



Fonds

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# Habit and Tradition

## **Prince Claus Fund Reader 2011** issue #4

The Reader is a publication that distills and organizes the contents of books and magazines that have been supported and produced by the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development. The Reader serves as an introduction to the extensive publishing activities of the Prince Claus Fund. The fourth edition of the Prince Claus Fund Reader offers a series of articles that focus on habit and tradition.

# Contents

- 4 **Introduction**  
By Siri Driessen
  
- 6 **Tradition: Hindrance or Inspiration?**  
By Paulin J. Hountondji
  
- 14 **Wood, Skin and Steel.**  
**The Musical Fusions of Carnival**  
By Simon Lee
  
- 26 **Claudia Roden. Food and Time in Place**  
By Sami Zubaida
  
- 30 **Hasan Saltik. The Modernity of Musical Archeaology**  
By Zulfu Livaneli
  
- 34 **Baaba Maal. The modern griot**  
By J.H. Kwabena Nketia
  
- 38 **Bhutan Archery Federation. Revitalising Tradition**  
By Françoise Pommaret
  
- 44 **The Art of African Fashion.**  
**Writing contemporary African and world history**  
By Aminata Damane Traoré
  
- 49 **Colophon**

# Introduction

## By Siri Driessen

'Now the laborers of the world have released themselves from their chains, the modern workingman has again chained himself. This time to the omnipresent tie, that snake around his Adam's apple, that cord of sins that tells us the degree of decency. Tie-wearers of all countries, unite. Throw off the cord that keeps you imprisoned. Stick your neck out. Release yourself and step into the paradise of the open collar.'

With these words, spoken at the presentation of the 1998 Principal Prince Claus Award to three African fashion designers, Prince Claus of the Netherlands urged the audience to loosen their ties. After Prince Claus undid his and threw it at the audience, many of the men present returned the gesture and tossed their ties towards the stage. The 'Declaration of the Tie', as the event became known, came to be regarded as an example of the Prince's frank attitude and his critical position towards the establishment.

However, Prince Claus was not only directing his comments towards the tie-wearing attendees of the awards ceremony and the accompanying fashion show. In a broader perspective, the speech reflected his main principles about culture and development: the Prince has always argued for a questioning attitude towards learned behavior. Instead of obeying the fixed rules of a society, Prince Claus insisted on the continuous challenging of existing habits and prevailing modes of thought. Moreover, he opted for a view on culture that emphasized its dynamic character, and paid attention to everything that happened in the margins of a society and was subjected to invisibility. According to the Prince,

a country could only develop itself through a comprehensive examination of its identities, including the local and marginal ones. This idea is not to be seen as a plea for cultural chauvinism – it implies that one has to look beyond the establishment to understand that the most important elements of a culture can be hidden beneath the surface. Consequently, it is not desirable to simply present personal or national convictions to a development country. In order to gain results in development work, it is important to disconnect oneself from prevailing thought patterns and adjust to local cultures.

In their own way, all of the articles collected in Reader 4 reflect this opinion. In the first one, 'Tradition: Hindrance or Inspiration', the Beninese professor in philosophy Paulin Hountondji investigates the possibility of redefining the cultural identity of formerly oppressed countries without either completely disqualifying them as corrupted and unusable or justifying them as undeniable parts of their identity. Hountondji argues for a view of culture that starts from within – a view that is comparable to the one of Prince Claus – and chooses to emphasize the plural and dynamic character of the cultures of countries that have been oppressed. Inner tensions, dynamics, and plurality are as much part of these cultures as everywhere else – a fact that has often been ignored in social sciences. According to Hountondji, it is only in this way possible to conceive of (African) dominated cultures in their fullest scope and refrain from temptation to accept cultural practices as they have been set by dominating powers or outdated traditional ideas.

In the second article of the Reader, Simon Lee tries to practice the conception of culture in a study of the different expressions of Carnival music. By taking the Caribbean, Latin American and Diasporic sounds and movements as hybrid forms of art, he enables himself to oversee the reciprocal cultural exchanges that occurred in the development of Carnival music and dance. Meanwhile, Lee takes into account the different historical backgrounds of the countries that perform Carnival and their influences on the performed music. In this way, Lee visualizes Carnival cultures from a standpoint that combines a view from within, with broader and more transhistorical perspectives.

The third article illustrates a rather different, but also practical approach. In 1999,

the Prince Claus Fund awarded the Egyptian food writer Claudia Roden for her contributions to the accumulation of knowledge about Middle Eastern cooking cultures. In the laudation included in this Reader, the anthropologist Sami Zubaida describes how Roden's works are not only cook books that include a wide range of Middle Eastern recipes but are also ethnographic and historical studies of food traditions. According to Zubaida, she explicates the historical ties between different food cultures, and mutual influences in tastes and flavors, as well as the different kitchen habits and folktales that accompany specific recipes. Because Roden obtains her research, in part, from fieldwork, from strolling in markets and interviewing people, she manages to discover hidden knowledge.

A musical equivalent of this approach can be found the work of Hasan Saltik, a 2003 Prince Claus Fund laureate. Saltik founded a record company that specializes in the preservation of local Anatolian music productions, both traditional and contemporary. In this way, Saltik manages to renew the power of marginalized sounds and genres. Moreover, his work contributes to the deepening of (the conception of) an Anatolian musical identity. A similar aim is recognized in the work of the Senegalese Baaba Maal, a 1998 Prince Claus Fund laureate. In his music, Maal tries to combine 'authentic' sounds and music styles with a contemporary approach. Consequently, his compositions and performances are cross-cultural works that still manage to express a specific African sound.

Yet, it is not only artistic expressions enclosed in Prince Claus's ideas about culture and development. The Prince has always emphasized the importance of sport and sports associations as instruments for social cohesion and building self-esteem. The sixth article of the Reader contains the laudation written for the Bhutan Archery Federation, a 2004 Prince Claus Fund laureate. In this text, ethno-historian Françoise Pommaret explains how archery developed from a traditional act of defense into a popular sport, one that is closely connected with Bhutanese identity. However, as Pommaret indicates, this strong linkage to Bhutanese traditional habits cannot only be regarded as positive, because it prevented the Bhutanese archers from internationalizing their sport. It was the commission of the Bhutan Archery Federation to transform the traditional art of archery into an internationally accepted sport, which enabled Bhutanese sportsmen and women to present their culture in an international setting. In this way, the federation has shown that the ideas of Prince Claus about the modernization of tradition can also be executed in practice.

The Reader concludes with the laudation about the aforementioned Art of African Fashion, written by Aminata Dramane Traoré. In her text, Traoré emphasizes the importance of fashion as a mediator between past and present, between traditions and modernity. As Traoré remarks, fashion serves as a means to communicate, express ways of being and establish identities. With their designs, Oumou Sy, Alphadi, and Tetteh Adzedu, who together form the Art of African Fashion, reinterpret traditional African aesthetics and transform them into contemporary articulations. In this way, they use fashion as a tool to question and adjust prevailing traditions. Coming back to the words of Prince Claus mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, the African designers again show that it is possible to practice tradition as something dynamic that does not need to be conceived of as authoritarian, but rather as something to work with. By including articles, all of which in a different way (re)define their relationship to habit and tradition, this Reader attempts to illustrate that Prince Claus's words can be activated in multiple ways – throwing away a tie is only one example.

# Tradition: Hindrance or Inspiration?

By Paulin J. Hountondji  
*Prince Claus Fund Journal #4*

## 01

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**In co-operation with the Lebanese American University, the Prince Claus Fund organised a conference on 'The Role of the Intellectual in the Public Sphere'. (See also previous pages.) Discussions took place on 24 and 25 February 2000. Among the speakers were Elias Khoury from Lebanon, Desiderio Navarro from Cuba, Ahmed Abdalla from Egypt, Mamadou Diawara from Mali, Waziri Adio from Nigeria and 1999 Prince Claus Award laureate Paulin Hountondji from Benin.**

**Paulin J. Hountondji      Tradition: Hindrance or Inspiration?**

1. Gobineau, Joseph Arthur comte de; *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, Didot, Paris, 1853-1855, 4 volumes

2. The French anthropologist intended to oppose the basic hypothesis of 'the English anthropological school', namely Tylor and Frazer. The latter assumed, first, that human nature was identical everywhere and at all times, and secondly, that the facts and deeds of the primitive man were based on a particular philosophy, that is a coherent and self-conscious worldview. Tylor called this particular worldview 'animism'. To him, animism was a philosophy shared by all members of 'primitive' societies, and the rationale for all those customs, habits, rites, social uses which seem at first so peculiar to the European observer. In view of this theory, Tylor appears to have been doing what we call today ethno-philosophy, while Lévy-Bruhl's refutation amounts to substituting for this ethno-philosophical

**Two temptations**

In examining a given tradition, two temptations should be resisted: first, the temptation of contempt, and second, that of overall justification. It was the fate of some cultures in the world to have been systematically said to be inferior during centuries of Western domination including, as far as Africa is concerned, a long history of slave trade and colonialism. This sense of inferiority was unfortunately internalised to various degrees by the cultures themselves. On the other hand, voices arose both from within these cultures and from within the dominant, i.e. the European cultures, to resist that claim to superiority and put Western civilisation back in its right place, a place far more modest than it pretended. African voices were part of this new concert. The danger then, however, was to fall into the exact opposite of the first attitude by idealising and romanticising non-Western cultures.

