

# **The Innovator and the Primitives: George Herzog in Historical Perspective**

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Looking back on the work and ideas of scholars of earlier times is a delicate task. In fields involving cross-cultural study, theories and methods rise and fall in popularity, sometimes seeming little more than trends. Yet each generation of scholars works earnestly within a historical context, drawing on ideas that they have determined help them best understand the complex world of human beings. Just as we ethnomusicologists attempt to describe the people we study according to their own cultural contexts, it is important to consider the historical context of previous scholars when analyzing their contributions to the historical unfolding of our field. Feigning a purely “objective” look at the past would be as dishonest as attempting an “objective” portrayal of another culture. In a study of intellectual history one’s own biases naturally guide one’s analysis. While one may attempt to judge the past fairly by taking into account the historical context, we can benefit most from the work of our academic ancestors by placing their sense of their own work clearly in contrast to our sense of the field today.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I embark on an analysis of the ideas of George Herzog. I began looking into Herzog’s correspondence between the years of 1927 and 1936 in the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music, hoping to find letters that Herzog may have sent from the field during his trip to Liberia in 1930. My goal was to explore Herzog’s relationship with a Liberian named Charles George Blooah, who had served as the informant for research Herzog and several of his colleagues undertook in the late twenties and thirties. Unfortunately, I found few letters in the Herzog collection directly involving Blooah. What I did find were letters sent back and forth between Herzog and many of his contemporaries in the fields of Anthropology and the study of primitive music. These letters reveal much about the ways Herzog was thinking about his work. With this information in mind, I then explored the

public presentation of Herzog's ideas as evidenced in newspaper articles and publications from around the same period.

I have woven these various threads, or voices, together, juxtaposing ideas and issues from numerous sources and from various times (1927-1952) to construct an analysis of Herzog's ideas about his work from this period of his career. Of interest are issues such as Herzog's sense of the definition of the field, the idea of primitive music as a study object, relationships between informant and researcher, authority, and representation. The result is a characterization of Herzog's ideas that is multi-dimensional; at times apparent contradictions emerge, but this is as much due to my method of constructing this paper as it is due to Herzog's development as a scholar. Some of his ideas seem outdated, as we may expect, while at other times his work predicts the shape of ethnomusicology to come in sometimes surprising ways. Again, my own biases as a late twentieth-century ethnomusicologist guide this analysis of Herzog. Comparing ideas from the past with my sense of the field today has helped me to gain a better sense of where we have been and where we are going as a discipline.

### **A "Specialist in Music"**

Herzog's studies of folk and primitive music began in Budapest, where he came into contact with the folk song research methods of Bartok and Kodaly. Moving on to Berlin in the early 1920s, Herzog studied under comparative musicologist Eric von Hornbostel. Hornbostel's methods, like those of Herzog's first teachers in Budapest, involved detailed transcription techniques and sound analysis. These methods, along with the wide, sweeping vision which undergirded Hornbostel's comparative approach, would continue to influence Herzog throughout his career. Herzog then came to the United States, bringing a part of the Berlin Archive with him, to study with Franz Boas at Columbia University. At Columbia, Herzog was trained in Boasian theories and methods, which included the concept of diffusion and extensive fieldwork method. Boas was explicitly critical of the comparative methods favored by Hornbostel (Boas 1896). But Herzog, in much of his work, drew upon theoretical and methodological elements of both of his mentors, combining Hornbostel's decontextualized sound analysis and comparative perspective with Boas's emphasis on fieldwork and diffusion. From a historical perspective, Herzog can be viewed as a link between two significant historical eras and schools of thought in ethnomusicological scholarship. Later in his career, Herzog moved on to Indiana University, where he taught, researched, and founded the archive known today as the Archives of Traditional Music.

