to have been the affair of only a select minority; the missionary report merely communicates a caricature of a successful affinity community to create a clear symbol of successful evangelisation. Within the community of players constructed for readers back in Germany, the logic of an asymmetrical transfer of gifts and know-how turns the Lobedu into dependents and pupils.

At the same time, Reuter's presence and his prohibition on local musical practices at least created the conditions for dissent communities. We lack documentary evidence in this case but we cannot exclude the possibility that this musical transfer was fuel for social conflict: whether because of the dances and drumming of the Lobedu majority, which ran counter to the missionary project, or as a result of the Western music practised by the converted Lobedu minority, which clashed with local traditions. What we can be sure of, however, is another form of musical communitisation and politics of belonging: it was the descent community of the missionary movement that the brass choir primarily stabilised. Reuter could feel at home in a foreign land and the emerging missionary societies and associations in Germany were proud to have endowed their own musical heritage with a supposedly global resonance. To missionary enthusiasts both at home and abroad the Transvaal now echoed to the strains of provincial Prussia.

### Elite Formation and its Boundaries: “Saros” and Yoruba in West Africa

Lagos and the neighbouring cities in the south west of present-day Nigeria saw cultural upheavals in the second half of the nineteenth century caused by the interplay of mission, a Christianised African elite, and the local majority population.<sup>19</sup> Even before Lagos became a de facto British protectorate in 1851 and a colony ten years later, the Anglican Church Missionary Society, along with the Presbyterians and Wesleyans, had begun to missionize in the region in the 1840s. The consequence was the repression of traditional musical practices within the mission stations’ sphere of influence—up to and including the burning of indigenous instruments. While most of the established Yoruba chiefs kept their distance from missionaries, another social group gave powerful impetus to the drive for Westernisation of its own accord. Former slaves, of Yoruba or Igbo descent, had lived in Sierra Leone following manumission and now returned to their region of origin. These so-called Saros had imbibed the canon of a British liberal education in Britain’s flagship colony of Sierra Leone, which featured an unusually developed school system and the exceptional Fourah Bay College, which provided an education intended to equip them to advance professionally and socially within the colonial administration, trade, and missionary posts. The roughly 1,500 Saros were a social elite in multicultural Lagos—in 1866 a city of 25,000 inhabitants that was home to a few dozen Europeans, the various ethnic groups living in the Niger region, and returnees from other West African colonies, Cuba, and Brazil.<sup>20</sup> These returnees founded philanthropic societies, supported public institutions such as libraries and schools, and organised concerts featuring European classical music, which were held in the specially created Philharmonic Hall. As choir members and as teachers in the missionary-run grammar schools, which were also responsible for musical education, they were the mainstays of a Westernised urban music scene.<sup>21</sup> The affluent, English-speaking Saros produced illustrious figures such as the publisher Robert Campbell and Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African bishop in the Anglican Church, both of whom were musically active. The founding fathers of an increasingly independent church music, which could be described as “Nigerian” following the country’s establishment, also came from this milieu. The Saros’ social position, and the cultural life of a colonial provincial capital they did so much to shape, created the preconditions for such exceptional talents as Robert Coker (who died in 1920) and Thomas K. Ekundayo Phillips (1884–1969) to complete their education in European art and church music in Germany or England before the First World War. As composer, organist, and choirmaster at the Cathedral Church of Christ and as author of a scholarly treatise on the music of the Yoruba, Phillips in particular was a kind of multiplier who laid the ground for a number of other Nigerian musicians and composers after 1945.<sup>22</sup>