**Cultural imperialism**

The first temptation is that of cultural imperialism based on what might be called first order ethnocentrism, as opposed to a defensive or second order ethnocentrism. Historically, its most visible form during the last four centuries or so was the collective sense of superiority developed within the Western civilisation by some of its ideologists. This form of ethnocentrism is known as Eurocentrism. For centuries, a whole range of scholars have been for centuries putting their intelligence and learning to the service of this prejudice. For instance Gobineau, the author of '*Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*', thought he was engaged in science. So obvious, however, were his racist assumptions, that nobody should have given the slightest credit to his scientific pretensions.<sup>1</sup> Lévy-Bruhl's theory of 'primitive mentality' seemed at first sight more consistent, though in the final analysis it was based on the same kind of prejudice.<sup>2</sup> Lévy-Bruhl's work is a good example of how an accumulation of real facts can be arranged, organised and interpreted in such a way to serve as a means to reinforce sheer prejudice. Books like '*Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*' and the five others which were to follow<sup>3</sup> are good illustrations of how false science is constructed. The case is all the more eloquent since the author himself was to write a self-criticism published posthumously as '*Les carnets de Lucien Lévy-Bruhl*'.<sup>4</sup> Mutatis mutandis, one dares to hope that the authors of 'The Bell Curve', a book much talked about in America in the last five years, which also tried to give scientific appearance to sheer racist prejudice, will rehabilitate themselves before they die, for the sake of science and for their own personal dignity.<sup>5</sup>

**Cultural nationalism**

The second temptation is that of an excessive and uncritical reaction to the former one. It usually takes the form of an identification with one's own tradition, as a result of self-defence and justification. We are still facing this danger today. Most of the time, we develop a kind of

relation with our own cultures which is not so pure and straightforward as it would have been normally, if we did not feel compelled to answer the challenge of other cultures at the same time. For instance, because some of our ancestral uses have been or are still under external (say, Western) attack, we would still today defend or seek to justify them as part of our identity though we are conscious ourselves of how outdated and little adapted they are to the present conditions of life. We would have certainly rejected these uses or fought for them to be improved and better adapted if we had been alone together. In other words, our relation as individuals to our original cultures is frequently biased, not to say poisoned by the obsession of collective self-defence imposed on us by a hostile environment.

One of the most serious issues today, therefore, is how to get rid of this obsession of the Other and develop again a free and critical relationship to our own cultures. In other words, how can we revive this debate: in places or circumstances where the internal debate within particular cultures has been slowed down or even stifled by external aggression? How can we minimise the negative impact of racism and colonial contempt on the way people behave towards their own culture? How can we mentally liberate ourselves from other cultures' views of our own culture, in order to prioritise our own debate with and within the latter? William Abraham, a Ghanaian (now Ghanaian-American) philosopher, wrote something similar in 'The Mind of Africa': it has often been said, he argues, that the eyes of the whole world are upon us; this is not true, we must get rid of this idea and behave just as we think we have to (I cannot unfortunately give the exact quotation, since it is impossible to find the book anywhere in Cotonou - which, by the way, is also part of the conditions of intellectual work in our countries).<sup>6</sup>

#### A secret complicity

People from dominated cultures are not the only ones, however, to react this way. Not only are they strongly supported, but most of the time they are preceded and shown the way by dissident voices from within the dominant cultures themselves. I called attention to this point many years ago: the rejection of Eurocentrism came first from European intellectuals themselves, namely the anthropologists. Some of them went so far as simply to invert the imperialistic scale of cultural norms: whereas Western civilisation was usually valued for its technical and economic achievements, Malinowski, instead, saw 'a menace to all real spiritual and artistic values in the aimless advance of modern mechanisation'. To him, the study of primitive forms of human life was 'one of the refuges from this mechanical prison of culture' and 'a romantic escape from our over-standardised culture'. I recalled the major role played by the German anthropologist Frobenius in the intellectual development of both Senghor and Césaire, the two poets of 'negritude'. There is therefore, I suggested, a secret complicity between the 'progressive' anthropologist in the West and the cultural nationalist in the South.<sup>7</sup> The latter is often provided his arguments by the former. When these arguments happen to be weak or inconsistent, the cultural nationalist tends unfortunately to take them up as they are.

Let me give an example. In his overview of 'African Religion, Spirituality and Thought', published 30 years ago, Dominique Zahan, a French anthropologist, mentions incidentally a custom which was held sacred in some parts of Africa as late as the 19th century: at the burial of King Ghezo of Abomey, now part of the Benin Republic, several dozens of his wives were sacrificed to accompany and continue to serve him in the Beyond. Moreover, most of them were said to be volunteers and to consider it a great honour to be chosen. Colonial ideologists would have simply presented this practice as one more proof of how savage or primitive Africans are. Instead, the modern anthropologist tries to identify the philosophy behind this custom. To Dominique Zahan, this ritual only means that for the Blacks, there is no real discontinuity between life and death: life flows from death, and death is but the continuation of life.<sup>8</sup>

This way of presenting things is a good example of how ethnophilosophy works: it refers to some collective worldview or conceptual framework as possible justification for the most unjustifiable customs. Cultural nationalism aims at the same goal: it seeks to justify all inherited

account, an ethno-psychological account of non-Western realities. To him, the rationale for the primitive way of life does not lie in any kind of philosophy but in a 'mentality', i.e., the bare fact of a given psychic constitution. The primitive's behaviour is not motivated by logical reasons, but determined by his/her psychological nature. To that extent, no real understanding is possible between the 'primitive' and the 'civilised'. Lévy-Bruhl's story amounts to widening the gap between cultures and splitting down the unity of humankind.

3.

Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien; Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures, Paris, 1910; La mentalité primitive, Paris, 1922; L'âme primitive, Paris, 1927; Le surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive, Paris, 1931; La mythologie primitive, Paris, 1935; L'expérience mystique et les symboles chez les primitifs, Paris, 1938

4.

A good presentation of Lévy-Bruhl's thought and development on primitive mentality is found in: Cazeneuve, Jean; La mentalité archaïque, Armand Colin, Paris, 1961.

5.

Herrstein, Richard and Charles A. Murray; The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life, First Free Press, New York, 1995

6.

Abraham, William; The Mind of Africa (The Nature of Human Society), University of Chicago Press, Chicago/Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962

7.  
See Hountondji, Paulin J.;  
*African Philosophy, Myth and  
Reality*, Indiana University  
Press, Bloomington and  
Indianapolis, 1996 (second  
edition), p. 157-159

8.  
Zahan, Dominique; *Religion,  
spiritualité et pensée afri-  
caines*, Payot, Paris, 1970,  
p. 245

9.  
Hountondji, Paulin J.;  
'Brainstorming - Or How to  
Create Awareness of Human  
Rights', in: Mayor, Federico,  
in collaboration with Roger-  
Pol Droit (ed.); *Taking  
Action for Human Rights in  
the Twenty-first Century*,  
UNESCO Publishing, Paris,  
1998, p. 144-147

10.  
This does not only apply to  
Africa. Examples can be  
taken from any other culture.  
For instance, committing  
hara-kiri has been said to be  
part and parcel of Japanese  
culture. The heroism of the  
kamikazes who, during the  
Second World War, sacri-  
ficed their lives to destroy  
enemies' boats, appears to  
be a modern illustration of  
an age-old practice, deeply  
rooted in the ancestral  
culture. However, how  
universally approved was  
this practice? Who can  
assert that there has never  
been at any time, in any  
circumstances, a secret  
protest by a mother, a sister  
or a lover, a discrete murmur,  
a self-contained revolt  
against the unwritten law  
or the social pressure that  
forced young and valid  
people to commit suicide?

practices including the most unjustifiable. That is why ethnophilosophy, obviously an invention of the West, has been so massively taken up by Third World intellectuals and especially by African philosophers. Yet, as a matter of fact, no woman today, even from the culture of King Ghezo, the Fon culture in present-day Benin, would like to be buried alive with, or sacrificed in any other way for the sake of her husband, however prestigious he may be.

What is needed, therefore, in the present circumstances, is to get rid of this need for self-justification before the tribunal of other cultures in order to develop the internal debate within our own cultures. We need to question our cultures from within, i.e. from our own point of view instead of assuming that they can only be questioned from without. We need to understand how such a ritual came into existence in the past, why so many princesses not only accepted it but went so far as to offer themselves as voluntary victims. Zahan's reference to a certain conception of life and death is probably not false, but we need more: we need to appreciate how strong the social pressure was on these princesses and the overall social atmosphere in the context of absolute monarchy in a small size country. We need to understand how this very philosophy of life and death came to develop and why it no longer works today.