Just as Herzog combined extant methods and ideas in his training and later research, he seemed to want to identify himself as a cross-disciplinary

scholar. He believed that the study of primitive musics must become a unified field. Herzog published *Research In Primitive and Folk Music of the United States* in 1936 partially as an attempt to characterize and unify what he considered a field in need of unity both in terms of theory and method. First of all, Herzog wanted to finally professionalize the study of primitive and folk music by emphasizing the need for serious training. Much of the early collecting and studying of primitive music had been amateurish in Herzog's estimation, and he wanted his book to direct the course of the field toward more serious study by trained professionals. Furthermore, Herzog wanted to unify the various disciplinary threads of the field.

Considering the amount of undirected effort and the lack of cooperation between the various interests involved—anthropological, historical, musical, etc.—it has seemed that a general survey of the field, such as is here attempted, might facilitate future efforts. (Herzog 1936a:ii)

Ethnomusicologists have seemingly always concerned themselves with defining and aligning the field in relation to other disciplines in the academy. Herzog often wrote of the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation and, at different points in his career, aligned the study of primitive music with different related disciplines. For example, the following quote demonstrates Herzog's personal Hornbostel-Boas dichotomy:

As for the proper position of this orphan discipline, it is just as important for the study of primitive music to retain its close connection with the field of Anthropology, as to stimulate the interest of the historical musicologist. (1990 [1942]:208)

The foreword of *Research in Primitive and Folk Music* shows Herzog clearly attempting to orient the direction of the discipline, as he asserts that the study of primitive and folk music concerns students of culture, anthropologists, comparative musicologists, psychologists, and musicians, as well as the lay public (1936a:i). Still later in his career, while at Indiana, Herzog stated in a newspaper article that research in primitive and folk music connects anthropology, folklore, and musicology (Hafner 1949:1). This reflects, to some extent, the way the idea of ethnomusicology has been constructed at Indiana University. Evidently, Herzog's notion of his field's relationship to the other fields in the academy evolved and transformed over time. In a 1932 letter to Herzog, Berkeley anthropologist Alfred E. Kroeber further reveals Herzog's conception of his work. While I did not locate Herzog's letter to which Kroeber here responds, nor do I know whether or not Herzog wrote back addressing these points, Kroeber's

voice in this dialogue implies certain emphases in the field and sheds light on Herzog's sense of himself as a scholar.

Let me offer a word of advice. . . . I mean about your not wanting to be listed as an anthropologist and preferring the rank of specialist in Music within anthropology. I think you are quite wrong. You know we are getting older all the time, and there is time to narrow intellectual horizons when all the enthusiasm of youth deserts us. Don't close yourself in. You have worked on language, general ethnology, folklore, and social organization and law in the field, besides music. . . . Everyone of any account is at heart a specialist in one way or another. But if you allow others to call you that, they take it for granted you know nothing at all but your specialty. . . . It isn't what you actually teach that constitutes you one thing or another—it's the TITLE they give you. NAMES are more important than they seem. . . . How do you know for sure what you will want to be doing twenty years from today? For all you know you may want to try to swing into philosophy. As an anthropologist, without other name tags, you have some chance. (Kroeber 1932:1-3)

I find it fascinating that Herzog preferred the title "specialist in Music" to describe the work he did. Kroeber appears to have believed that the term "specialist in Music" implied a specialization in music sound, perhaps reflecting a notion that, in 1932, the study of music was still largely seen as the study of music sound. Herzog, on the other hand, related music to the rest of society and utilized a wide range of approaches, many of which could be considered legitimate within the field of ethnomusicology today. This letter reflects the fact that at this time a wide range of interests was acceptable within anthropology, but not within the study of music. One could study music within anthropology, but the study of primitive music itself, in the eclectic manner in which Herzog approached it, was not yet in itself a recognized discipline. While Herzog's battle to label himself may not have been of any grand consequence, his approach to music to some extent foreshadowed the shape of ethnomusicology to come, a point to which I will often return. Kroeber's letter demonstrates the role that informal communication between scholars has had in shaping the parameters of the very notion of the study of music.

