

Institution: SOAS
Unit of Assessment: 35 Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts
Title of case study: Using musical tradition as a tool for teaching and protecting languages and cultures in South Sudan (Angela Impey)
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The Republic of South Sudan (RSS) has endured decades of civil war, resulting in displacement, meagre infrastructure, and limited access to education, demonstrated by a literacy rate of just 27%. Dr Angela Impey's ethnomusicological research into the songs of RSS' largest ethnic group, the Dinka, and her music production skills, enabled her substantial involvement in the creation of two songbooks and accompanying CDs of traditional Dinka songs, annotated in Dinka and English. In a country where few languages have standardised orthographies, and mother-tongue texts are scarce, these resources constitute a unique contribution to literacy training and the preservation of local cultures.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Impey has been researching African music for the past twenty-five years. Since 2007, she has been a Lecturer in Ethnomusicology at SOAS, having previously lectured in her native South Africa. During a break from her academic career, she worked in public arts in southern Africa, and in social development in East Africa. She has published widely in the area of advocacy ethnomusicology, specifically on gender, land, memory and belonging, and has been actively involved in heritage music production and documentation.</p> <p>Much of Impey's work focuses on the politics and poetics of music in southern African borderlands. Since 2007, she has been researching memory as evoked by Nguni women's jews harp songs, resulting in a number of publications (notably outputs d and e). It also fostered Impey's interest in music as oral history, particularly for marginalised social groups, privileging unheard voices and offering a 'bottom-up' history which challenges official narratives. This emphasis on music as oral history renders Impey's work distinct within the discipline.</p> <p>Between 2009 and 2011, Impey acted as a co-investigator on the project 'Metre and Melody in Dinka Speech and Song', funded by the AHRC's 'Beyond Text' programme and led by the Department of Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh. The project investigated the interplay between traditional Dinka musical forms and the Dinka language, the largest language group in RSS and among the richest tonal languages in the world, yet lacking an established orthography and literature. Concomitantly, it examined how, in this overwhelmingly oral culture, Dinka song has responded to the intense disruptions and prolonged violence during decades of civil war.</p> <p>Dedicated linguists within the team produced an orthography for Dinka to be applied in transcribing and annotating popular children's and traditional songs. As the project's ethnomusicologist, Impey compiled and recorded an expansive collection of Dinka songs for transcription by her colleagues. Using this rich resource, she analysed songs as poetic autobiography, looking, for example, at their composition and circulation as audio-letters between RSS and the global Dinka diaspora (in output c). The project's overall findings make an important and altogether original contribution to studies of both linguistics and ethnomusicology, particularly in an African context; with the exception of Francis Mading Deng's 1973 book on song lyrics, no formal research had previously been conducted on Dinka music.</p> <p>Significant collaborative outcomes of this project to which Impey contributed substantially as compiler and producer were the 2012 publication of <i>Dance to the Drum of our Home: A Book of Dinka Children's Songs</i> (Malek with the collaboration of Impey et al. London: Mantra Lingua, 2012) and <i>Songs of the Dinka of South Sudan</i> (Impey. Plymouth: DMS, 2012). These books, featuring traditional songs fully annotated in the new Dinka orthography and in English, with accompanying</p>

CDs, are among the first written resources produced in Dinka, therefore crucial to meeting the new nation's need for universal mother-tongue literacy training. Moreover, the compilations contribute to the preservation of Dinka culture and identity, a concern central to post-conflict reparation.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- a. "The Poetics of Transitional Justice in Dinka Songs in South Sudan." *Discussion Papers, Research Unit on International Security and Cooperation (UNISCI)* 33 (2013): 57-77.
- b. "Songs of Mobility and Belonging: Gender, Spatiality and the Local in Southern Africa's Transfrontier Conservation Development." *Interventions: Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 15/3 (2013): 255-71.
- c. "Keeping in Touch via Cassette: Tracking Dinka Songs from Cattle Camp to Transnational Audio-letter." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 25/2 (2013): 197-210.
- d. "Songs of the In-Between: Remembering in the Land that Memory Forgot." In *Popular Music and Human Rights*, edited by Ian Peddie, 39-52. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

The 'Metre and Melody in Dinka Speech and Song' project was funded by an AHRC large grant (Start date: 01/01/2009. End date: 31/03/2012. Total amount awarded: £449, 708).