I wrote some time ago about brainstorming as a way to favour, from within a society, a new awareness of values. Instead of trying to impose norms imported from other cultures, it would be more effective, I argued, to draw upon the inner dynamism of every culture, the inner potential for self-criticism and self-improvement. All cultures have developed social practices in the past which common sense totally disapproves of today. What seemed normal yesterday no longer does today. For instance, the Inquisition in Western Europe and later on, the slave trade and the anti-Black racism in Western Europe and America. Second, not only are cultures dynamic and bound to change over time; no culture admits just one system of norms at the same time. Instead, in any given culture there are always several systems mutually competing. Therefore, instead of taking for granted the claim for universality of a given model at a given time, one should always look carefully beyond the dominant social model for the wide range of secondary or marginal models.<sup>9</sup>

#### Identifying murmurs

We are facing, therefore, two kinds of problems: a theoretical problem and a practical one. We need, first, to develop new paradigms in the social sciences. Whatever the discipline, whether history or sociology or economics or law or any branch of anthropology including legal anthropology and religious anthropology, to quote just a few examples, so far in Africa the tendency in the social sciences has been to frame out just one way of living, doing or thinking that appears to express, in each case, the specificity of Africa. This search for specificity is probably still relevant today. However, by calling attention exclusively to what might be considered as 'the African difference', social scientists have overlooked so far the internal pluralism of African cultures, the inner tensions that make them living cultures, just as unbalanced and therefore, just as dynamic, just as bound to change as any other culture in the world.

Greater attention should be paid, beyond the norms and social practices usually held as characteristic of a given culture, to the wide range of marginal practices and norms. The problem, then, is a methodological one: by what methods, through what theoretical and practical tools is it possible today for the social scientist to identify these hidden models? How can we best recognise, behind the brouhaha of the dominant culture, the stifled voices that tell another story? To stick to our example, how can the anthropologist or historian of Africa today identify and make evident all the critical murmurs, the stifled protest which were presumably uttered or eventually suppressed, at the time of King Ghezo's burial, by the princesses' mothers, sisters, relatives, secret lovers (if any), or even by the princesses themselves, when given the opportunity to speak off the record? What was the comment of the king's jester or of the authorised satirical singers? Such questions are based on the assumption that, beyond the unity and specificity of a culture, it is important to explore its internal diversity and pluralism. They invite new approaches and an important shift in the current scientific paradigms.<sup>10</sup>

### Breaking the walls of prejudice

However, it is not enough to develop a new reading of the past, a new comprehension of tradition. Once it has been recognised that tradition is plural, the practical question is: how can we promote the internal debate inside our own culture here and now in such a way that it may itself develop new, and the best possible alternatives? I may not have perceived, in my aforementioned article, how difficult it is to organise brainstorming in a social context where very few people really want it; in a context where some people are used to manipulating the masses and for that reason do not want the truth to become evident at all. A favourite method used by these manipulators is to pour torrents of lies on their followers. More exactly put, they deposit in their followers' minds the seeds of lie and delusion in such a way that these seeds grow by themselves without any need for additional intervention. Followers internalise what they have been told, including the forbidding of all dialogue with other sides and the conviction that the people in front are bad people.

I do not wish to elaborate on this. Let me just mention how harsh this refusal of dialogue can be, not only in politics but even in such domains as religion. In my country we know of a religious chief, a pastor of the Methodist Church of Benin, who was elected President of the Church in March 1993 for a five years' mandate, renewable once. In 1997, instead of organising new elections to get another mandate starting from 1998, he came to the annual Synod with a new draft constitution with the provision that once a President is chosen, he should remain in office till his retirement. This gave birth to a deep crisis within the Church, the deepest crisis ever experienced by this congregation which happens to be the first Christian group ever established in Benin.<sup>11</sup>

Time has not yet come to draw the lessons of this crisis, which has been stirring up all religious communities in Benin, whether Christian or not, for the last two years or so. What strikes me most, however, is how an issue which looks so clear, so simple, so limpid has been confused so far by all means and through all kinds of methods by the man in question and his staff. What fascinates me is the way they have exploited the ignorance and lack of information of thousands of people in the Church. They rush here and there to whatever local church they feel has not yet got the proper information to mislead the members and warn them against any contact with the so-called 'rebels' or 'dissidents'. They erect around them walls of prejudice that incline them simply not to listen to any other explanation or information. Despite this, however, some of these people sometimes come across the facts that the man has been trying to hide. The charm then is neutralised and people are prepared, once again, to face reality.

I myself happen to be part of this conflict - you can guess on which side I stand. Beyond this specific fight, however, one question arises: how can the walls of prejudice be broken in each case? How can people unwilling to discuss or warned against any questioning of the established order be progressively brought to face reality and accept discussion? How can such people be brought into the brainstorming exercise which is the condition for collective invention and renewal? To me, the well known sentence of the Founding Act of UNESCO ('Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed') sounds like a paradox: if principles of tolerance, ideas of human rights and human equality or, for that matter, the belief in the God of love are understood to be the defences of peace, piling these principles and belief up in the minds of men will never be enough to create peace. Specific actions are needed to deconstruct and, whenever possible, break down the walls of prejudice erected by manipulators to prevent fair discussion and dialogue.

11.

The first Christian missionary came to Danhome in 1843 in the time of King Ghezo, and he was from the Methodist Church of Britain, founded by John Wesley in the 18th century.



# Wood, Skin and Steel. The Musical Fusions of Carnival

By Simon Lee

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## 02

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From samba and merengue to reggae, zouk and calypso, Carnival music provides the creative space for masking and fantasy, liberation, licence and celebration. With roots in ancient religions, popular Carnival hits merge the past with the new music technologies of the present. The infectious beat is part of a living tradition that began in enslavement and migration and continues today.

## **Wood, Skin and Steel**

### **The Musical Fusions of Carnival**

**Simon Lee**

#### **The sacred drum of Africa**

In the pre-dawn dark of a Monday morning in February or March, depending when the Roman Catholic season of Lent begins, city streets throughout the Caribbean stir and convulse to incendiary rhythms which eventually erupt at sunrise into the tidal wave, which is Carnival.

In the darkness of *Jouvert* (from the French *jour ouvert*, daybreak) bamboo vaksins hoot in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; *gwo ka* drums thunder in Basseterre, Guadeloupe; *lapo kabwit* drums rage in Roseau, Dominica, while in Trinidad, blue devils wave their tails and menace crowds with pitchforks to the militant beat of biscuit tins as steel bands hypnotise thousands into the slow syncopated 'chip' shuffle which will keep them moving, long after the sun slides behind the mountains of the Northern Range.

If Carnival is the apotheosis of Caribbean popular culture, a combination of planned multimedia event, spontaneous street theatre and party, then music is undoubtedly its driving energy, the spirit which animates the craftsmen and women, designers and ultimately the masqueraders and all who participate in this collective festival. It is music which provides the creative space for masking and fantasy, liberation, licence and celebration.

Contemporary Carnival, whether in the Caribbean, Latin America or in the wider diaspora (Miami, Toronto, London), embraces high and low culture, the avant-garde along with folk traditions. In the largely oral societies of the Caribbean, where the concept of documenting heritage is still fairly recent, Carnival is a repository of the cultures inducted to the region through greed, violence and deception, and an accumulation of the fusions, or creolised syncretisms, which have evolved as a result of 500 years of their co-habitation.

As an organic cultural phenomenon, Carnival is a working example of the concept of building bridges between cultures and at the same time it is a refutation of homogeneity and the dangerous fallacy of globalisation. Assimilating, or worse, sacrificing, the 'other' on the altar of an economic or technological buzzword may lead not only to the destruction of bridges but also to the drying up of the rivers they cross.

Examining Caribbean Carnival as a repository of history, Creole development and popular culture, the culture and the religions of Africa, Asia and the Americas, and even those of Europe, play a vital role in the music of Carnival.

Sadly, virtually nothing has survived of the region's original inhabitants, the Amerindians, apart from the *shac shac* (or maracas), which feature as percussion instruments throughout the islands. It is only in the musically fertile Windward island of Dominica that you can hear Amerindian music, played on bamboo flutes to drum and *shac*

*shac* accompaniment, with singing and dancing performed by cultural groups from the Carib Territory, where the region's last 3,500 indigenous survivors live.

Yet even in Dominica, as throughout the Caribbean, the music of Carnival is powered by African-derived rhythms. After the European settlers had decimated the indigenous population they turned to Africa as a new source of free labour. The millions of slaves imported between 1514 and 1888 carried their gods and ancestors – along with the rhythms that summoned them – across the Atlantic.

At Haiti's oldest *voudou* ceremony (six days and nights starting on Good Friday) held in the Souvenance compound to honour the Rada lwa or spirits of Dahomey (present-day Benin), the same rhythms and songs played in Africa 300 years ago can still be heard. Some of these songs are sung in 'langaj', a sacred African tribal language no longer spoken.

Similarly, in Cuba's African-derived Santeria religion and the secret, all male, Abakua sect, African rhythms still survive – as they do on the tiny Grenadine island of Carriacou, where the Big Drum ceremony for the ancestors is still performed. In Trinidad, there is the Yoruba Orisha religion, in Suriname there is Winti ancestor worship, and in the majority of the islands some kind of African-derived religion, some nameless, some only half-remembered but all of them powered by the sacred drum.