Despite Herzog's sometimes forward-looking tendencies, his work naturally reflects the fact that he lived in very different times from our own. Explicitly comparative work was the rule, not the exception as it is today, and evolutionary ideas were still very much in vogue. As demonstrated in a 1929 job offer to Herzog from the University of Illinois, courses in "general cultural evolution" (Hiller 1929:1) were standard. The musical and anthropological worlds were understood in broad terms on broad scales: trends

across time (evolution) and across space (diffusion). Comparative models dominated sociocultural research during Herzog's formative years. For example, Laura Boulton, in a 1933 letter to Herzog, made what we today would consider the sensible suggestion that there may be "as many general styles of Indian music as culture areas in the USA." Herzog responded that "no one has at the present time knowledge or material to substantiate statements of such a general nature" (1933:1). While this comment was based on the fact that intensive study of many individual Indian tribes' musics had not yet been accomplished, it also reflects Herzog's orientation toward the notion of a singular, "unified general picture" of Indian music (1990 [1942]:204).

Herzog wrote regularly on the subject of "Indian music," and his research tended to locate commonalities between tribes that enabled him to write in terms of broad generalities. Along with other students of Boas (such as Clark Wissler and Alfred Kroeber), and some of his ethnomusicological contemporaries (such as Helen Roberts), Herzog sought to establish native North American culture areas based on intensive, localized fieldwork. This was, as Anthony Seeger describes, a systematic attempt to "permit generalizations over a larger area, geographic or cultural, than the individually described 'tribe' or community" (1992b:98). In contrast to much earlier comparative work which focused on comparing musical *systems* of whole peoples, Herzog and his colleagues traced the diffusion of specific *styles* across geographical space. Stephen Blum writes:

Herzog followed Boas in rejecting the assumption that a "tribal style" must be "an integrated accumulation of songs endowed with the same features." To Herzog, the most evident distinctions were those, not of "tribal styles" but of "different categories of songs in use at the same locality." (Blum 1991:22 after Herzog 1934c:412-413)

This approach bears more resemblance to the work of late twentieth-century ethnomusicologists than does, for example, the comparative musicology of Hornbostel. In fact, Herzog's publications at times demonstrate a move in the direction of the localized orientation of much ethnomusicological work of our times. Just three years after the aforementioned letter to Boulton, Herzog wrote that "Every so-called primitive group has distinctive music" (1936a:5). That same year Herzog published an enormously detailed, contextually grounded study of Jabo proverbs (1936b). And, as early as 1934, he wrote, "we shall probably find at least a hundred distinct musical styles on the [African] continent" (1934c:13). On this point, one can see Herzog moving away from his first mentor Hornbostel, who in 1928 wrote that the work of

African music scholars would involve the “natural process of differentiating a unity” (Blum 1991:29 after Hornbostel 1928:39).

Another issue of great concern to Herzog was important to many scholars during this period: that distinctive, primitive musics were dying out. This notion fueled Herzog’s preoccupation with archives and preservation. Herzog’s worry is evident in a 1949 newspaper article about the establishment of what is today the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music: “there is the desire to preserve the music, much of which cannot be duplicated any longer” (Hafner 1949:1). In *Research in Primitive and Folk Music*, Herzog stated that interest in preservation was “perhaps stronger in the United States of America than anywhere else” because “our folk music proper is on the point of dying out, just as we are about to realize its significance” (1936a:i). One of Herzog’s prime motivations for writing this book when he did was that he saw the material disappearing rapidly (1936a:ii). It was important to him that “samples from the music of many Native American tribes have not been taken as yet, and ought to be, before it is too late” (1936a:ii). The urgency of this situation led Herzog to suggest a plan—never realized—of having a limited number of turntables constantly revolving at various field sites in North America. Likewise, Herzog believed that Liberian Jabo people’s arts, “like all other content of native cultures, . . . are bound soon to disappear under the increasing force of the impact of Western civilization” (1945:234).

Herzog was by no means alone in his concern for and interest in disappearing primitive culture. Herzog’s correspondence with *Harper’s* magazine in 1928 suggests that “primitive music” was “a present day fad” (letter from *Harper’s*:1928). Herzog acknowledged in a return letter to *Harper’s* that “general interest in the subject is growing,” although he was concerned that a 1928 article in *Harper’s* had misrepresented his field of study. Herzog the scientist came through in his comment that the views expressed in this article “have been found by recent controlled study to be inadequate” (Herzog 1928:1). Again, Herzog’s notion of the study of primitive music included the idea that only trained music specialists, utilizing scientific methods such as “controlled study,” should be engaged in the serious and urgent task of collecting and analyzing this rapidly disappearing material.

