

RECORDED BY
MARJORIE SHOSTAK, MEGAN BIESELE, NICHOLAS ENGLAND



ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4315

Instrumental Music of the KALAHARI SAN



A !Kung San woman playing gut pluriarc. Photo by Megan Bieseles / Anthro-Photo



A !Kung San man playing a variation on the musical bow. Photo by Richard Lee / Anthro-Photo



A !Kung San woman playing metal pluriarc. Photo by Marjorie Shostak / Anthro-Photo

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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SIDE 1

1. Gut pluriarc with 3 men's voices.
2. Metal pluriarc with one woman's voice.
3. Gut hunting bow, solo.
4. Gut hunting bow with one man's voice.
5. Gut hunting bow with resonator and one man's voice.
6. Sitengena with one man's voice.

SIDE 2

1. Te bow with two women's voices.
2. Tin can bow solo.
3. Sitengena solo: "Rain Song."
4. Sitengena with one man's voice.
5. Gut pluriarc with one man's voice.
6. Metal pluriarc with one woman's voice.
7. Gut hunting bow with one man's voice.

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43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., 10023 N.Y., U.S.A.

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC OF THE KALAHARI SAN

Recorded by Marjorie Shostak*, Megan Biesele and Nicholas England

This tape, of approximately one hour, is intended as an introduction to the instrumental music of the !Kung San of northeastern Namibia (South West Africa) and of northwestern Botswana. The earliest recordings represented here date from the period 1951-55 when Nicholas England (Dean, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, California) accompanied the Marshall family (Peabody Museum, Harvard University) to the northeastern region of Namibia, to the isolated groups of !Kung following a traditional hunting and gathering mode of subsistence. The subsequent recordings date from the period 1969-1972 and were collected by Marjorie Shostak and Megan Biesele (Department of Anthropology, Harvard University) in the northwestern region of Botswana, among !Kung who sometimes followed their traditional ways, but who were increasingly learning the ways of their new agricultural and cattle-owning neighbors, the Tswana and Herero.

The instrumental music presented here, from both periods, is performed on traditional instruments--ones which rely on materials found in the natural environment--and on innovative instruments--ones which use materials, such as metal wire and cans, which can only be obtained through trade. The traditional instruments include the hunting bow (a wooden bow and gut string), the pluriarc (a wooden, guitar-like body with 5 gut strings), and the te bow (a vertical wooden post and gut string). In its "modernized" form, the base of the pluriarc is made of an empty gallon oil can while the strings are changed from gut to hair from the tail of a giraffe. The hunting bow is transformed by a metal wire in place of the gut string, and in another form, it has a tin can as a resonator. (See Nicholas England for exact description and photographs of these instruments.) Another instrument found only relatively recently among

the !Kung (30 years at most) is the sitengena, or "thumb piano" (wooden base and metal keys). Probably borrowed from neighboring peoples, it was one of the most highly favored and most often heard instruments among young people (1969-76).

San instrumental music is not generally performed before an audience with all the tension that isolation of the performer implies. Instead the people play for themselves, when the mood strikes them. Others nearby may go on with what they are doing, stop and listen, or join in.

The selections on the tape have been arranged to introduce the listener to the full range of this music, including short selections which emphasize the tonal colors of the various instruments and longer selections which help to convey the deeply moving, almost hypnotic effect of an individual's creative outpouring. For those who have seen the films, "The Hunters" or "Bitter Melons," on the !Kung by John Marshall (D.E.R., 5 Bridge St., Watertown, Massachusetts) the musical selections from the films may prove to be familiar.

*Inquiries should be sent to Marjorie Shostak, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.



A !Kung San man playing hunting bow. Photo by Irven DeVore/Anthro-Photo.

Side One

Band #1 Gut pluriarc with 3 men's voices. Music is on the sound track of "The Hunters." Recorded in Namibia by Nicholas England, 1951-55.

Band #2 Metal pluriarc with one woman's voice. Composed and sung by Hwan//a of !Xabe. Recorded in Botswana by Megan Bieseke, 1972.