All these sacred musics were used as strategies for survival and resistance during and after slavery. It's no coincidence that the successful slave rebellion in Haiti was initiated at the Bois Caiman *voudou* ceremony in 1791, where drums summoned the aggressive Petro spirits to assist the slaves in their war against the French.

Some of these rhythms have found their way into the music of Carnival and also into Latin Jazz classics. Roots music bands in Haiti, starting with Boukman Eksperyans (named for the Jamaican born *voudou* priest who presided at Bois Caiman), which have experimented since the 1980s with the fusion of *voudou* ceremonial rhythms and songs with electric instrumentation and transnational influences from rock, reggae and rap to jazz and hip hop, unleash *voudou* rhythms on the Port-au-Prince Carnival crowds, and possession is a regular occurrence.

It was an influx of Carriacouan immigrants to Trinidad in the 1840s, bringing with them the rhythms of Big Drum ritual dances derived from the Hausa, Arada, Ibo, Kromanti, Manding tribes who gave such impetus to Trinidad's post-emancipation Carnival. Carriacouan master drummer Winston Flaery also claims that the music and songs of stickfighting, which played a prominent role in Trinidad's Carnival through the nineteenth century and which is still practised, also came from Carriacou.

African rhythms have played a major role in all Creole music forms from son and merengue to reggae, zouk and calypso. Yet the African drum had to endure colonial oppression – something which ironically worked as a catalyst in producing one of the main musical ingredients of Carnival in the Anglophone Caribbean – the steelpan.

While the Hispanic colonists tended to allow their slaves a degree of cultural licence (which some theorise is one of the factors in Cuba's polyrhythmic music), drums were banned in many British and Dutch islands.

Besides fearing the drum's potential for signalling and orchestrating rebellion, the colonial authorities of Protestant islands tended to be far less tolerant of African-style worship than their Roman Catholic counterparts in the French and Hispanic Caribbean. Since the reformation, Protestantism had banished the saints, the ceremony, the rituals of Catholicism (which in many aspects parallels the secular pageantry of Carnival) for a fundamentalist austerity.

The ritual and saints of Catholicism were not that far removed from the African orishas and the appropriation of Catholic saints by Creole African religions is another example of successful bridge-building, which rather than resulting in homogeneity, produces something unique, part of the Creole paradigm.

After the 1888 ban on drums in Trinidad, (commemorated in an early calypso 'Can't beat the drum in my own native land') experiments were made first with lengths of bamboo, giving rise to the tamboo bands which accompanied Carnival bands and then in the late



**Seru Fortuna**

Juanita, dressed as a Barbie Doll for the Curaçao school carnival,  
with her father and grandmother

Photo by Catrien Ariëns



1930s with pots and pans, tins and eventually the oil drum prototypes of the steelpan.

A similar creative diversion took place in Curaçao, when the distinctive African tambu rhythm played on drums and hoe heads was banned only to resurface as tumba, Curaçao's equivalent of calypso.

### **Creolising the mix**

Creole music – that is, music created in the Caribbean – is another continuous example of syncretism and the building of bridges between often disparate cultures.

So it is not surprising to find a Javanese band in Suriname playing soca music from Trinidad's Carnival nor a traditional Jing Ping folk band in Dominica playing the calypsos of the Mighty Sparrow, probably the world's best known surviving 'Trini' calypsonian. Nor is it uncharacteristic at Trinidad's Hosay festival, which was originally a solemn Shi'ite Muslim occasion commemorating the deaths of Mohammed's nephews in battle, to find the descendants of African slaves beating the tassa war drums alongside their East Indian compatriots. The Chinese cornet, played in the essentially African conga music of Santiago de Cuba's Carnival, has long been recognised as a definitive sound of this particular Carnival.

The fusion which is the basis of most Caribbean popular music and especially the music of Carnival is that of African rhythms with European forms (from classical music to formal dances, hymns, folk and sailors' songs) and instrumentation. Once again it is relevant in the light of the bridge-building (*vis à vis* homogeneity versus roots and identity debate) that the fusions produced are new, unique, and distinctly Creole forms. They have become sources of national and regional identity and pride.

The ethnomusicologist Peter Manuel points out in his well-researched overview of the region's music, *Caribbean Currents*, forms as different as the rather stately danza of nineteenth century Puerto Rico, which has little or no African input, and the distinctly neo-African Cuban rumba of the late nineteenth century are Creole creations.

To come up to date, we can identify two vibrant but little known Afro-Caribbean dance musics as examples of the continuing Creole paradigm: Punta Rock, a band produced by the Garifuna or Black Caribs of Belize (descendants of the offspring of African slaves and Caribs from St Vincent), fuses traditional Garifuna rhythms and drums with calypso, soca, salsa, son, and zouk influences played on electric instruments.

Similarly, in Suriname, *kaskawi* is a total hybrid: a fusion of *kawina* drumming and *kaseko* (Suriname's version of calypso which takes its name from the French Guyanese Creole dance *cassez corps* or break your body). Both *kaseko* and *kaskawi* are permeated with the rhythms and vocal styles of the Bush Negroes, runaway slaves who founded clandestine settlements in the Amazon rainforest, maintaining an African lifestyle and culture to this day.

It seems entirely apt and pertinent to the debate that it was a *kaskawi* hit, 'Faluma', sung by the Surinamese group Ai Sa Si in Saramakan (one of the tribal languages of the Bush Negroes), that provided the Barbadian soca group Square One with their massive Carnival hit of the same name in 1997/98. Sung by the region's reigning soca diva Alison Hinds (who retained the Saramakan lyrics), Square One's 'Faluma' was played at Carnivals throughout the Caribbean and the diaspora and was instrumental in establishing the singer as an icon of popular culture.

The 'Faluma' story is a prime example of Carnival music at its Creole creative best: it spans the cultures of the Caribbean, from the Maroons of the seventeenth century and their language, while incorporating soca, the latest musical idiom of Trinidad, as interpreted by a Barbadian band. This is spontaneous bridge-building.

It's both instructive and musically delightful to compare the original with its neo-African polyrhythms and call and response choral work with the faster tempo soca version, but more significant is the fact of its regional and diasporic success. This was not a by-product of marketing but rather the Carnival infrastructure which underpins the Creole aesthetic.

'Faluma' precisely because of its uniqueness (but with the strong rhythms and call and response format accessible to any Caribbean citizen) became an almost overnight success,

spread through the islands by DJs, radio stations and eventually bands on the road. Carnival hits, whether road marches, party songs or traditional calypsos with their strong lyrical content – each of these genres will be judged according to different criteria – are ephemeral creations and however good they are rarely outlast the Carnival season. The Carnival culture demands new songs each year (a situation which frustrates many musicians) and many classics disappear into oblivion. However a hit in any category is usually innovative but most importantly for road marches and party songs must be danceable. Traditional calypso tends to be judged on the wit and word play of its lyrics.

### **Mother of all carnivals**

Any discussion of Carnival music brings us to Trinidad, home of calypso and steelpan. Theories on the origins of calypso are wide-ranging, controversial and ongoing. One of the calypso greats, Rafael de Leon, the Roaring Lion, devoted an entire book to proving its origins lay with the medieval French troubadours. Africanists point to songs of praise, satire and topicality still sung in Africa. While both these schools of thought have their points, the controversy is irrelevant. Calypso is a Creole form par excellence – a multi-fusion.

Trinidad, with its rich history and resulting cosmopolitanism (Spanish colony, settled by French planters then seized by the British in 1797 who brought in Portuguese, Chinese and East Indian indentured labourers after Emancipation) has been one of the major centres of creolisation for more than 200 years.

Carnival was introduced to the Spanish-controlled island in the 1780s by an influx of Roman Catholic French planters, invited under generous terms by the Spanish, with an eye to developing the colony. The French from Martinique, possibly Haiti and Grenada too, brought their slaves with them. As early as the 1820s, the Martiniquan planter Begorrat and his chantwell (master singer) the slave Gros Jean, whose French Creole praise song for his master, may be the first documented calypso:

Begorrat et Diab'la, c'est un (Begorrat and the devil, that's one)  
Begorrat et Diabl'a, c'est deux (Begorrat and the devil that's two)  
Begorrat fort cruel et mauvais (Begorrat is strong, cruel and wicked)  
Begorrat roi-la dans son pays (Begorrat is king in his country)

Before Emancipation, the slaves had observed and even imitated their masters' Carnival celebrations. It is likely that some actually performed as musicians in the orchestras which provided the accompaniment for the elegant Carnival balls. What is certain is that right across the Caribbean it was the slaves' appropriation of European formal dances (quadrille, lancers, polka, reel and mazurka) which spawned the early forms of Creole music from Cuban danzon to Haitian mereng, or the *bélé* of the Lesser Antilles.

With Emancipation in 1834 and the final end of slavery after the apprenticeship period in 1838, Carnival and its music passed into the hands of the black urban masses. They used the festival not only to mimic and mock their former masters, but to settle scores among rival gangs, which at Carnival would form themselves into bands, led by a chantwell.

Prior to 1834, the only celebrations allowed to slaves were during the Christmas season, a period at the end of the sugarcane harvest and when the local militia would train and therefore be ready for any slave insurrection.