### Primitive Music as Study Object

The sources I explored for this paper also shed light on the ways scholars defined the notion of “primitive music” during the first half of this century. This notion had historical roots in the cultural evolutionary thought of late nineteenth-century scholars. Enlightenment and post-enlightenment academics believed that peoples of the non-industrialized world represented earlier stages in social and cultural evolution. From the vantage

point of the pinnacle of human cultural evolution—the industrialized West—these scholars compared primitive music to their own art music traditions. Primitive and folk musics were often described as more instrumentally linked to specific functions, more purely emotional, and resulting from simpler thought processes, than the music of the industrialized West. Before exploring the concept of “the primitive” in Herzog’s work, I will discuss the concept in a general manner to shed light on the context in which Herzog developed his ideas.

Richard Wallaschek’s *Primitive Music: An Inquiry Into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Instruments, Dances and Pantomimes of the Savage Races* (1893) is often cited as an example of early evolution-minded ethnomusicology. Like Hornbostel, Wallaschek analyzed musical forms out of their social contexts and compared them according to parameters based in western art music traditions. In his work, Wallaschek assumed that the late nineteenth-century represented “the epitome of development” (Seeger 1991:349), while he labeled the music he studied “primitive.” Seeger writes that Wallaschek “anticipated a great deal of subsequent writing when he argued that (primitive) music is not an abstract art, but one deeply entrenched in the rest of life” (Seeger 1991:349). Likewise, Bruno Nettl writes that early ethnomusicological literature dwelt on “the presumption that in simple prehistoric, folk, or tribal cultures people use music to accomplish certain ends, and that therefore this music is *functional*” (Nettl 1983:147). By comparison, western art music was believed to be abstract, a product of higher reason, and less connected with profane and mundane everyday activities than was the music of the primitive and the folk.

Notions such as these were founded on social distinctions between the enlightened, civilized world and the more emotive and less intellectually advanced non-civilized world. These distinctions informed musical scholarship of the day. As Nettl observes,

At one time, there was a tendency to recognize only two classes, Western art music in the one and everything else in the other. Soon, recognition of the fact that Asian cultures had a stratification of music not unlike that of Europe led to a tri-partite model, primitive, art, and folk music. Those cultures with an art music, that is, a kind of music performed by professionals who were highly trained and had the technical and speculative conceptualizations of music we call music theory, were also said to have, in other strata of society or in a different tradition, a folk music. The cultures with no such art music were thought to be “primitive” and thus to have “primitive” music. (1983:305)

In music of those peoples considered “primitive,” Hornbostel found evidence of what he termed a “low level of musical culture” which revealed

a “narrow range of consciousness” (Blum 1991:13 after Hornbostel). These low level musical cultures were thought to be more purely emotive. Seeger writes: “Non-Western societies were ascribed a ‘primitive’ affinity to emotion, and therefore to music and dance, which was believed to have been lost with the acquisition of ‘civilization’” (Seeger 1992b:95). Similarly, Bartok wrote about Hungarian peasant music styles that allowed for “spontaneous gratification of the musical instinct or impulse” (1976 [1933]:81).

Curt Sachs found pre-consciousness in primitive music, in which “imitation and the involuntary expression of emotion precede all conscious sound formation. . . . Ecstasy in the broadest meaning of the word dominates the throat as well as the limbs” (Sachs 1937:175). Likewise, Hornbostel described primitive conceptualizations of music based on the sound of singing itself: “primitive singers . . . do not retain in the memory a tone system established once and for all” so “they can vary the intonation of intervals within the widest limits according to mood and expressive needs” (Blum 1991:15 after Hornbostel). Additionally, many scholars ascribed aspects of music sound itself to the primitive realm. Nettl writes that Wilhelm Wundt, for example, asserted that “primitive peoples have monophonic singing and use intervals rather like those of nineteenth-century Western music” (Nettl 1983:36).

