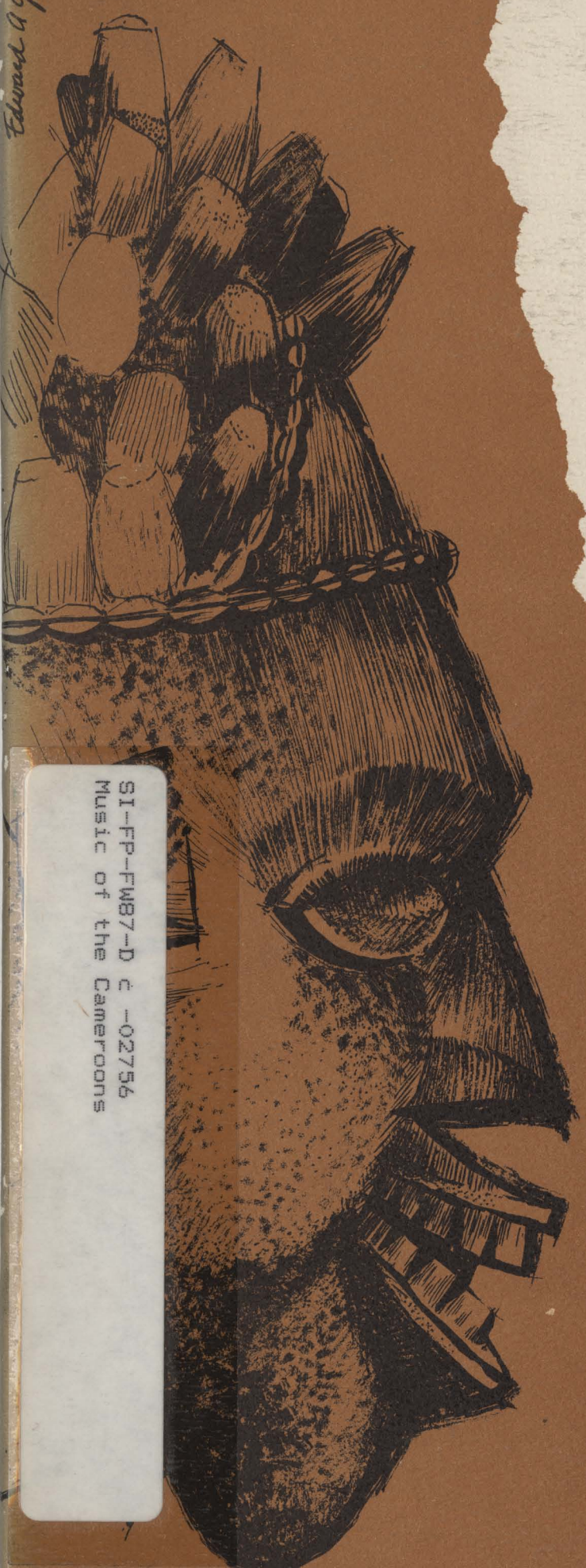


Edward A. Green



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Music of the Cameroons

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MUSIC ^{of} the CAMEROONS

recorded by Robert and Pat Ritzenthaler

BEKOM TRIBE DANCE MASK

NJUNG

- a. HAIL MUMA
 - b. Social Song
 - c. Social Song
- THREE BAFUT SONGS
NGWA — Two Songs
DRINKING SONG
MANSA (Funeral Song)
SONG FOR THE GRASS CEREMONY
FOUR LULLABIES
SANITREE ("Sanitary")
LAMBULE MUNKUNKA ("Shaming" Song)
NJUNG (Social Song and War Cry)
MANSA (Funeral Song)

CHRISTIAN HYMN

- NJUNG
- a. COFFEE WORKERS SONG
 - b. WORK SONG WITH LEADER
 - c. JAMMA-JAMMA
- PIT VIOLIN
FON'S WIVES (Two Songs)
FON'S WIVES
SOCIAL NJUNG
SONG OF WELCOME
NUFUM (Memorial to the Dead)
FULANI
NJUNG