Some of the words:

--Zhu zhu ku n//a mi o = People, people are talking about me, oh!

--We, we o mi ma, o we = Come, come to me my own, my very own.

--Zhu ku cha mi o = People are tricking me.

--Aiye, gu mi o, aiye, Mother, come take me.

Zhu ku n//a mi Mother, people are yelling at me.

Perhaps the meaning of the words is as follows:

She wants her lover to come to her but people are talking about it and saying things to her. Her final lament is to her mother, for her to come and take her away from all the talk.

Band #3 Gut hunting bow, solo. Played by #Tuma /We from Dobe. Recorded in Botswana by Marjorie Shostak, 1971.

Band #4 Gut hunting bow with one man's voice. Played by /"Tashay!Kumsi from !Xabi. Recorded in Botswana by Marjorie Shostak, 1971.

Band #5 Gut hunting bow with resonator and one man's voice. Played and sung by Uxone. Recorded in Namibia by Nicholas England, 1951-55.

Band #6 Sitengena with one man's voice. Played by /Ti!kay, also known as "Jimmy," from /Xai/xai. Recorded in Botswana by Marjorie Shostak, 1970.

Some of the words:

//Ganwa ku kainya mi God hates me, where

kuri mi ku o? //Ganwa = can I go? God, bad

chi dooli kuri mi ku n!n o. God, where can I

rest, oh!



!Kung San children at play. Photo by Marjorie Shostak/Anthro-Photo.

Jimmy is an unusual person. The words to his songs and his statements about himself are quite similar--he sees himself as very much alone and as having been ostracized by the community.

He claims that he goes into trance while playing the sitengena and that he communicates with the spiritual world this way. He says his songs come directly from this experience.

He is definitely one of the most innovative and influential musicians in the area. All his compositions are played by the children and he is said to have composed most of the songs everyone plays.