Herzog identified certain characteristics of music sound as “common to most if not all primitive music” (1990 [1942]:205):

The strongly descending trend of melody, the avoidance of metrical regularity in rhythm for which our classical music has a predilection, the comparative flexibility of intonation which is connected with the dearth of musical instruments with fixed tones, the absence of music writing, of analytic theory and an awareness of units of musical construction (tones, intervals, phrases and the like), and the fact that melody is not used for emphasizing or illustrating the dramatic, emotional, or pictorial content of the song text. (1990 [1942]:205)

These were the musical tendencies of those culture groups whom Herzog later identified, in a request for sabbatical, as “backward peoples” (Herzog 1956:2). It is important to note that this list of characteristics obviously was constructed from the perspective of, or more clearly, counter to the most common properties of, western art music. These characteristics then served to justify dividing up the world into, basically, two halves—the civilized (where, again, the “folk” also resided) and the primitive.

Despite the vast differences separating various peoples of primitive distinction, they were identified as a singular entity. It made perfect sense, then, for Herzog to discuss, in one short article ("Speech-Melody and Primitive Music"), the relationships between speech and melody among the Jabo of West Africa, the Chewa of southeastern Africa, and the Navajo (Herzog 1934a). Again, Herzog thought that Boulton was overstepping the bounds of an empirically sound category of thought by suggesting that there may be as many general styles of music as culture areas in the United States. Herzog preferred to think and write in more general terms, for instance, by suggesting that there was far more "material" in the United States than in Europe for "studies in primitive music," due to the large population of indigenous primitive Americans (1936a:ii). Writing to Jaap Kunst in 1929, Herzog, discussing "the study of Primitive and Oriental Music," wrote that "the nature of our study seems to be such that it does not permit too much specialization" (Herzog 1929a:1).

Titles of academic courses and lectures also reflected an emphasis on primitive music as a singular category. Writing to anthropologist Manuel Andrade in 1932, Herzog discussed "giving a course on Primitive Music" (Herzog 1932a:1), while in a letter to Gustave Reese of the American Musicological Society, Herzog expressed his intention to give a paper entitled "Primitive Music" at the 1935 AMS meeting (Herzog 1935a:1). Likewise, Herzog's 1929 letter to Alfred Frankenstein confirms the idea of primitive music as a scientific field of study, and of his continued deference to his first mentor. "The chief authority on the subject of primitive music is the German scientist von Hornbostel" (Herzog 1929b:1).

Throughout the earlier years of Herzog's work in the United States, the human category of "primitive" seemed to be used unquestioningly by Herzog and his colleagues. However, in materials from later in his career, I found evidence which may suggest that Herzog was gradually becoming aware of the limitations of this broad category. In 1956, Herzog wrote to the Dean of the Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences requesting a leave for sabbatical in order "to write a general book in the field of Comparative Musicology, or as it now tends to be called in this country, 'Ethno-Musicology.'" In a paragraph in which Herzog was justifying his credentials for writing such a book, he wrote:

I should be ready to take on the task. Actually, I had a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1935-36, for the purpose of writing a book specifically on Primitive Music with its social or cultural background. I did not succeed in completing the book, perhaps because I was too much preoccupied with the vastness and the variety of the material, and of its connections with other cultural phenomena. (Herzog 1956:1)

Clearly Herzog still believed in the idea of primitive music to the extent that he was again planning to base a book on the subject. Yet, we see above his admission that, perhaps, the subject of primitive music was too large and unmanageable for a single monograph. Almost despite himself and his intentions, this revealing comment suggests a reflexive sense of his struggle with the concept of "primitive." Additionally, I found several instances from the latter part of his career in which Herzog placed the term "primitive music" in quotes (1956:1; Herzog and Courlander 1947:137), much as we do today, perhaps implying a sense of "for lack of a better term" or suggesting the modifier "so-called."