After Emancipation the ex-slaves seized on Carnival as their festival. They celebrated liberty by commemorating the old plantation days with the burning flambeaux of the Cannes Brulées procession (gangs of slaves were called out to neighbouring plantations in the night to put out fires which might otherwise have destroyed the precious crop).

They vented their creative energies in costume, song and dance and released their frustrations in escalating violence which led to the banning of Cannes Brulées and clashes with colonial authorities in the 1880s. In this period Carnival and its music were distinctly Afro-Creole and there was little interaction between the black lower classes and the privileged white minority.



Children's parade, Curaçao Carnival  
Photo by Catrien Ariëns



After the intervention of the authorities in the 1880s, the banning of drums and even masks, the foundations of modern Carnival were laid as the middle classes and even some of the élite felt safe enough to participate. The bridge was now ready for building and music played a fundamental role.

By the end of the nineteenth century calypso, or *kaiso*, was used to refer to any song sung during the Carnival season. These songs included the *lavway* (an African style call and response chant which led street festivals), the *belair* (French Creole topical song), the *calinda* (stickfighting song) and the *bongo* (wake song sung for the recently dead). Tunes were borrowed from the region (the Haitian folk song ‘Chaconné’ or ‘Yellow Bird’ is a famous example), from Europe and from America and between 1890 and 1930 accompaniment was often the string band (flute, clarinet, bass, cuatro, guitar and violin) which was borrowed from neighbouring Venezuela.

It was the leader of the *calinda* (stickfighting) band who emerged as the early calypsonian, or chantwell, as he was originally known. By the early 1900s the calypso tent (a bamboo structure thatched with palm leaves) appeared, devoted to presenting songs of topical interest, scandal, insult (*picong*), ballads and virtually any theme. The *lavway* – especially in its ‘leggo’ form – became the street chant eventually evolving into what is known today as ‘The Road March’ (the most popular song played on the road during Carnival).

The stigma attached to the culture of the black lower classes, which we find throughout the Caribbean (to the ridiculous extent that some black Dominicans still refer to themselves as *Indios Oscuros*) gradually receded as the twentieth century progressed. Yet even as late as the 1950s and the emergence of the Mighty Sparrow who won his first calypso monarch title in 1956, to be a calypsonian or a steelbandsman was synonymous with being a lowlife. It says much for the creative power of Carnival music that it was eventually able to cross the bridges of class and colour.

This process of low culture (read African or Asian but definitely non-white) being accepted, endorsed and even appropriated by élites is general throughout the Caribbean. It happened with Cuban rumba (which went on to become an international dance craze – despite the fact that most of the music played abroad was son) with reggae (initially despised as downtown/Rasta music), calypso, steel band and if there are any doubts, one only has to examine the most recent case: *bachata* of the Dominican Republic.

Unlike the national music merengue, which received state sanction from the dictator Trujillo in the 1940s, the melancholic *bachata* (with its plangent *soukous* – like tumbling guitars and Afro beats, whose lyrics voiced the pain of love gone wrong, betrayal or the oppression and nostalgia of the displaced rural poor) remained the entertainment of the lower class until the 1980s, when it received recognition only through the efforts of the Dominican Republic’s greatest contemporary musician and songwriter, Juan Luis Guerra.

Returning to Trinidad and contemporary Carnival music, we are faced with paradoxes and contradictions in terms of building bridges but more especially with reference to homogeneity.

Calypso and what some take to be its modern fast tempo version soca (in fact a continuation of both the *lavway* and party song tradition) after some exciting musical experiments in the 1970s and early 80s, have been stagnating musically since the 1990s.

In the 1970s calypsonians like Lord Shorty and the great Shadow (who was finally recognised in 2000 when he won his first calypso monarch title) infused calypso musical forms with the bass rhythms of American funk and soul, the distinctly Afro rhythms of Tobago’s tambrin drums and the influence of Dominica’s *kadans* (a fusion of Haitian *konpas* and calypso) to produce calypsoul or soca.

However, in their efforts to homogenise the soca sound to make a similar crossover into the mainstream market that reggae had made so successfully, ‘Trini’ musicians simplified some of their unique rhythms or simply turned to synthesisers and drum machines, incorporating samples of dancehall and rock. Calypso, with its local topics and soca, with its lyrical flimsiness do not travel well; it took a Bob Marley to internationalise reggae, and

## Recommended Listening

### Haiti

Various, *Rhythms of Rapture, Sacred Musics of Haitian Vodou* (Smithsonian Folkways, U.S., 1995)  
Boukan Ginen, *Jou A Rive* (Xenophile, U.S., 1995)  
Boukman Eksperyans, *Libeté* (Pran Pou Pran) (Mango, UK, 1995)  
Tabou Combo, *Zap!* (Mini Records, U.S.)

### Jamaica

Various, *The Roots of Reggae* (Lyricord, U.S.)

### Cuba

Los Munequitos de Matanzas, *Rumba Caliente* (Qbadisc, U.S.)  
Clave y Guaguanco, *Noche de la Rumba* (Tumi, UK, 1999)  
Various, *Fiesta Cubana Congas y Comparsas* (Artex, Canada, 1991)  
Mercedita Valdes, *Tumi Cuba Classics Vol 2: Afro Cuban* (Tumi, UK)

### Dominican Republic

Various, *The Rough Guide to Merengue and Bachata* (World Music Network, UK, 2001)

### Guadeloupe

Akiyo, *Memoires* (Declic, France)

### Dominica

Exile One, *Anthology* (Gordon Henderson Productions, Commonwealth of Dominica, 1996)  
WCK, *Caribbean Heartbeat* (CK Entertainment, Commonwealth of Dominica, 2001)  
Caribbean Voyage Series, *Dominica* (Rounder Records, U.S., 1999)

### Carriacou

Caribbean Voyage Series,  
*Carriacou Callaloo* (Rounder  
Records, U.S., 1999)

### Barbados

Square One, *In Full Bloom*  
(Esaf, Barbados, 1998)

### Trinidad

Various, *Trinidad Rough Guide  
to Calypso and Soca* (World  
Music Network, UK, 1999)

Ella Andall, *Oriki Ogun* (Ella  
Andall, Trinidad, 1999)  
Mighty Sparrow, *Vols 1-3* (Ice  
Records, Barbados/UK,  
1992)

Shadow, *Shadowmania 1&2*  
(Rituals Records, Trinidad,  
1997)

Andre Tanker, *Children of the  
Big Bang* (Rituals, Trinidad,  
1996)

### Curaçao

Trinchere-a *Tela t'ei bash'*  
*abou* (Trinchera, Curaçao,  
1999)

Ike Jesurun, *Time* (Red Bullet,  
Holland, 1995)

Izaline Calister, *Soño di  
un muhé* [One Woman's  
Dream] (Exil Musik,  
Curaçao, 2000)

### Suriname

Ai Sa Si, *Faluma* (Arti,  
Holland, 1998)

### Belize

Andy Palacio, *'Til da Mawnin*  
(Stonetree Records, Belize,  
1996)

Where available, years of  
release have been provided

calypso and soca only function in a Carnival context, they are not musics to sit and listen to.

The result, while not unpleasant in the context of a Carnival fête or on the road during the frenzy of Carnival, has been a rootless unmemorable sound, in which the majority of soca songs sound the same. It's also no coincidence that increasingly over the last decade it has been musicians from other islands who have musically dominated the 'Trini' Carnival, starting with the Barbadian invasion of 1996 led by the very talented young Bajan arranger Nicholas Brancker, who is in touch with the musics of the region.

The Jamaican Byron Lee has been playing 'Trini' Carnival regularly for the past twenty years; the Barbadians have come close to winning soca monarch titles recently and in the past two years Talpree from Grenada and Godfrey Dublin from St Vincent have both been major presences in 'Trini' Carnival. The reason for their success lies precisely in working with their roots and not attempting to excise them in the misguided attempt at globalisation or mass consumption.

Creatively, the musical initiative in Carnival has passed out of 'Trini' hands, although there is a new generation experimenting with rapso – a dancehall, rap, Jouvèrt chant style fusion. There is still the possibility of exploring the Afro-Indo fusion, initiated by Indian singers like Drupatee Ramgoonai and Rikki Jai who had some success in both calypso and soca, and in terms of bridge-building, the chutney (derived from fast paced Bhojpuri folk and women's wedding songs) soca fusion has long been accepted.

But for some of the most creative Carnival music we have to look elsewhere in the Caribbean: Dominica, Suriname, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Cuba and Haiti. Dominica's *bouyon* fusion is a perfect example of the Creole paradigm: it combines the unique Jing Ping folk music of the island with regional influences as diverse as salsa, zouk and soca. In Martinique, Xtrem Jam combines traditional *bélé* singing, *gwo ka* and hip hop rhythms with the melodies of Algerian Rai. The Guadeloupean Carnival band Akiyo, similar in style to a Bahian Afro Bloco with their array of *gwo ka* drums and percussion are spine tingling with powerful lyrics linking past to future.