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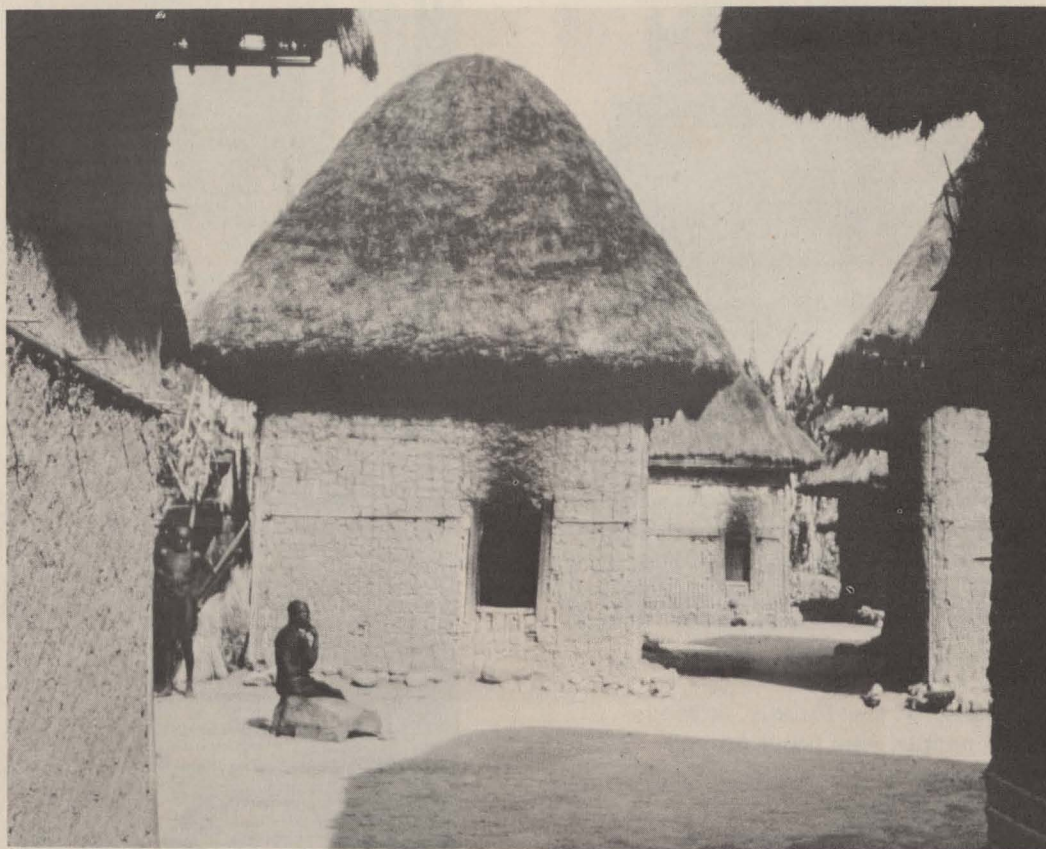


Fig. 1: Grasslands village

Recorded in the British Cameroons in 1959 by Robert and Pat Ritzenthaler under a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and the Friends of the Museum, Milwaukee Public Museum. Photos by Robert Ritzenthaler, courtesy of the Milwaukee Public Museum.

SIDE I

- Band 1: NJUNG
- Band 2: a. HAIL MUMA
 - b. Social Song
 - c. Social Song
- Band 3: THREE BAFUT SONGS
- Band 4: NGWA - Two Songs
- Band 5: DRINKING SONG
- Band 6: MANSA (Funeral Song)
- Band 7: SONG FOR THE GRASS CEREMONY
- Band 8: FOUR LULLABIES
- Band 9: SANITREE ("Sanitary")

SIDE II

- Band 1: LAMBULE MUNKUNKA ("Shaming Song)
- Band 2: NJUNG (Social Song and War Cry)
- Band 3: MANSA (Funeral Song)
- Band 4: CHRISTIAN HYMN
- Band 5: NJUNG

- Band 6: a. COFFEE WORKERS SONG
 - b. WORK SONG WITH LEADER
 - c. JAMMA-JAMMA

- Band 7: PIT VIOLIN
- Band 8: FON'S WIVES (Two Songs)
- Band 9: FON'S WIVES
- Band 10: SOCIAL NJUNG
- Band 11: SONG OF WELCOME
- Band 12: NUFUM (Memorial to the Dead)
- Band 13: FULANI
- Band 14: NJUNG

Most of this music was recorded among the Bafut, a tribe of about 20,000 living near Bamenda (Fig. 1) in the grassy highlands of the British Cameroons. They are an agricultural people headed by a divine king or paramount chief called the "Fon" who still wields considerable authority. The Fon maintains an attractive compound of 44 buildings most of which house his 41 wives and their some one hundred children.