There was no ambiguity, however, in the way the term was employed in the popular press during the latter part of Herzog's career. Much like our term "world music" today, "primitive music" was a term in popular usage, and was, as the *Harper's* letter above suggests, perhaps even a trend during the thirties and forties. The *Indiana Daily Student* commented on the arrival of Herzog's recording collection (the beginnings of our present day Archives of Traditional Music) with the headline, "I.U. Receives Music Of Primitive People" (*Indiana Daily Student* 1949a). This article fails to specify further what peoples were represented by the collection, suggesting that during this era, the notion of uncivilized peoples as a singular whole was in the popular consciousness, and that the term "primitive people" was in common usage. That same year a review of a Herzog lecture about African music was published. Under the subheadings "African Music Flexible" and "Simple Structure, too," the article paraphrased Herzog extensively:

Prof. Herzog pointed out a feature of African music as being exceedingly plastic in form. As an example of the flexibility of the music, he played two responsorial songs from French Equatorial Africa. These songs had a somewhat primitive charm. . . . Another feature of African music, Prof. Herzog told the members of the club, is the comparative simplicity of structure, with a certain touch of sophistication in rhythm. (*Indiana Daily Student*, 1949b)

It would certainly be unfair to judge Herzog's comments above out of context in the truncated form of a brief newspaper article. Yet, it is valuable to consider this example of how Herzog's ideas about African music were being communicated to the general public. Africans are portrayed as being simpler and more flexible musically—if one reads only the subheadings—and charmingly primitive and slightly sophisticated rhythmically—if one reads more closely. In these ways, the notion of "Africans" as a whole, communicated through the voice of an "expert" (Herzog in this case), and mediated through the voice of a journalist, constructed a public image of Africa as primitive, an image that to a great extent remains with us today.

In no way do I intend to denigrate Herzog by discussing his construction of “primitive music.” Rather, I find it interesting and revealing to unpack this one scholar’s notion of what was simply a commonly-accepted term based on a commonly-accepted notion of a category of persons during the first part of this century. Scholars of each era devise ways of categorically dividing up the world as we grope toward understanding. Each of these categories brings along with them inherent biases, the popular term of today—“world music”—being no exception. The voices of scholars and of the press share in the construction of our ideas about the study of music at any given point in history. Analyzing these voices helps shed light on where the field of ethnomusicology has been, which certainly helps us better understand where we are today.

### Representation of the “Other”

Intimately connected with the notion of primitive peoples and music is the issue of how these peoples and music were represented in academic writing of the time. Just as the field of study and the study object were defined broadly, primitive peoples and their arts tended to be characterized in rather broad and sometimes monolithic, homogeneous terms. For example, anthropologist Edward Sapir’s 1929 article involving one relatively small group of people in Liberia was named “The Voice of Africa: Some Gwaebo Proverbs” (Sapir 1929). Herzog and Courlander (1947) shared with the readers of the African stories they published such facts as “cleanliness of the body and home is carefully observed in Negro Africa. Africans bathe in hot water in the morning and again in the evening after they have returned home from their daily tasks” (Herzog and Courlander 1947:139). Implicit in such portrayals of Africa is a tendency common among anthropologists at the time: the desire to esteem primitive peoples. Much like Malinowski’s writings of the same period in which he attempted to show that Trobriand islanders were able to think in rational, scientific terms like civilized peoples in the West (Malinowski 1948), Herzog reacted against social evolutionary thought of the past by arguing that primitives were not so “primitive” after all.

Describing a Liberian parable about the subject of time, Herzog wrote, “The personification of Time is one of the many examples which show that ‘primitives’ are by no means incapable of abstraction, as is sometimes maintained” (1947:137). Likewise, Sapir wrote that “The Gwaebo, like nearly all African Natives, possess a great store of proverbs which epitomize the wisdom of the folk” (Sapir 1929:184). Herzog, discussing West African drum signaling, wrote that “signaling as a technique is intricately interwoven with phenomena of social life and structure; it displays the same type of sophistication which we know of African music and folklore” (Herzog 1945:218).