So, there is no doubt that a small segment of the Yoruba people of Lagos developed into a community with an affinity for Western church music. Above all, this aesthetic preference functioned as a binding agent for a migrant elite that was already essentially alienated from local musical traditions. Without this elite, with its



specific educational biography and a desire for upward social mobility focused on mission and colonial state, mission music in Lagos and the surrounding area would not have made such an impact. Nonetheless, this success had narrowly defined boundaries and unintended consequences: the affinity community proved overly exclusive and was unable to integrate broader social strata. The concerts arranged by the Saros were prohibitively expensive for the rest of the population, and in one of the musical centres of this milieu, the Church of Christ, the congregation that developed contained a variety of ethnicities alongside a number of European diplomats, so all events were held in English.<sup>23</sup> In other respects, too, the Saros inhabited a social space separate from that of the indigenous Yoruba, and two musical worlds soon coexisted: the traditional music of the Yoruba continued to be performed, uninfluenced by the European music emanating from mission churches and schools and cultivated by the Saros.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this constellation proved unstable and the divisions began to soften. The banning of Yoruba music from the elite church fostered the foundation of independent congregations under African leadership. Between 1888 and 1917, virtually every missionary church in Lagos split. This led directly to the hybridisation of the church music practiced in the breakaway churches, which increasingly integrated indigenous melodies, texts, and instruments. This development was reinforced by the fact that the Saros found their pursuit of social advancement increasingly stymied within church and society: European competitors dominated trade and as Africans their hopes of progressing within the clerical hierarchy were usually disappointed. The independent churches emerging around the turn of the century were the seedbed for the emergence of a nationalist thought based essentially on the discovery and invention of cultural autonomy.<sup>24</sup> It was not least the increasing awareness of a descent community embracing traditional Yoruba music, an awareness that began to grow among Western-educated and musically adept personalities within the African churches, that fostered anticolonial tendencies. Mojola Agbebi, for example, an early advocate of independent churches, banned European songs entirely from services in the Native Baptist Church that he founded in 1888; and Herbert Macaulay, who founded the first political party and became a leading Nigerian nationalist after the First World War, promoted the performance of Yoruba music in his Melodramatic Society. Quite often musical practice and historical-cultural self-reflection went hand in hand. This applied, for example, to A. K. Ajisafe, who both contributed to the indigenisation of church music by founding the African Church Choir and wrote an important study on the social anthropology and legal conceptions of the Yoruba.<sup>25</sup>

Expressed within the conceptual framework proposed above, this meant that when the affinity community for Western music came up against its limits because of its social exclusivity, it activated and reinforced a community of origin oriented towards traditional Yoruba music. This occurred first as countermovement, as cultural self-assertion, and second because the mission sought to expand further, and now even the churches, under European and indigenous leadership, were in competition with one

another. The direction of musical influence was thus reversed, for “in fact it was not the Yoruba musicians who had to come to terms with the music of the invading culture but the musical among the new elite who in time found that they had to adapt to traditional music.”<sup>26</sup> The linkage of these two types of music, as subsequently practised primarily by the independent churches, ultimately changed both—at least in the context of religious music. The composer Thomas K. Ekundayo Phillips for example wrote chorales in which an organ accompanied the four-part song on the Victorian model, but at the same time, as was common in the local musical idiom, he selected a pentatonic melody and sought to combine music and text in a way that honoured the tonal character of Yoruba.<sup>27</sup>

### **Africanization and Musical Dissent: the Missionary Franz Ferdinand Rietzsch and the Nyakyusa of East Africa**

In 1931, Franz Ferdinand Rietzsch, a missionary of the Moravian Brethren, arrived in the hinterland of the British mandate of Tanganyika, formally German East Africa.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to his fellow missionaries, Rietzsch had received an exceptional musical education, as was evident in his studies in comparative musicology at Hamburg University and his interest in the writings of Erich Moritz von Hornbostel, which he had discovered while studying in England. Rietzsch is a perhaps extreme and at first sight ambivalent case. Equipped with clavichord and phonograph, he carried out serious ethnomusicological work among the Nyakyusa and Nyiha in the environs of Lake Malawi while adhering to a worldview shaped by the new conservatism of *Wandervogel* and *Singbewegung* which led him to become a member of the Nazi party in 1936.<sup>29</sup> His activities not only document how ideologies of ethnic nationalism could be reconciled with a true interest in East African cultures, but also reflect the shift in attitudes towards musical education among certain missionaries between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s.