Fig. 2: The Fon of Bafut with a few of his wives

In contrast is the music of the Fulani, a Moslem, cattle-herding people who have moved into the area from the north in relatively recent times bringing with them a different culture and physical type. In the main, however, this album presents the music of the Bafut and neighboring tribes who were also of the Tikar migration.

As elsewhere in Africa, music is an integral part of Cameroons culture, being interwoven into nearly every facet of daily and ceremonial life. To illustrate this variety of function we have selected work songs, funeral music, lullabies, praise-to-the-chief songs, and entertainment music for social occasions. It might be noted that music and the dance are almost inseparable in the sense that nearly all music is danced to, at funerals and joyous occasions alike. (Fig. 2A)

While there are musician specialists recognized for their performing skill, nearly everyone sings and plays an instrument or two. There is some sex differentiation in that men tend to play the solo instruments, especially the xylophone and harp, while the women concentrate on the rhythm instruments; the exception being the drums which are ordinarily played by the men. The wide assortment of musical instruments are fashioned by the men and include the xylophone, several types of drums, (Fig. 2B)



Fig. 2A: Secret society dancer with mask, cloak, and dance rattles



Fig 2B: Orchestra at ceremony honoring the chief, village of Babungo

flutes, flageolets, pan pipes, finger pianos, musical bows and rasps, iron gongs, drone trumpets, rattles. There are also two rather unique instruments, the pit harp and the friction drum.



Fig. 3: Friction drums used only by one secret society of Bafut

With the women doing the farming, the men have considerable leisure to devote to the arts and crafts. The area is particularly noted for the bold style and excellence of its woodcarving.

Although Cameroons music tends to become *dionysiac* at funerals and at some social occasions when palm-wine drinking has stimulated the participants, it has its calmer moments ranging from soft lullabies through rather studied harp solos to the enthusiastic praise-to-the-chief songs. While they make some use of harmonic forms, much of their singing has a leader-chorus pattern with little polyphonic work. **Their great use of and love for music** is readily apparent even to the casual observer; it is difficult to recall any day during our five month stay in the village of Bafut when we heard no music.

Since some of the selections are of a lengthy (as long as twenty-five minutes) and repetitious nature, these have been cut in this album out of consideration for the Western ear.

SIDE I, Band 1: NJUNG

This is the name of the xylophone used in this area. Two banana stalks are laid on the ground with 8 to 10 hardwood keys laid across them. As the keys bounce out of position and fly off while being hit with wooden mallets, a boy stationed opposite the player replaces



Fig. 4: Xylophone player with boy replacing dislodged keys

them. The name Njung is also given to a series of social songs not always accompanied by this instrument. Beside the singing, a "flute" and drum can be heard; also a musical rasp and rattles.

SIDE I, Band 2: "HAIL MUMA"

The brother of the Fon and second in command in the village gives his wives some palm wine, so they join with his children in singing a song to honor him, "Hail Muma, how good he is to us!" B and C are just social songs accompanied by the musical rasp and gourd rattles, the latter covered with a fiber network to which palm kernels have been attached. **Palm kernel rattles** sometimes are attached to the ankles of dancers.

SIDE I, Band 3: BAFUT SONGS

These unaccompanied songs are done by a 16 year-old blind boy who is practising to be a diviner. In the second song he imitates the instruments by striking his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

SIDE I, Band 4: NGWA

Two songs that are sung by young boys and girls as they dance in the moonlight.

SIDE I, Band 5: DRINKING SONG

This is a song accompanied by a musical bow (akange), and is usually sung in the drinking huts. It tells about a farm women who has stolen some food.