Details of the 'Metre and Melody in Dinka Speech and Song' project:

<http://projects.beyondtext.ac.uk/dinkaspeech/index.php> [Most recently accessed 15.11.13].

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The Republic of South Sudan (RSS) has some of the world's poorest indicators for education, due largely to decades of continual civil war. 1.3 million primary-age children are out of school, and only 10% of women are literate. Poor access to education is exacerbated by ongoing violence, insecurity, decimated infrastructure, and displacement. Consequently, there is a great need to rebuild civil society, integral to which is the vast improvement of literacy in this new nation.

A new Education Bill seeks both to improve literacy and protect the RSS' 63 native languages as a means to retain and celebrate local cultures, stipulating that all pupils be taught in their mother-tongue until Year 4 (and thereafter in English) (1, below). However, two fundamental problems hinder these objectives: most RSS languages do not have established orthographies, and hence there are almost no published resources for literacy training in native languages. The sets of CDs and books produced by Impey and the team – *Dance to the Drum of our Home* and *Songs of the Dinka of South Sudan*, aimed at children and adults, respectively - are thus ideally positioned to offer the first non-religious published resources to support universal literacy training in Dinka.

Reactions to the resources from those working in education in RSS have been overwhelmingly positive. Deng Yai, Undersecretary for Ministry of General Education and Instruction, stated:

"This resource is invaluable to us at this moment of education development in South Sudan. We are in the process of revising the curriculum framework to meet the needs and aspirations of the nation, and this includes the teaching of languages (...). Your materials will be valuable for use in Early Child Development and Primary education. But what you are doing is killing two birds with one stone: apart from teaching Dinka children to read in their own language, you are teaching them a great deal about their own culture. This is a very good beginning." (2)

The Dinka-speaking population of RSS is approximately 1.5 million, or 35.5% of the population. The number who could benefit from the resources is therefore great. To ensure their dissemination, they were in early 2013 distributed to schools, churches (who run literacy

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programmes), community centres, government ministries, and foreign NGOs promoting education. 500 copies of *Dance to the Drum...* were circulated to primary schools supported by USAID in Dinka-speaking states, for example. Ezra Simon of USAID notes:

"I have been in this job for two and a half years and this is the first time that I have been offered materials for education. All other materials are either religious or are extremely outdated. The CDs created quite a stampede in the office and we need more! They are so exciting and there is simply nothing like this anywhere in South Sudan." (3)

300 copies were donated to UNESCO's RSS literacy project whose Head of Literacy, Samuel Wollie, affirmed that the children's book "will be most useful for our literacy training (...) as it supports our philosophy of 'learning' by teaching language through song and performance." (5) 300 copies were also donated to DFID's consortium programme, which works closely with UNICEF, while 250 were distributed via Catholic Relief Services.

The CDs and books are also consistent with the Education Bill's emphasis on strengthening and preserving cultural heritage, offering recorded songs and, for the first time, written transcriptions in Dinka. The ability to assert a cultural identity is entwined with native language literacy and revitalisation, and is of particular significance to a population utterly demeaned by protracted war, and whose post-war insecurity and displacement still threaten native traditions.

Lodoviko Lual, Parliamentarian and Chair of Dinka Language Development Association (DILDA), attests to the resources' cultural importance:

"This is the first CD like this that is a document of Dinka history, and particularly of the war. This is a document that we can keep. It is not like the way our grandfathers remembered word for word, and when they died, the songs died with them. These documents will contribute toward the continuity of our culture." (4)

A national archive is being established in RSS and Impey's high-quality field recordings will form an important contribution to its holdings. Outside RSS, the collection is already in the British Library Sound Archive and the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands.

In their support of literacy and cultural celebration and preservation, the resources made possible by the research of Impey and her colleagues provide teachers, students, NGOs and other education providers in RSS and the Dinka diaspora with tangible, practical tools to strengthen a new and vulnerable national culture.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Details of South Sudan's forthcoming Education Bill: <http://blog.usaid.gov/2013/04/improving-education-in-south-sudan/> [Most recently accessed 15.11.13].
2. Deng Yai, Undersecretary of the Ministry of General Education and Instruction, Republic of South Sudan.
3. Ezra Simon, Foreign Service Officer, USAID.
4. Lodoviko Lual, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly of South Sudan, Parliamentarian and Chair of the Dinka Language Development Association (DILDA).
5. Samuel Wollie, Head of Literacy, UNESCO, South Sudan.
6. John Ryle, Director of the Rift Valley Institute, London.