As researcher, Rietzsch identified pentatonic melodies of considerable complexity in Nyakyusa music due to independent top and bottom parts; he found polyrhythmic structures and a speech rhythm in music with an importance unknown in Western music; and he registered fine variations in the seemingly repetitive antiphonies. According to Rietzsch all this pointed to “an original, genuine and anything but ‘primitive’ art, though unfortunately one that is not really recognised and therefore often largely sneered at, if not despised, not least by ‘educated’ Negroes themselves.”<sup>30</sup> In light of this he began to see flaws in the music policy pursued for decades by Christian missions, since it had imposed Western harmonies, melodies and rhythms on the African congregations through the mass translation by German, British, and American missionaries of chorales and popular songs. In the context of everyday mission life, he believed that locals regularly failed to sing the major and minor scale, and that their own musical traditions were being forgotten as they sought to do the essentially impossible and learn European music. From his *Volk*-based ideological perspective the situation in the missions boiled down to “whether we

should pursue our work by fostering the encroachment of European civilisation or by embracing local customs.”<sup>31</sup> Rietzsch decided to go all out to use musical education in his parish to cultivate local traditions. He began to practice African melodies with the choir and reworked Reformation songs to make them resemble the pentatonic structure of Nyakyusa music. He took a particularly dim view of the evangelising songs of Ira Sankey. These Methodist tunes had been advancing triumphantly across the globe since the final quarter of the nineteenth century and underlined the motif of the individual confession of faith. In line with Rietzsch’s credo that what was needed were “community songs rather than first-person songs,” he attempted to reduce the number of Sankey chorales disseminated among the Nyakyusa by Scots missionaries during his fellow German missionaries’ internment and exile in Germany between 1920 and 1925.<sup>32</sup>

These musical interventions by Rietzsch did not go unnoticed. In 1932, the choir at the Kyimbila mission station rebelled. A number of singers refused to sing Rietzsch’s new pentatonic melodies, and the choir insisted on a piece chosen by one of their own, as was usual before Rietzsch’s arrival at the station. In the end, he left the service early. A provincial conference of missionaries and the Nyakyusa council of elders subsequently addressed this minor incident, and Rietzsch was eventually replaced. The same problem soon cropped up again when he refused to allow another mission choir to perform the accustomed repertoire of English and German chorales. Again, the response was passive resistance. The people simply stopped turning up for choir practice.<sup>33</sup>

Contemporaries, Rietzsch’s colleagues and superiors, already identified the core of this conflict as follows. First, the English Sankey songs had now become popular in the parishes and enjoyed the aura of progress, particularly among those who had gone through missionary schools, while the corpus of traditional Nyakyusa songs was now categorised as second-class. Second, the African songs which Rietzsch taught in the school evidently reminded the elders, who had converted to Christianity, of those dances the missionaries had always repressed, dances from which locals had often been at great pains to distance themselves. Rietzsch also sought to persuade parishioners that Western clothing, which they valued and were particularly keen to wear to church, was culturally inappropriate for them, further widening the rift his approach to teaching music had opened.

The case of Rietzsch brings out the dilemma that early ethnomusicology had in common with the new trend towards the Africanization of church music within colonial music education, one that at first sight seemed emancipatory. Its advocates linked the valorisation of African musical cultures with contempt for individual and changeable musical tastes.<sup>34</sup> The musical re-education that the missionaries had pursued over the decades could not now simply be reversed, at least not among the minority that it had reached, many of whom now began to assume leadership positions in the emerging African churches.

In brief: while the older model of Europeanisation, to which the great majority of missionaries adhered, contributed to cultural dispossession, the newer movement

towards the Africanization of musical education, which gained ground from the 1920s on, gave impetus to an essentialist attribution of identity. This movement rejected the notion that African musical preferences could change and had begun to do so more rapidly as a result of cultural contact. Translated into the vocabulary of musical community building, Rietzsch's case seems very different from that of Reuter. For Reuter in South Africa, music was primarily an instrument of power, and there it functioned as a *de facto* means of strengthening the missionary descent community, while Rietzsch in East Africa had something quite different in mind. His intention was to strengthen the descent community of the Nyakyusa by bringing their traditional songs into church services and schools. But he overlooked the fact that in these places an affinity community had now formed comprising individuals converted to Western music. This community, provoked by Rietzsch's ignorance and authority, temporarily turned into a dissent community, which defended Western church music as a cultural asset they had now made their own.<sup>35</sup>