SIDE I, Band 6: MANSA

This funeral song, accompanied by a five-string harp, is sung at a "die-cry" or ceremony for the dead. This is sung to a woman: "Now that you have lost your husband, what are you going to do?"

SIDE I, Band 7: SONG FOR THE GRASS CEREMONY

In the spring of the year, the Fon's buildings are re-thatched with fresh grass. The people bring bundles of grass for this purpose, and after it has been stored away, food and palm-wine are passed around. As they feast, they sing this song. It is accompanied by a small drum and a musical rasp, a notched palm-stem which is rhythmically scraped with a bracelet of brass to make the noise.



Fig. 5: Orchestra with musical rasp players

SIDE I, Band 8: LULLABIES

These are sung without accompaniment, but the slapping of the mother's hand against the baby can be heard.

SIDE I, Band 9: SANITREE ("Sanitary")

Each market day a Sanitary Inspector makes a thorough check of the food to be sold. This song mocks him: "If the meat is not good, he buries it; if the palm-wine is not good, he throws it on the ground! Then why does he get dysentery?" At the end, there is a remark that "now we know about cleanliness, we like to marry a girl with clean teeth!"

SIDE TWO

1 thru 4 - Praises to the Fon sung by his wives. The Fon is the paramount chief, divine in the eyes of his wives and subjects.

SIDE II, Band 1: LAMBULE MUNKUNKA

This "shaming song" is sung publicly to a person, suspected of committing a crime, to make him ashamed to the extent that he will confess. The group, male and female and self-appointed, can sing this song to him only once. For a minor crime this shaming technique is adequate. Lambule: "I saw the thing happen can you deny it?" Munkunka: "I see your tail is long! i. e. you are brave to continue to deny your guilt (because your courage is as big as a monkey's tail is long).

SIDE II, Band 2: NJUNG

Another "Njung", this time a social song accompanied by drum, rattles and wooden rasp. At the end a sort of "war cry" is sounded in honor of the Fon, who is above all men, above all animals, even the dreaded leopard, and even above other gods. The shrieks are punctuated with clapping the hand quickly before the mouth, in much the same fashion as the American Indians sounded their war-whoops.

SIDE II, Band 3: MANSA

The funeral song, a solo with an answering chorus. This may be sung on social occasions as well as at memorials for the dead. A woman who has lost her husband will sing it to a woman who is dancing opposite her husband, seeking sympathy because the widow is without a husband.



6: Musicians at funeral of chief, Bande village

SIDE II, Band 4: CHRISTIAN HYMN

Used also as a dance song, the story tells of a poor man standing outside, who is sick and hungry. The king comes and gives him a cigarette; so the man goes with the king to the place where all dance, all have food, and all are happy.

SIDE II, Band 5: NJUNG

An Njung orchestra with horns, drums, drone trumpet, and a musical rasp.

SIDE II, Band 6: WORK SONG

As the coffee-sifters work at the United Africa Corporation warehouse in **Bamenda**, they sing while they sift and bag the coffee beans. The rhythm is supplied by the coffee beans rattling in the sifting-box as the coffee **goes through it**. "B" has as soloist a blind man who is hired to lead them in the songs, and he is answered by the workers. In the **background** can be heard the thud of cow-hides as they are thrown from the weighing scales to a pile across the room. Since these men come from all over the Cameroons, some of the songs they sing have worked their way up from the coast. "C" JAMMA-JAMMA is one of them; it refers to a leafy vegetable.