In his book on Jabo proverbs, Herzog wrote: "The wide range of applicability and the ease with which the meaning of a proverb can at times shade into its opposite, suggest that in Africa the use of proverbs may become an intricate and artistic intellectual exercise" (Herzog 1936b:6). Herzog constructed the entire introduction to his book as a counter argument to "theories which hold that the mental processes of the 'primitive' are prelogical" (Herzog 1936b:12). These anthropologists clearly wished to esteem primitive peoples—an honorable mission motivated by good intentions. Yet, in so doing, they perpetuated colonial distinctions between themselves and a faceless "other." Individual voices of the people they studied were often lost within the portrayal of a "primitive" world.

Although esteeming primitives was a dominant theme of Herzog's published work, looking behind the scenes at his correspondence, one sometimes uncovers less favorable representations. More specifically, Herzog's written correspondence at times suggested a perpetuation of ideas of colonial Western domination and the backwardness of the "other." Ruth Stone has analyzed a letter Herzog wrote to Fay Cooper Cole at the National Research Council just before his 1930 trip to Liberia. As Stone points out, Herzog's relationship with his field assistant, Liberian George Blooah, is portrayed as asymmetrical, even patronizing. In this letter, Herzog states that upon arrival in Liberia, that *he himself* will have to establish him and Blooah with the Liberian authorities, and that banking will be better handled by just him alone. The West and primitive Africa are contrasted in the letter as well. Herzog promises he will write to Cole from the field, writing "I will have to investigate first, how much of the mail in Liberia disappears in the ocean or is disposed of by similar efficient methods, before I could be certain of the percentage of my accounts actually reaching the shores of Western civilization." Likewise, Herzog wrote that he would have access to "White missionaries" as well as the seaport of Cape Palmas, neither too far from his field site, so that his research team would be "within easy reach of anything we may need" (Herzog 1929c:2). Thus, he emphasized both the remoteness of his field site and his connections to "Western civilization" as a kind of safety net to provide those essentials that he would need that were unavailable in wild Liberia. As Stone comments, "Herzog alternately seemed to indicate control of the situation, dominating even his research assistant, and at other times emphasized the isolation, remove, and primitiveness of the field site, making his control all the more heroic" (Stone 1992:4).

### **Authority and Relationship to the Informant**

Explicit in Herzog's letter to Cole, and implicit in much of his and other published works of the era, is the issue of the scholar's authority in

relation to the informant. As Stone points out, the scholar's voice has often dominated written ethnographies, which frequently describe "one-sided acts of the researcher" and leave the people being studied silent (Stone 1992:1). Sapir also worked with Liberian George Blooah in writing his articles about Gwaebo peoples. Some of the same issues evident in Herzog's letter to Cole come to the fore in analyzing the way Sapir portrays Blooah in his publications. Sapir, in discussing the credentials of his research assistant, emphasizes Blooah's western education. Blooah "received his education" from white missionaries in Liberia before moving on to the US to continue study at the University of Chicago. Implied, of course, is that no other "education" took place in Blooah's life among his own people; Blooah only became "educated" through his contacts with the West (Sapir 1929:183). Herzog wrote that Blooah was "taught to write his language phonetically" by researchers in Chicago, portraying Blooah as the passive recipient of Western knowledge (Herzog 1936b:1). Again, the West was portrayed as the ultimate authority, and only through contact with this authority was Blooah's credibility established.

Herzog's correspondence reveals even more the way he conceived of his relationship with Blooah. In 1931, Herzog received a letter from P.B. Byrne, Assistant Secretary of the Chicago World's Fair Centennial Celebration, inquiring about Blooah, who was apparently interested in setting up "an African exhibit" in the centennial celebration exposition. Byrne wrote:

We understand that . . . Charles G. Blooah . . . is under your supervision. We are not, at this time, particularly desirous to know his financial rating, but rather whether or not he is honest and trustworthy and pays his bills, and if we attempt to do anything through him to obtain such an exhibit, that any moneys collected by him will be honestly and properly accounted for. . . . Reports received concerning Mr. Blooah are not entirely satisfactory (Byrne 1931:1).