### Conclusion

The musical education carried out by Christian missions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is of more general historical significance in at least two respects. From the perspective of *colonial history*, it is striking that power could be exercised or challenged, and social groups privileged or stigmatised, through the musical practices of missionaries and graduates from missionary schools. The effects of music on making communities differed, as the examples from sub-Saharan Africa show, depending on the strategies pursued by local missionaries and depending on the social context in which music was received and became a means of expressing cooperation or resistance. In every case, however, music was much more than just a harmless prop of colonial rule. By changing aesthetic norms and practices, it contributed both to creating hierarchies within local societies and generating cultural resistance. In many places the sounds of the brass choir and harmonium did not penetrate far into the mission stations' hinterland, but in those places where it was heard regularly and over a longer period of time, new cultural fault lines emerged: through the repression of indigenous musical forms; through affinities for Western music, which often went hand in hand with the ability to read and sometimes with the mastery of a new musical instrument; and through the defence or invention of musical traditions, which could be an act of cultural self-assertion and, from around the turn of the century, became a component of anticolonial nationalism. Syncretic linkages of European musical language with formerly suppressed instruments and local melodic and textual material then became the norm, particularly in the independent African churches. The initiators of this syncretic work, who were often members of an elite that had collaborated with colonial rule and had received a secondary education, such as the Saros in Lagos, made the greatest contribution to the enculturation of Western music—and changed it through a process of appropriation that, over the long term, generated distinct forms of African church music.

The significance of missionary music to *global history* is its ability to shed light on a field of cultural practices that has so far been neglected, one that supersedes the dichotomy between cultural homogenisation and hybridity so prominent in many historiographies of global relations. Despite the intraconfessional differences between the various strands of religious music, missionaries spread a Western musical-theological canon across the entire world. To understand the political relevance of this process it is useful to draw on the ideas of Giorgio Agamben, who interprets the liturgical forms of glorification as early acclamations of hegemony, acclamations that he conceptualises as genealogically continuous mechanisms central to the constitution of power.<sup>36</sup> Seen in this light, it could be argued that, with their omnipresent palette of translations, singing lessons, and musical instruments, missionaries helped suppress local aesthetic articulations of spirituality and faith in authority, along with local rules for expressing consensus. The glorification of the Christian divinity required mastery of certain techniques of reading, singing, and playing. The imported religious utility music also imparted a specific culture of subjectivity in which the only roles open to the missionized were the subordinate ones of liturgical accompanist, practitioner, and disciplinary subject within the collectivity of the choir. In virtually every case, the scarcity of oeuvre-related art music and virtuosity-generating instrumental instruction impeded the musical socialisation of composers and virtuosos, the subject positions enjoying the greatest prestige within the Western musical ideal.

From a postcolonial perspective, the flipside of missionary globalisation is the proliferation and admixture of musical communities and styles. The confluence of different musical languages set in motion the development of descent, affinity, and dissent communities. Borrowing this typological concept from ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufman Shelemay, I have outlined the mutual interaction between these communities and demonstrated how the concurrent presence of supporters, opponents, and reformers shaped the reception of missionary music. Plainly, this reception cannot be understood as a one-way street of cultural imperialism,<sup>37</sup> but was instead a hybrid endeavour. While missionaries never failed to proclaim the superiority of their music and the backwardness of local music, the project of musical education would have been hopeless without a high degree of agency among the missionized—whether as choristers, teachers, or translators. Above all, this project presupposed their musicality and capacity for musical multilingualism, and thus fits the model of a hybrid colonial discourse.

Thus, processes of musical appropriation shaped the dialectic of colonial discipline and subversion. By and by, forms of sociability defined by musical practice would develop uncontrollably, but not independently of missionary influence. Only the specific localisation of the missionary endeavour reveals the extent to which translocal musical affinities were forged. It also unravels claims of common musical descent and allows us to trace the cultural origins of dissent. Located between the civilising mission and local religious practice, musical education in the mission is a topic whose investigation promises to enrich our grasp of global cultural relations.

