The author explores the links between musical sound and social identity by explaining the significance of two basic types of musical material, *rythmes* and *bàkks*. Rythmes are short, repetitive patterns that are associated with specific dance patterns. Bàkks, by contrast, are extended musical phrases, often composed over time, and usually associated with specific families. Interesting gender issues arise in connection with the performance of sabar music. For example, the music is often performed at certain female-organized parties (also known as *sabar*), which provide unique spaces for embodied expressions of female sexuality. On the flip side, however, traditional myths about the superiority of the male gender are reinforced through sabar performances at wrestling matches and political rallies.

It would have been helpful had the book's specific regional findings been related to those of scholars like Akin Euba and David Locke, who have also studied West African drum languages. The extended transcription of a *bàkk de spectacle* (119–21), for example, provides a great opportunity for comparative reflection. How, for example, do form, structure, and style in sabar music relate to or differ from those of *dùndún* and *kpegisu*? Limited as it is in terms of technical exegesis, the discussion (118, 122) does not adequately engage this particular transcription.

Tang's study is particularly significant for examining the performance of sabar beyond its indigenous social and aesthetic frames. By explaining the links between sabar drumming and mbalax music, she draws attention to some of the fascinating implications of performing traditional drums in new contexts in which African and Western elements signify on one another. The fact, for example, that bàkks are now often performed as part of modern African popular music suggests a transformation in function and affect. As Tang explains, the aesthetic and social meanings of these musical phrases may now be mediated without recourse to their linguistic origins. Given the increasingly intercultural nature of many musical genres in Africa, the need to understand how materials from diverse cultural sources cohere and communicate should garner more attention among scholars who seek to analyze the creative responses of African musicians to the dynamics of their postcolonial environment. *Masters of the Sabar* represents a significant contribution in this direction.

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Steven Nelson. *From Cameroon to Paris: Mousgoum Architecture In and Out of Africa.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. xiv + 247 pp. Photographs. Map. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $50.00. Cloth.

In this study of the widely disseminated inscriptions of an African architectural form, the distinctive Mousgoum *teleuk*, or dome-shaped house of the

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2008.0039 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Cameroon-Chad border area, Steven Nelson speaks in three distinct voices. The introduction and chapter 2 are framed as an informal travelogue; the author laments that an approach based on the observation that "one of these things is not like the other" appears to describe the Sesame Street generation's narrow perception of exotic travel (50). Later in the same chapter he explores the position of the nineteenth-century traveler Heinrich Barth regarding the teleuk and otherness; to do this Nelson switches personae and adopts Freud's interpretation of ego and society from *Civilization and Its Discontents* (55–56). He also calls into service Mary Louise Pratt's updated reading of this ego-centered stance in her essay in Henry Louis Gates's *"Race," Writing and Difference* (Chicago, 1986). These three approaches appear throughout the book, creating a kind of triple reading of both the teleuk dome and its spectators: one informal and journalistic, the second and third, old-school and new-school academic exegesis.

In a parallel way African architectural historiography has moved through its own successive explanatory regimes. Environmental determinism, leavened by cultural factors such as polygyny, has been the default mode for explaining Africa's architectural diversity during the long dominance of the adaptation model in social anthropology. In the 1970s, Douglas Fraser introduced formalist structuralism to his students; one of them, Suzanne Preston Blier, published her dissertation in 1987 on Batammaliba architecture using house/body symbolism to explain its parts and their significance. As her student, Nelson, in his turn, devotes chapter 1 to a similar exegesis of the Mousgoum house. But this is not the real thrust of the book's argument, which is less about architecture than about its reception and representation, bringing into focus a third approach to African architecture through critical reading rather than either structural analysis or, to quote Shirley Ardener, "social maps and ground rules." Steering away from traditional history and ethnography (which are disposed of in the introduction), he says relatively little about either the internal workings of Mousgoum culture or its place in the region. What interests him more is the way the teleuk as a design and habitation was apprehended by precolonial travelers and later by French colonial administrators and intellectuals as a cultural representation of "primitive genius"—but also as unmeasurable "otherness."

With chapter 2, the book's real theme is introduced by means of a long engagement with travelers' visits—from Barth in 1852 to Olive MacLeod in 1911 to André Gide and Marc Allégret in 1926—which sets up the opportunity for close critical reading. Freud on civilization is the touchstone for understanding Barth's encounter with the teleuk, while Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris are authorities on the bodily effluvia, such as saliva, which dictates Olive MacLeod's feelings of repulsion toward the large lip plugs worn by Mousgoum women (*Chiefs and Cities of Central Africa*, 1912). For Gide, the self-described interpretive model is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), as echoed in his own account's title, *Voyage au Congo* (1927). Given

its sustained navel-gazing on the nature of modernity, Gide's account of his visit to Chad is perfect material for reconstructing the French intellectual's colonial gaze.

From here chapter 3 unfolds organically in exploring the Mousgoum teleuk's representation at the French Equatorial Africa Pavilion at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris. Like world fairs, large colonial exhibitions have become the stock-in-trade of subaltern cultural criticism. But as an architectural historian, the author is able to interpret the iconography of the pavilions themselves much more rigorously than the typical literary critic would. The final chapter returns to Cameroon and examines the contemporary Mousgoum teleuk's resurgence in response to the twin forces of postcolonial tourism and the development of "heritage" as a local as well as global, UNESCO-driven concept. One of the unexpected bonuses of becoming a tourist destination has been the flowering of mural painting, primarily by women.

Overall the book makes a convincing argument that architecture has the capacity not only to reinvent its own meanings, but also to act as a repository for all the large ideas floating through postcolonial and cultural studies: modernity, the primitive, the colonial subject, agency, memory, and so on. While this approach has its own possible pitfalls—mainly that architecture qua form tends to disappear in the process—it opens new windows on material culture as text.

There are a few small quibbles: Barth is spoken of as using an evolutionary paradigm even though his three-thousand-page chronicle (*Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, 1857) slightly predates both Darwin (*On the Origin of Species*, 1859) and Tylor (*Primitive Cultures*, 1871). He also is said to have equated the past with death, in Freudian terms. The opposite argument usually holds sway today: as William Faulkner observed, not only is the past not dead, it isn't even past.

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https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2008.0039 Published online by Cambridge University Press