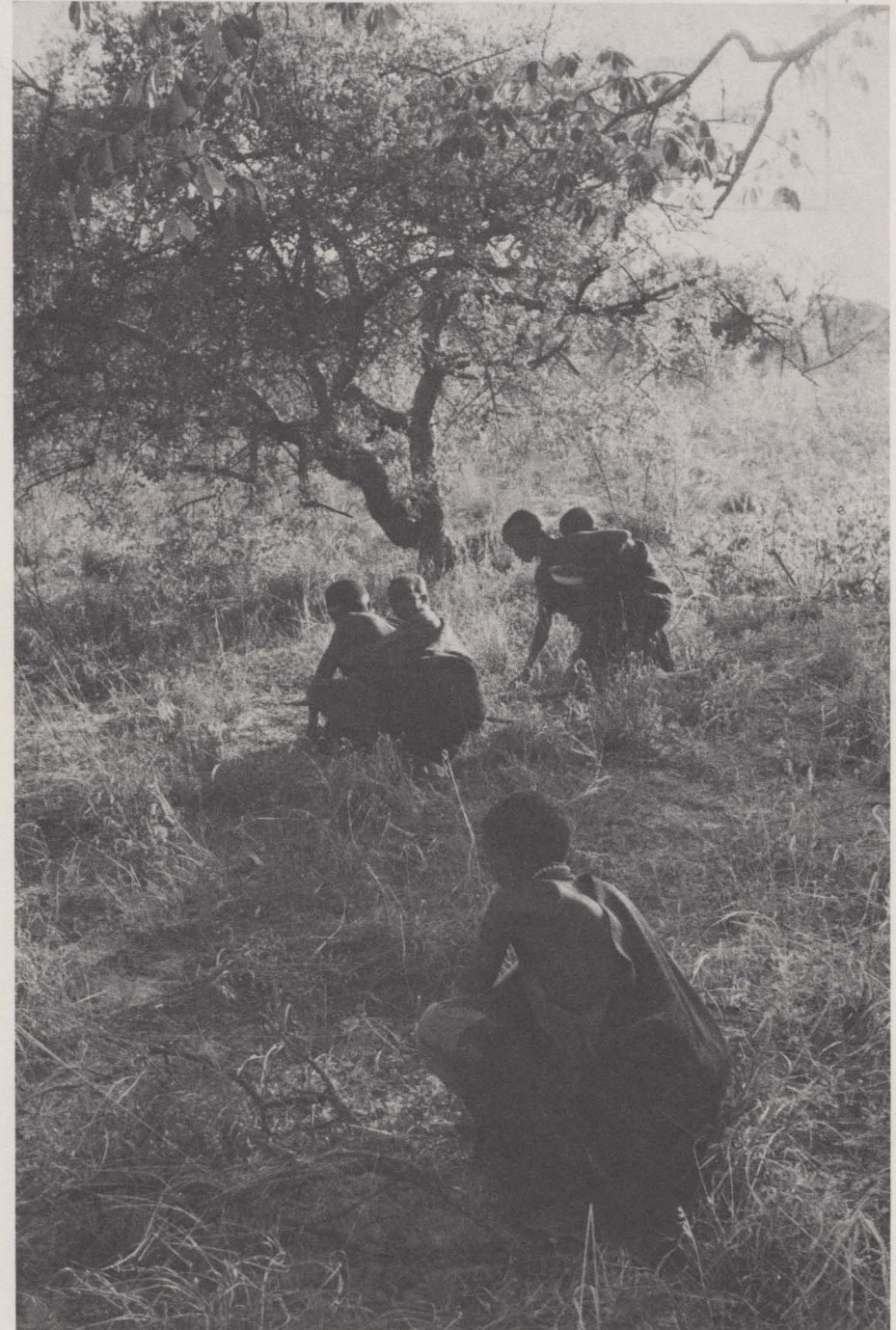
Side Two

- Band #1 Te bow with two women's voices. Recorded in Kauri, Botswana by Megan Bieseles, 1972.
- Band #2 Tin can bow solo. Recorded in Namibia by Nicholas England, 1951-55.
- Band #3 Sitengena solo: "Rain Song." Recorded in Kauri, Botswana by Megan Bieseles, 1972.
- Band #4 Sitengena with one man's voice. Played and sung by /Gau. Recorded in Namibia by Nicholas England, 1951-55.
- Band #5 Gut pluriarc with one man's voice. Recorded in Namibia by Nicholas England, 1951-55. Music is on sound track of "The Hunters."
- Band #6 Metal pluriarc with one woman's voice. Played and sung by Hwan//a of !Xabe. Recorded in Botswana by Megan Bieseles, 1972.
- Band #7 Gut hunting bow with one man's voice. Recorded in Namibia by Nicholas England, 1951-55. Music is on the sound track of "Bitter Melons."

Further Reading

Instrumental Music of the Kalahari San

1. Megan Bieseles, "Song Texts by the Master of Tricks: Kalahari San Thumb Piano Music," Botswana Notes and Records, vol. 7, pp. 171-188 (also available as reprint from the African and Afro-American Studies and Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin)
2. Nicholas England, "Music Among the Zu/wasi of South Western Africa and Botswana," Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968.
3. Nancy Howell, Demography of the Dobe !Kung (Academic Press, New York), 1979.
4. Richard Lee, The !Kung San (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England), 1979.
5. Richard Lee and Irven DeVore (eds.), Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts), 1976.
6. Lorna Marshall, The !Kung of Nyae Nyae (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts), 1976.
7. Marjorie Shostak, Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.), 1981.



!Kung San women gathering food. Photo by Marjorie Shostak/Anthro-Photo.



7. A !Kung San man resting. Photo by Marjorie Shostak/Anthro-Photo.



A !Kung San mother and child. Photo by Marjorie Shostak/Anthro-Photo.

FE 4316 HEALING DANCE MUSIC OF THE KALAHARI SAN.

Produced by Richard Katz, Megal Biesel and Majorie Shostakin 1983.
Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Healing Dance songs, !kia dances. Giraffe Dance songs, Dances,
Trees and Drum Dances. 1-12" LP with notes.