## Bibliography

### Published Primary Sources

- Adick, Christel, and Wolfgang Mehnert, eds. *Deutsche Missions- und Kolonialpädagogik in Dokumenten. Eine kommentierte Quellensammlung aus den Afrikabeständen deutschsprachiger Archive 1884–1914*. Frankfurt am Main: IKO-Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2001.
- Ajisafe, A. K. *The Laws and Customs of the Yoruba People*. London: Routledge, 1924.
- Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, ed. *Berliner Missionsberichte* (1889).
- Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, ed. *Missionsberichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* (1905).
- Petric, Hermann. *Die Posaunen von Medingen (Neue Missionsschriften, no. 75)*. Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1909.
- Phillips, Thomas K. Ekundayo. *Yoruba Music: Fusion of Speech and Music*. Johannesburg: African Music Society, 1953.
- Richter, Julius. *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft 1824–1924*. Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1924.
- Rietzsch, Franz F. “Diesseits und jenseits von Dur und Moll. Unterschiede zwischen europäischer und afrikanischer Musik.” *Herrnhut. Wochenblatt aus der Brüdergemeine* (1935): 64–67, 71–73.
- Westermann, Diedrich. “Kultur und Mission in Afrika.” *Das Buch der deutschen Weltmission*, edited by Julius Richter, 140–44. Gotha: Leopold Klos, 1935.

### Secondary Sources

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Arlt, Veit. “Der Tanz der Christen. Zu den Anfängen der populären Musik an der Goldküste, ca. 1860–1930.” *Jahrbuch für Europäische Überseegeschichte* 4 (2004): 139–78.
- Ayandele, E. A. *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis*. London: Longmans, 1966.
- Baker, Geoffrey. *Imposing Harmony: Music and Society in Colonial Cuzco*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Blench, Robert. “Nigeria.” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 17: 907–16. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Busse Berger, Anna Maria. “Spreading the Gospel of *Singbewegung*: An Ethnomusicologist Missionary in Tanganyika of the 1930s.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66:2 (2013): 475–522.
- Castagna, Paulo. “The Use of Music by the Jesuits in the Conversion of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil.” *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences and the Arts, 1540–1773*, edited by John W. O’Malley, 641–658. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- Chikowero, Mhoze. *African Music, Power, and Being in Colonial Zimbabwe*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015.
- Dowley, Tim. *Christian Music: A Global History*. Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2011.
- Fiedler, Klaus. *Christianity and African Culture: Conservative German Protestant Missionaries in Tanzania, 1900–1940*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.
- Grüter, Verena, and Schubert Benedict, eds. *Klangwandel. Über Musik in der Mission*. Frankfurt am Main: Otto Lembeck, 2010.
- van der Heyden, Ulrich. “Die Kolonial- und Transvaal-Ausstellung 1896/97. *Kolonialmetropole Berlin. Eine Spurensuche*, edited by Ulrich van der Heyden and Joachim Zeller, 135–142. Berlin: Berlin Edition, 2002.