It seems then that Caribbean Carnival music, intuitively accessible to anyone with a sense of rhythm, of collective celebration, is a dynamic bridge-builder. It was forged in its diverse but interrelated forms in the one region of the world where different cultures have been able to creatively bridge the legacies of oppression, exploitation and fundamentalism.

Yet the very Creole expressions of this multi-culture depend for their aesthetic survival and development on resisting homogenisation and on finding new ways to reinterpret old traditions, while responding creatively to the present and future. As the renowned St Lucian jazz composer, multi-instrumentalist and director of the West Indies jazz band Luther Francois notes, 'We have so many rhythms in the region, the challenge is to liberate them.' We need only take a glance at the phenomenal global success of Cuban music to realise the validity of Francois' statement.

# Claudia Roden. Food and Time in Place

By Sami Zubaida  
*Prince Claus Awards 1999*

## 03

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# Claudia Roden. Food in Time and Place

## By Sami Zubaida

Claudia Roden's (1936, Egypt) distinguished career as a food writer and broadcaster includes many glittering achievements in various fields, ranging from coffee and picnics to Italian and Mediterranean food. She has written many great books which richly deserved their success. Claudia's television programmes have conveyed her enthusiasm and warmth, as well as her extensive knowledge, and have been much enjoyed by a wide audience. Of all her many accomplishments, however, 'A Book of Middle Eastern Food' (1968 and 1985) and 'The Book of Jewish Food' (1997) stand out as the brightest.

In a significant sense, Claudia Roden created the genre of Middle Eastern food. It is only when the common themes and their variations are recorded that we begin to see a distinct entity, uniting the households and communities that practice this cuisine in a common culture. Generations of anglophone readers, including many from the region itself, have eagerly explored this food from Claudia's recipes. Wherever I go, I am asked if I know the book, and people consider me with awe when I say that Claudia is my friend. And the relationship between author and readers is not one-way. In the introduction to the second edition of the book (1985), Claudia relates how the people she met from the Middle East were forever telling of their culinary passions and revealing their secrets: her pockets and drawers were full of recipes entrusted to her. She receives letters from far and wide, commenting on particular recipes. I recall Claudia talking about the great passions aroused by how much parsley you include in a tabbouleh in relation to the quantity of cracked wheat. The second (revised) edition of the book reflected this interaction with readers: the genre was more firmly established, people started to think of their food as 'Middle Eastern'!

Claudia's books feature inspiring recipes, but they are clearly not just recipe books: they constitute a veritable ethnography and history of the kitchen and the table. She is always fascinated by the genealogy of recipes, dishes and ingredients and the continuities between the past and the present. Drawing on scholarly studies of Arabic manuscripts on food, by A.J. Arberry, Maxime Rodinson and others, she gives her readers a vivid picture of the tables which adorned the high society of the Arab world in its golden age. And she marvels at the continuity of tastes, techniques and combinations of ingredients: when we pound, shape and stuff in our modern kitchens, we are repeating the actions of our ancestors of centuries past. She also traces the migrations of recipes and ingredients – how much European cookery of the Middle Ages and early modern times owed to the Persian and Arab traditions, and examples of the survival of some of these themes right into the present. Mint sauce (with vinegar and sugar), the traditional accompaniment to roast lamb on English tables is but a survival from ancient Persia transmitted by the Arabs through the Crusades! Claudia conveys her historical enthusiasm to her readers: those looking for that perfect recipe for a dinner party are also treated to a lesson on its history and cultural resonance – and they love it.

In addition to the excursions into history, the introductions to Claudia's books contain a wealth of ethnographic detail, on the process of cooking, the etiquette of serving, the manners of the table, the sequence and ritual of the meal, all illustrated with anecdotes, proverbs and folk tales. And it does not end in the introduction, but continues with the presentation of the different foods and the recipes. Tales are related of the context in which the author encountered the recipes, or folk tales concerning that item of food, featuring such mythic comings as Juha or Nasr-Eddin Hoja (popular characters in Middle Eastern folklore). The ethnography also includes culinary 'fieldwork' – how the author came by the foods and recipes – for she is a tireless explorer of markets and kitchens, and a collector of their secrets and crafts. It starts with the absorbing tales of her family and childhood and then turns to the various kitchens and cooks she

has encountered and observed (Claudia is always generous in acknowledging her sources). Eating at Claudia's table and watching her at work in her kitchen, one relives these encounters in the narratives and anecdotes which animate the conversation.

Nowhere is this ethnographic flare more evident than in 'The Book of Jewish Food' (1997), subtitled 'An Odyssey from Samarkand and Vilna to the Present Day'. The opening chapter is entitled 'A celebration of roots: of generations past, vanished worlds, and identity'. Here we find the most vivid descriptions of the Egyptian Jewish milieu of Claudia's origins, so vivid that you can almost hear the sizzling of the pan, smell the garlic and aromatics, taste the cooking and feel the warmth and humour of the domestic scene. The book then embarks on a breathtaking tour de force of the Jewish communities throughout the world, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, with their various divisions. The account of the Sephardi world ranges in time and space from ancient Baghdad, Arab Spain and the Ottoman world to chapters on Georgia, Salonika, Yemen and the three Jewish communities of India. It includes sections with intriguing titles such as 'Tunisia – Berbers and Livornese'; 'Morocco – Legacies from Baghdad and Andalusia in the Berber World'; and, oddly, in the middle of all this, 'About My Aunt Regine'! Autobiography and history are entangled in a fascinating mosaic of narratives. This must certainly be one of the best books ever to be written about the Jewish world in all its diversity and variety. Food is the focus and the motor which drives the book, but the result is much more: a comparative ethnography of the Jewish communities of the world, in a style which makes it a joy to read.

In these colourful ethnographies and histories which animate Claudia's books, something very valuable is demonstrated: the cosmopolitan and hybrid nature of the Middle East for much of its history. In our time the forces of ethnic and religious nationalism are trying to rewrite that history to suit their narrow visions of national or doctrinal 'authenticity', and to close the door on the vitality of that diversity. Claudia's work is an inspiration – through food, drink and conviviality – for the many who work for an open, cosmopolitan world society which includes our region.

# Hasan Saltik. The Modernity of Musical Archeaology

By Zulfu Livaneli  
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# Hasan Saltik and Kalan Music.

## The Modernity of Musical Archaeology

By Zulfu Livaneli

Hasan Saltik and his record company Kalan Music have a unique place – almost an avant-garde position – in Turkish music. A man of principals and ideals, Hasan Saltik is dedicated to a mission to prove that it is possible to survive and succeed in the music market by producing high quality albums that embody a certain ethical and political stand without surrendering to the general drive for profit making. Many music critics and intellectuals agree on the quality and value of his productions and praise him for the priceless contributions he has made to the protection and promotion of the musical heritage of Anatolia and the neighbouring Ottoman territories. Through his sensitivity to the multi-ethnic and multi-religious cultural background of these lands and his archaeological approach, he has saved from extinction the works of many musicians and a wide variety of unusual forms and genres in the region's ethnic musical traditions. In a period of 10 years, Saltik has created a niche in the market for musicians and works which would sink into oblivion without his care and attention. Hasan Saltik is a true music lover whose tastes and appreciation are unmatched in the field of Turkish music. His work is the best witness of the man.

Born in 1965 in Tunceli, the son of a Kurdish mother and a Turkish father, Hasan Saltik came to Istanbul when he was nine years old. He started studying at the State Conservatory in the city but had to leave before long due to economic difficulties. His professional life in the music industry started in his uncle Rahmi Saltik's record company. In 1991, with very limited capital, he founded Kalan Music at a time when state control of radio, TV and the media in general was loosened and the Turkish music industry was beginning to grow. In a market where neither the local nor the foreign record companies concerned themselves with productions of local music and where Turkish pop albums were almost mass produced, consumed immediately and forgotten, Saltik was resolute in moving in a quite different direction. His goal of finding, preserving and promoting the local music culture, in all its abundance and variety, was what distinguished and still distinguishes Kalan Music from other recording companies. More than 10 years have passed since the establishment of Kalan Music, and Saltik and his company are still true to their goals and ideals. In those few years, Saltik has brought into existence a diverse and extensive archive that includes music not only from our country but related creativity from all over the world. This archive keeps on growing and Saltik keeps on sharing it with us.

Hasan Saltik embraces not only the old but also the new. He produces albums of contemporary musicians and of folk music by Armenian, Greek, Kurdish, Laz and Gypsy peoples. His most outstanding project is the Archive Series through which he brings to life the real depth and richness of our musical traditions. The Archive Series throws light on the history of musical performance in Anatolia, documenting the development of the repertoire and the schools of performance, and acting as an important source of inspiration for new interpretations and renditions. In preparing the albums of the Archive Series, Kalan Music operates to the demanding standards of a musical studies and cultural research centre. Saltik consults and co-operates with advisors who are distinguished researchers and collectors in their own fields, and the resulting productions are of interest not only to serious music lovers but also to professionals and academics.