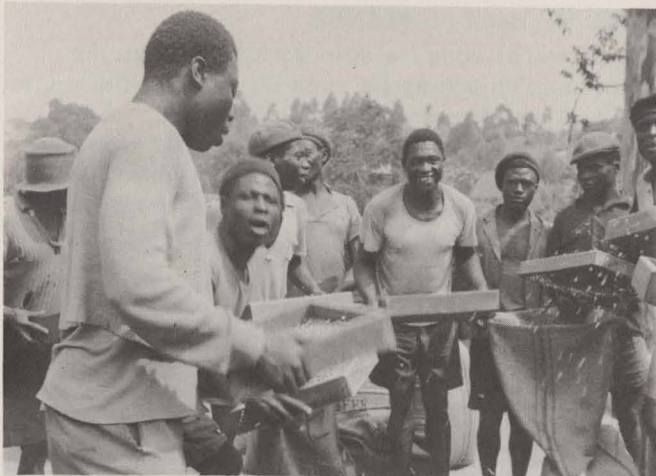


Fig. 7: The coffee sifters sing at work

SIDE II, Band 7: PIT VIOLIN

A stick set in the ground is bent over to form a bow, with a raffia cord leading from the tip to a square cover, placed over a 7 inch deep resonating pit in the ground. The boy gets

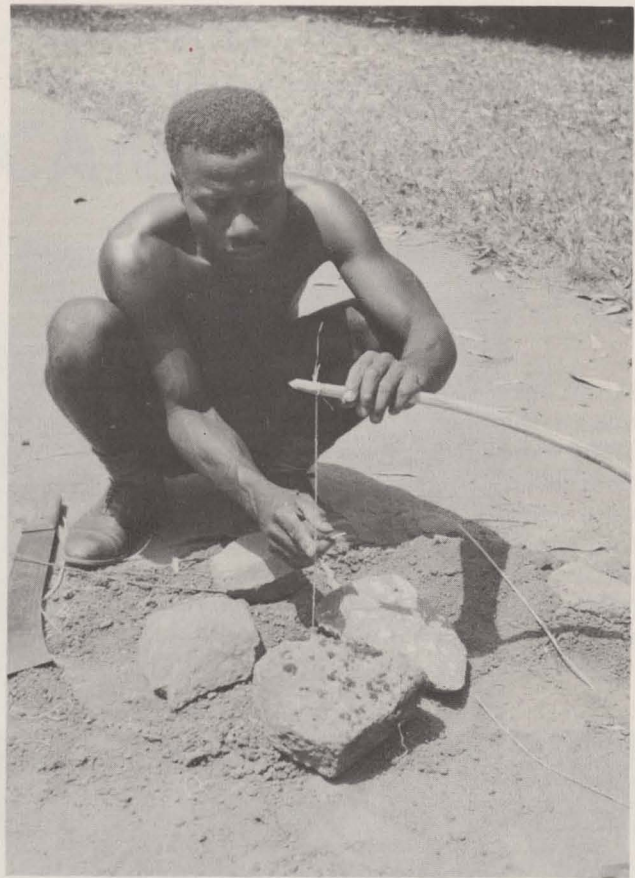


Fig. 8: Pit harp

two tones from it by placing his left hand first on top of the bow and then under it, while plucking the string with his right hand. He feels very sorry for himself as he sings: "They have been sending me to carry water; they have been sending me to find firewood; they have sent me to guard the fields against the monkeys; they do this because I am a poor boy who has lost my father and mother." There no longer are monkeys to steal food from the fields, so the boys now dig the pit in the compound and sing this song.

SIDE II, Band 8: FON'S WIVES (Two Songs)

SIDE II, Band 9: FON'S WIVES

SIDE II, Band 10: SOCIAL NJUNG

SIDE II, Band 11: SONG OF WELCOME

This can be sung for a son or daughter who has been away from home and not been heard from for some time. At the return, there is much rejoicing. Here the hand-clapping forms much of the rhythm base.

SIDE II, Band 12: NUFUM

A memorial to a dead Fon, the nufum being the house where the dead Fon is buried. This song is sung on the day of the week set aside to worship the dead Fon, and with much hand-clapping it is sung by the Fon's wives and daughters. It is followed by the familiar shrieks: "Hail to the Fon".

SIDE II, Band 13: FULANI

- music being played at "Salla", the end of the Moslem month of fasting called **Ramadan**. The orchestra consists of a small drum, a gourd rattle, and a four-holed **flageolet** of leather covered wood and a flat brass mouth-piece. The reedy, oboe-like tone of the **flageolet** seems more in keeping with North Africa rather than West. (Fig. 9)



Fig. 9: Fulani and Tiv musicians

SIDE II, Band 14: NJUNG

- another social Njung with orchestra.