- Höckner, Elfriede. *Die Lobedu Südafrikas. Mythos und Realität der Regenkönigin Modjadji*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998.
- . “Reuter, Friedrich Ludwig.” *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 21 (2003): 486–89.
- Jones, A. M. *African Hymnody in Christian Worship: A Contribution to the History of Its Development*. Gwelo, Rhodesia: Mambo Press, 1976.
- King, Anthony. “Nigerian Music.” *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 13, 238. London: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- King, Roberta, with Jean Ngoya Kidula, et al. *Music in the Life of the African Church*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008.
- Kornder, Wolfgang. *Die Entwicklung der Kirchenmusik in den ehemals deutschen Missionsgebieten Tanzanias*. Erlangen: Verlag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Mission Erlangen, 1990.
- Krige, E. Jensen, and J. D. Krige. *The Realm of the Rain Queen: A Study of the Pattern of Lovedu Society*. London: Oxford University Press, 1943.
- Ludwig, Frieder. “Die internationalen Kontaktnetzwerke westafrikanischer Eliten und europäischer Missionsleitungen im Kontrast am Beispiel der Krise der Niger-Mission (1890–92). *Weltmission und religiöse Organisationen. Protestantische Missionsgesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Artur Bogner, et al., 615–37. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004.
- Mashale, Francinah Koena. “The Provision of Education at Medingen Mission Station since 1881.” Master’s thesis, University of South Africa, 2009.
- McGuire, Charles E. *Music and Victorian Philanthropy. The Tonic Sol-fa Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- “Musik und Mission” (special issue). *Interkulturelle Theologie* 35: 1/2 (2009).
- Olwage, Grant. “John Knox Bokwe, Colonial Composer: Tales about Race and Music.” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131:1 (2006): 1–37.
- Omojola, Bode. *Nigerian Art Music. With an Introduction Study of Ghanaian Art Music*. Ibadan: Institut français de recherche en Afrique, 1995.
- . *Yoruba Music in the Twentieth Century. Identity, Agency, and Performance Practice*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012.
- Porter, Andrew. “‘Cultural Imperialism’ and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780–1914.” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25 (1997): 367–91.
- Robertson, Roland. “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity.” In *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, 25–44. London: Sage, 1995.
- Rosenkranz, Gerhard. *Das Lied der Kirche in der Welt. Eine missionshymnologische Studie*. Berlin: Haus und Schule, 1951.
- Sadoh, Godwin. *Thomas Ekundayo Phillips: The Doyen of Nigerian Church Music*. New York: iUniverse, 2009.
- Sanneh, Lamin. *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*. New York: Orbis, 1983.
- Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. “Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64:2 (2011): 349–90.
- Tamke, Susan S. *Make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord: Hymns as a Reflection of Victorian Social Attitudes*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978.
- Toelle, Jutta. “Da indessen die Mohren den Psalm: Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden! abgesungen. Musik und Klang im Kontext der Mission im México der Frühen Neuzeit.” *Historische Anthropologie* 22:3 (2014): 334–49.
- Weman, Henry. *African Music and the Church in Africa*. Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri, 1960.
- Wilhoit, Mel R. “Sankey, Ira David.” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 22: 246. 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

### Websites

International Mission Photography Archive: <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll123>.

### Notes

- \* Claudius Torp is currently principal investigator of the project “Piano Culture and Cosmopolitanism. A Global History of Keyboard Instruments, c. 1850–1930,” funded by the German Research Foundation, at the University of Kassel.
- 1 See the large stock of missionary photographs that the University of Southern California has made accessible through its International Mission Photography Archive: <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll123> (accessed 25 October 2016).
  - 2 Adick and Mehnert, eds., *Missions- und Kolonialpädagogik*, 150f., 161, 186, 206, 219.
  - 3 The history of Catholic missionary music is beyond the scope of this article, but of equal importance with regard to the long tradition of Franciscan and Jesuit music education in colonial Latin America. Research in this field of missionary historiography seems to be more advanced than that in the Protestant politics of music. See Baker, *Imposing Harmony*; Castagna, “Use of Music”; Kühne, *Martin Schmid*; and Toelle, “Musik und Klang.”
  - 4 Tamke, *Make a Joyful Noise*, 123.
  - 5 Wilhoit, “Sankey, Ira David,” 246.
  - 6 See Robertson, “Glocalization.”
  - 7 For contributions on Protestant music in Africa, see Weman, *African Music*, 115–22; Jones, *African Hymnody*; Kornder, *Entwicklung*; Arlt, “Tanz der Christen”; the special issue “Musik und Mission.” *Interkulturelle Theologie* 35: 1/2 (2009); and Grüter and Schubert eds., *Klangwandel*. The most important recent studies certainly include Chikowero, *African Music*; McGuire, *Music and Victorian Philanthropy*; Olwage, “John Knox Bokwe”; and Busse Berger, “Spreading the Gospel.” Missionary perspectives predominate in King, with Kidula, et al., *Music in the Life of the African Church*. Surprisingly little on the missionaries’ role is to be found in Dowley, *Christian Music*.
  - 8 The terminology is taken from Shelemay, “Musical Communities,” 364–75.
  - 9 Petrich, *Posaunen von Medingen*.
  - 10 See van der Heyden, “Kolonial- und Transvaal-Ausstellung,” 135–42. On Reuter, see also Höckner, “Reuter, Friedrich Ludwig,” 486–89.
  - 11 Quotations in Petrich, *Posaunen von Medingen*, 8.
  - 12 See *ibid.*, 10–14; quotations at 10, 12.
  - 13 *Ibid.*, 18 f.
  - 14 See especially Höckner, *Die Lobedu Südafrikas*, 31–62 and 119–134; Mashale, “Provision of Education,” 30–44; Krige and Krige, *Realm of the Rain Queen*, 314–22; and Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 414.
  - 15 Höckner, *Die Lobedu Südafrikas*, 43.
  - 16 *Ibid.*, 48, 122.
  - 17 *Ibid.*, 33 ff.
  - 18 In 1887, six years after the foundation of Medingen station, the Berlin Missionary Society recorded a total of 109 baptized parishioners, who made up only around 1 per cent of the population living within the station’s sphere of influence. In the period 1898–99, after the Lobedus’ devastating defeat, 427 individuals are said to have been baptized. See Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, ed., *Berliner Missionsberichte* 1889, no. 11/12, 277; and Petrich, *Posaunen von Medingen*, 11. Krige and Krige, *Realm of the Rain Queen*, 314, estimate that 3 to 5 per cent of the Lobedu were converted.
  - 19 See Omojola, *Nigerian Art Music*, chapter 2 (quoted in the following from