The Archive Series includes historically important examples of Turkish classical music that revive forgotten styles of singing, such as the *gazel*, but its greatest value lies in its introduction of Anatolian folk music in its various *ashik* traditions, its ethnic and regional multiplicity of languages, styles and forms. Different *ashik* performances, Armenian music from Anatolia, Assyrian music, Kurdish folk music,

Pontus and Laz music are some of the albums released in this series. Ironically, the Republican cultural project to promote folk music as a national value had impoverished local traditions – the personal styles of *ashiks*, the regionally different ways of singing and playing the *saz*, were stripped of their authentic local character and were standardised. Kalan Music productions are unique in that they revive these vivid and specific types of music-making in their genuine and substantive individuality.

Hasan Saltik's Kalan Music emerged almost as an archaeological institution that discovers long lost and neglected musical traditions and brings them back to life in their authentic versions. Saltik's cultural mission of representing the richness of the musical heritage of Anatolia has important implications in terms of democracy and human rights. With his productions, he not only creates a taste and a market for little-known musical traditions but also claims and opens up public platforms for the many languages and cultures of Anatolia which have, until now, been largely excluded from this space. Thanks to his productions, people in Turkey rediscover forgotten pleasures, develop new sensibilities and are encouraged to appreciate the worth of diverse cultural expressions. At a time when issues of identity and self-definition are at the top of our agenda, Saltik's work promotes tolerance and understanding of difference, and makes possible social and cultural exchange between parts of society that were long disconnected. The greatest thing is that Saltik does it only and only by way of music. There is one thing I would like to say to him: Dear Hasan Saltik, thank you.

# Baaba Maal. The modern griot

By J.H. Kwabena Nketia  
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## Baaba Maal. The modern griot

By J.H. Kwabena Nketia

The path to citizenship in our contemporary world of music is by no means an easy one for the African musician who reaches out to communities of taste other than his own. At every turn he must not only learn to overcome the challenges of intercultural communication by exploring areas of mutual responsiveness to the full; he must also ensure that the distinctive contribution which, he brings, as an imaginative and sensitive creative artist and a culture-bearer of an African music tradition, comes out loud and clear. As Baaba Maal has clearly demonstrated in his music, which is widely acclaimed both at home and abroad, such an approach, allowing an artist to express his own individuality or cultural identity, does not detract from the intrinsic value of his music when he really has 'something to say' or an experience to share in musical terms with others.

Unlike many African musicians who go through formal western education and conservatory training before they become aware of the intrinsic value of their own musical traditions and who then make the effort to rediscover it as 'source material', Baaba Maal was lucky to have begun with the music of his cultural environment in the formative period of his life. Those of us who were fortunate enough to have had the same start appreciate the importance of not going in the reverse order, for acquiring the musical language of one's culture and its procedures through enculturation enables a person to create his own tunes and melodies in the authentic style of his culture. It was natural, therefore, for Baaba Maal to decide to draw on his own tradition when he chose to be a professional musician, rather than the tradition which was then in vogue. He felt that he should put his emphasis on the development of the melodic and vocal styles he knew from childhood, for he was confident that this would be the strength and a vital source of enrichment of his performance style.

What is remarkable when one listens to Baaba Maal's music is the consistent manner in which he has developed his own type of authenticity from this, for whatever forms and materials he adopts, certain characteristics emerge distinctly as his stock-in-trade. These include, for example, his vocal techniques, the quality and strength of his voice projection, the use of particular types of ornaments in vocal and instrumental lines as well as his choice of scale types or modes. There are also the varying metrical framework and tempo which he employs for specific sets of songs, the various performance procedures that structure the music as it unfolds, the choice of different ostinato patterns over which he sings in a free-flowing or declamatory style that enables him to break his musical lines or verbal statements with appreciable moments of silence, vocal interpolations, prolonged notes that create suspense and short rhythmic configurations that recur at fixed points within successive phrases – procedures that transfer to the melodic section the features of 'play' that abound in percussion ensembles. The manner in which he creates and maintains energy levels and focal points in his music is also noteworthy. All these usages together define the sensibility which he brings to a performance and which he shares with members of his performing group through the participatory strategies that guide their performance.

Naturally, he draws on whatever defines the collective base of popular music as an international idiom, including sound sources, as well as what belongs in generic terms to Africa, including those evident in the music of the African diaspora, which he recognised very early in his career. What is again remarkable is the manner in which his awareness of the wider world of music, and the opportunities it offers to all musicians, has led him to combine tradition and modernity in an almost seamless manner as he responds to different contexts of creativity and performance, for his philosophy is that 'there should be no apartheid in music'. He should be free to perform in Senegal, South Africa, France or the United Kingdom. He should be free to choose any instruments he wants that meet his

scale of values, for he has learned to be at home with the kora and the acoustic guitar and can express himself in his own terms with either of them or both. Similarly, he does not allow his consciousness of identity to stifle his imagination or spirit of adventure, to isolate him from what modern technology has to offer or prevent him from borrowing secondary materials or formal models from other sources, as he does, for example, in his celebrated piece entitled 'African Woman' (1995), in which he consciously fuses the propulsive energy of a Cuban form with forms from his own background. He does all this as a mature musician willing to explore intercultural forms, without submerging or losing in the process his distinctive 'African voice' and modes of expression.

Turning from Baaba Maal's creative philosophy to his personal life and outlook, one is impressed by the strong link between the role he assumes as a cultural activist among his own people and the sentiments he expresses in his songs. His early upbringing has taught him that music is not only something to be enjoyed but also a medium for the communication and sharing of thoughts and sentiments. Aware of the minority status of his own people (Haalpular), the iniquities of the caste system, the plight of women and children and the abuse of human rights by some political regimes, he uses the song as a medium for raising levels of consciousness as well as for development intervention. He plays a variety of leadership roles in his society, performs with young people and at one time in his career performed with his group in several villages in his area. As he himself puts it, he never turns his back on people. It is no wonder, therefore, that he is regarded by young people in his area as a role model and that he has the 'Association des amis de Baaba Maal' named after him. He is seen not only as an entertainer but also as a teacher and messenger – a modern griot. Hence his ideal is not that of the professional musician who keeps to himself and his art or looks at the traditions of his culture only as a source for his art. He is conscious of the spiritual and cultural bonds that bind him to his people. Hence he is driven not only by his artistic inclinations but also by a strong sense of mission. Perhaps it is this rather than his brush with conservatory training that has led some observers to describe him as 'the intellectual among Senegalese musicians', for whatever he learned, he did not turn his back on the performance practices of his people.

Baaba Maal has clearly come a long way along the path to citizenship in our contemporary world of music. Not only is he in the forefront of African popular music, but he is now adjudged to be close to the peak of his development as a creative performer. Indeed, following the rousing reception he received at a recent concert in Festival Hall in London, some western critics now see him as the 'greatest African performer of the nineties and the latest Third World contender for star status in the West'. This is a recognition which all of us in the African world of music would be proud to celebrate when it becomes a reality, because we strongly believe that he deserves it. Meanwhile it is a pleasure and great pride to recognise his singular contribution to culture and development through music.

# Bhutan Archery Federation. Revitalising Tradition

By Françoise Pommaret  
*2004 Prince Claus Awards*

## 06

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# Bhutan Archery Federation

## Revitalising Tradition

by Françoise Pommaret

The decision by the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development to acknowledge the Bhutan Archery Federation for its athletic and socio-cultural achievements makes the whole of Bhutan happy and proud. A small kingdom tucked in the Eastern Himalayas between two giants, China and India, and with only around 750,000 inhabitants, Bhutan has never been conquered by any colonial power. In the past, archery was the country's main defence against foes and invaders, and Tibetan warriors as well as British emissaries and soldiers have praised the skill of the Bhutanese archers with their lethal arrows dipped in deadly aconitum. Archery was not used for hunting in Bhutan. Being devout Buddhists, the Bhutanese will not kill an animal unless it is absolutely necessary and hunting as a pastime is inconceivable.

At the beginning of the 20th century, with the advent of the monarchy, the country was more peaceful and archery became a competitive game between village teams. The skills of the village archers are extraordinary – accurately shooting an arrow with a bamboo bow at a small target, one hundred and ten metres away, and often, because of the nature of the terrain in Bhutan, the target is on the other side of a ravine.

Many religious beliefs are intrinsically interwoven into the traditional game, even if these are not visible to the outsider. Winning a match against the next village is a momentous event and a national identity marker of such importance that the local deities are summoned for help through special rituals. Girls from the village dance, sing and make bawdy comments about the rival team in order to make them lose concentration.

Deeply ingrained in the Bhutanese psyche, all these elements combine to uphold archery as a part of the intangible culture of Bhutan, a local heritage not simply a sport. Archery is linked with the villagers' identity and with the nation itself. It bonds Bhutanese together not only by specific technique and skills but also through the weight of its historical and religious values.

However, although Bhutan had the human resources and a long tradition, its archery was not compatible with international standards and styles. Moreover traditional archery was seen, because of cultural concepts, as a man's game. A woman cannot touch a bow. When the skills of the Bhutanese archers became internationally known it was immediately assumed they would enter international arenas and competitions, but there were hurdles. One obstacle was the style of shooting. While the Bhutanese archer shoots with a bent body and the arrow pointing more towards the sky, the international archer stands straight, feet apart, the upper body slightly turned and the bow in a vertical position. In addition, the Bhutanese archer uses a bamboo bow quite unlike the international equipment. The challenge was to introduce the international styles and standards in the country while keeping traditional archery alive with all its decorum and beliefs.

To meet this challenge, the Bhutan Archery Federation was formed in the early 1980s. It started scouting the country and telling people that yes, women could shoot arrows. It brought male and female archers to be trained in the capital Thimphu, first, by coaches from the US on short assignment and then, later, the Federation recruited Korean coaches for long-term contracts. The first 'international style' archers were also the first Bhutanese athletes to participate in the Olympics Games. Although the stress of the fierce competition in Los Angeles in 1984, the lack of previous international exposure, and the relatively short training period did not bring any medal, archery as an international sport was launched in Bhutan.



Today, the athletes train in difficult conditions compared to other countries but they are totally dedicated and hard working. They have a sense of mission and are proud to be ambassadors for their country on the world's sporting stage. They compete regularly in regional tournaments in South Asia and South-East Asia, and their Olympic standards have tremendously improved. At the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Bhutan and the Federation saw a young woman, Tshering Choeden, beating athletes who are ranked in the world's first 15. The Bhutan Archery Federation, whose president, Lyonpo Kunzang Dorje, is a minister and a keen archer himself, has come a long way since the early 1980s. It has infused professionalism, a sense of competition and growing self-assurance in these international athletes.

At the same time, the Bhutan Archery Federation has streamlined and revitalised the world of traditional archery by organising several tournaments a year and by reviewing the rules. Amongst recent innovations is the separation of archers playing with traditional bamboo bows from those using western-style compound bows. In the 1980s and early 90s, both kinds of bows could be used in a traditional archery game in urban centres, giving an unfair advantage to those using a compound bow – those who could afford such an expensive piece of equipment. Despite such alterations, the game has so far retained the elements which are inherent in its traditions: rituals to the local deities, sarcasm against the opponents, specific gender roles and fierce demonstrations of village or team identity.

While the Bhutan Archery Federation has put tremendous work and endeavour into introducing the international archery game to Bhutan, it has not neglected the traditional game, which is deeply rooted in the social history of the country. It has given archery new vigour and anchored it in the present time with sponsors and cash prizes. Because of its pragmatic outlook, its understanding of the international challenges and its upholding of the ancestral archery traditions of the country, the Bhutan Archery Federation is truly an excellent representative of the aims of the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development. Through its activities in the field of sports, the Bhutan Archery Federation harmoniously blends the two components: culture and development.

# The Art of African Fashion. Writing contemporary African and world history

By Aminata Damane Traoré  
*1998 Prince Claus Awards*

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## African Fashion.

### Writing contemporary African and world history

By Aminata Dramane Traoré

The Prince Claus Fund has decided to pay tribute to the art of African fashion, represented by the designers Alphadi (Niger, 1957), Oumou Sy (Senegal, 1952) and Tetteh Adzedu (Ghana, 1949), turning the spotlight on African talent, knowledge and know-how (both traditional and modern), which interweave to give shape, colour and life to our hope.

Clothing is the message, and the clothed body is brimming with meaning, in Africa as elsewhere. Affluent, technological, standardised societies tend to forget the meaning of this two-fold relationship between ourselves and our clothing and between the clothed body and other people (whether they are in our immediate vicinity or further away). Whether conventional, collusive or rebellious, clothing ultimately enables us to be ourselves with and among other people – sometimes the same as them, sometimes not. Clothing is the bearer of our, and society's, images of ourselves, of our desires and impulses. Fashion comes into being as soon as a member of the community – a designer – creates something unusual which is taken up by the group and worn for some length of time. In Africa's present-day context, in which its designers are drawing considerably on their cultural and historical heritage, fashion provides a link between past, present and future. It is a search for identity, an assertion and a projection into the future. It involves both being and appearing to be. In the past, appearing to be was subordinate to being, which was of primary importance because it was imbued with the breath of life and communicated it to clothing as though it were a second skin. In many African societies, witch doctors and marabouts were, and still are, able to reach someone by handling a piece of clothing which that person has worn.

In addition to this profound, intimate bond, clothing conveyed information about the wearer's age, sex, ethnic background and socio-economic status. The clothing, hairstyles and ornaments which Peul girls once wore, and in some circles still wear, distinguish them from Bozo or Bamanan girls. Within each ethnic group, the bride's trousseau consists of clothing which marks the passage to adulthood. In most cases the colours and patterns also convey messages and social values. Weddings, as well as births and funerals, are occasions for forming and consolidating social bonds by making gifts and counter-gifts of fabrics, as well as kitchen utensils for the bride.

The changes wrought by fashion in recent years have blurred national boundaries. The clothing traditions of the various ethnic groups and cultures are now shifting and interacting to create a new African aesthetic which includes a universal element. The people of coastal and central Africa now wear boubous and bogolan, while kente and raffia are now found in the countries of the Sahel. In industrialised Northern countries, many consumers are now tempted by the colours and patterns of African textiles. At the same time, a new generation of designers – from tailors to renowned stylists – has emerged. Not content merely to reproduce models from imported fashion magazines, they now appropriate, reinterpret and transcend them with the help of local know-how and materials such as cotton, wool, and fibre. In the course of this collective search for identity, African designers are also desperately seeking to be different, to find that special touch which will distinguish them from the rest.

Such dynamism could, and should, have served to boost Africa's textile industries. While they have attempted to take advantage of it by printing traditional patterns, in most countries they have now fallen into a slump from which they are having great difficulty in recovering. If African fashion has survived this slump in the African textile industry relatively unscathed, it is because local craftspeople have vigorously withstood the cultural onslaught.

It is a good thing for Africa in general, and more particularly for its thousands of craftspeople (such as weavers, dyers, tailors and embroiderers), its stylists and its models, that the Prince Claus Fund is helping to broaden the horizons of African textiles and fashion. The three designers chosen to represent the art of African Fashion and invited to receive the Principal 1998 Prince Claus Award, Alphadi (Niger, 1957), Oumou Sy (Senegal, 1952) and Tetteh Adzedu (Ghana, 1949) are helping to write contemporary African and world history.

# Biographies

## Aminata Dramane Traoré

Has been the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Mali since 1997. She is a cultural promoter and has founded and been active in various NGOs in the field of culture and development in Africa. She has published numerous reports, articles and books in this field, such as 'Author de la danse indansable' (1998) and 'Mains des Femmes' (1996), her autobiography.

## Paulin J. Hountondji

Is professor of Philosophy and is based in Benin. He founded the Inter-African Council for Philosophy, through which English-speaking philosophers are brought together, and where African-based philosophers in the Diaspora can exchange ideas. He is the author of 'African Myth and Reality' (1996 and 1976). Paulin Hountondji was awarded a Prince Claus Award in 1999.

## Sami Zubaida

Teaches politics and sociology at Birbeck College, University of London. He researches and writes on religion, ethnicity and nationalism in Middle East politics and society, and on food and culture. His publications include 'Islam, the People and the State' (2nd edition, 1993), 'Culinary Cultures of Middle East' (editor, with Richard Tapper, 1994) and 'Anthrobolojivyat al-Islam' (anthropology of Islam) (in Arabic, 1997).

## Simon Lee

Taught English, drama, media and film studies for the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) between 1974 and 1987. He helped draft the ILEA's anti-racist and anti-sexist policies and worked on development of multi-cultural/anti-racist/anti-sexist secondary school curricula. After moving to Trinidad in 1987 to teach, he joined the *Trinidad Guardian* in 1992 and has since written freelance for several publications, including *Islands International* magazine and the New York Times travel section. For *Caribbean World* (UK) and *Rhythm* magazine he has written a series of articles on Caribbean music. Lee has also contributed chapters on music, dance, the visual and arts and eco-tourism to the *Insight Guides to Hispaniola and Trinidad & Tobago*. He has won several awards for his travel writing. His book *Caribbean Musia-Mizik A Nou* (French Creole for Our Music).

## Zulfu Livaneli

Is an award winning singer, composer and social activist. He has composed over 300 songs, as well as the music for 30 films, five theatrical performances and one ballet. Well-known for his editorials, articles and essays, he is the author of a novel, *The Eunuch of Constantinople*, now in its seventh edition, translated into Spanish and English, and awarded best novel of the year by the Balkan Literary Award Foundation. He is also the director of three feature films: *Iron Earth*, *Copper Sky*, *Mist*, and *Shamaran*. In 1995, he was appointed Special Advisor to the Director General and Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO, working on culture in peace programmes, and he is a Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

## Joseph Kwabena Nketia

Is a composer and a musicologist. He is the Director of the International Center for African Music and Dance at the University of Legon, Ghana. In 1997 he received a Prince Claus Award for his outstanding contribution to the dissemination and advancement of knowledge relating to African music and the cross-fertilisation of traditional and contemporary musical forms and techniques.

## Françoise Pommaret

Has been associated with Bhutan for twenty-four years. She has a PhD in Anthropology and a diploma in Tibetan, is the author of several books and articles about Bhutan and Tibet, and is a Research Fellow at the National Centre for Scientific Research, France.

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