- http://books.openedition.org/ifra/598, accessed: 25 October 2016); idem., *Yoruba Music*, 113–122; Sadoh, *Thomas Ekundayo Phillips*; Blench, “Nigeria,” 907–916; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 127–167; and Ayandele, *Missionary Impact*, chapters 1 and 2.
- 20 Omojola, *Nigerian Art Music*, paragraph 8.
- 21 Ibid., para. 10–21.
- 22 See Phillips, *Yoruba Music*; on Phillips’ influence, see especially Sadoh, *Phillips*, 43–79.
- 23 See Omojola, *Nigerian Art Music*, para. 17; and Sadoh, *Phillips*, 11.
- 24 See Ludwig, “Kontaktnetzwerke,” 625ff.; for a general account of the rise of the independent churches in West Africa, see Sanneh, *Christianity*, 168–209.
- 25 See Omojola, *Nigerian Art Music*, para. 26–28; and Ajisafe, *Laws and Customs*.
- 26 King, “Nigerian Music,” 238.
- 27 See Sadoh, *Phillips*, 111.
- 28 Franz Ferdinand Rietzsch (1902–1978), teacher and pastor, carried out missionary work among the Nyassa in East Africa from 1931 to 1939. My account of this case draws on three studies: Busse Berger, “Spreading the Gospel”; Kornder, *Entwicklung*; and Fiedler, *Christianity*.
- 29 See Busse Berger, “Spreading,” 482–93; and Kornder, *Entwicklung*, 114.
- 30 Rietzsch, “Dur und Moll,” 64–67, 71–73.
- 31 Rietzsch to Baudert, 1932, quoted in Kornder, *Entwicklung*, 116. Missionary and ethnologist Diedrich Westermann was also calling for missionary work to be a “factor in the formation of nations” around the same time: “Wise natives have long understood that despite all the Europeanisation they will never be Europeans, and this has triggered the development of a new and conscious appreciation for the strengths of their own local traditions.” Westermann, “Kultur und Mission,” 143f.
- 32 Rietzsch to Baudert, 1932, quoted in Kornder, *Entwicklung*, 117.
- 33 See Fiedler, *Christianity*, 138 f.; Kornder, *Entwicklung*, 118 f.; and Rosenkranz, *Lied*, 101.
- 34 Cf. the similar idea in Fiedler, *Christianity*, 139 f.
- 35 The same nexus of expressions of dissent and affinity is reported in 1932 by a missionary in the Tamil church; see Rosenkranz, *Lied*, 61.
- 36 See Agamben, *Kingdom and the Glory*, 197–259.
- 37 For a critique of this concept, see Porter, “‘Cultural Imperialism,’” 367–91.