In response, Herzog replied:

I may say that my contacts with Mr. Blooah are of a purely scientific nature so that I am hardly in a position to comment on his trustworthiness. I may add, however, that according to my experience, some phases of our standards of legal or financial responsibility prove at times too intricate to be grasped by natives of Africa (of whom Mr. Blooah is one). This, then, can easily lead to entanglements, no matter how unintentionally (Herzog 1931a:1).

It is important to note that by this time, Herzog and Blooah had spent a considerable amount of time together, meeting in the US and negotiating their trip to Liberia, traveling by ship to Africa—during which time Blooah

taught Herzog his language—spending most of the year 1930 together working in Liberia, sailing back together, and continuing at least a close professional relationship in Chicago for nine months or so more before this letter was written. Yet, Herzog puts considerable distance between himself and Blooah in this letter, portraying their relationship as “purely scientific.” In fact, given only the information in this letter, Herzog could just as well be describing his relationship to an organism in a petrie dish. Of course, Herzog could not have commented on personal character attributes of the object of a purely objective scientific study. Furthermore, while Herzog’s published writings on this subject represent Africans as logical and sophisticated, in this letter he constructs a representation in which Africans are incapable of grasping the more complex Western world of “intricate” legal and financial standards. Writing to Kroeber that same year, Herzog again described Blooah as a kind of passive scientific object:

Blooah is still around but soon he will be kicked upward; for the time being, he is being oscillated between becoming a case-history to a psychoanalyst (who wants to make him a disciple, for the benefit of Anthropology and the oppressed races of Africa) and swelling the Dept. of Anthropology. (Herzog 1931b:1)

In this same letter, Herzog describes his busy schedule, made more hectic by “Keeping him (Blooah) alive” (1931b:1), suggesting that he was providing for or sponsoring Blooah’s time in Chicago. All in all, Blooah completely lacks agency in these letters. His portrayal is more akin to a scientific specimen—a source of scholarly fascination—than a human being.

Again, I am not deriding our ethnomusicological forefathers; rather, I am outlining through Herzog’s and others’ words some elements of the historical context in which they worked. And, in fact, Herzog in this respect is far from one-dimensional. I have found many instances in which Herzog lent credence to indigenous voices of the people he studied, including Blooah. For example, Herzog devotes an entire section of his article on West African drum signaling to “Native theory and terminology” (Herzog 1945:230-2). Likewise, Herzog called for the necessity of learning the “native classification” of songs when recording primitive music (Herzog 1936a:15). While he may not have paid as much heed to analysis of indigenous terms and concepts as we do today (“Partial as these native theories are, they are not without interest” [1945:232]), the fact that he was interested in them at all places Herzog well ahead of his time.

Despite the depersonalized accounts of his relationship to Blooah in letters, Herzog credited Blooah in publications, as did Sapir. Blooah is officially credited prominently next to the author’s name as the “assistant” in

both Sapir's "The Voice of Africa" ("Assisted by Charles G. Blooah") and Herzog's *Jabo Proverbs* ("With The Assistance of Charles G. Blooah") (Sapir 1929; Herzog 1936b). Even more striking is the fact that, in later publications of his own, Herzog effectively elevated Blooah to status of co-author of *Jabo Proverbs*.<sup>1</sup> And in the text of *Jabo Proverbs* itself, Blooah received direct credit for his ideas: a "B" follows each section of the book that Herzog determined was contributed by Blooah.<sup>2</sup> Finally, Herzog warmly acknowledges and thanks Blooah in the book's foreword, further giving voice and identity to his "assistant" (Herzog 1936b:viii).

Yet, just as is still true today, Herzog was clearly in control of whether or not his subjects of study would receive a voice, or credit, in written publication. This is simply a fact of our enterprise—that is, we as scholars assume a certain authority without which the type of work we do would not be possible. Yet, this assumption of authority took somewhat different, and sometimes more blatant, forms during Herzog's career than it often does today. Herzog's correspondence shows numerous examples of scholars trading recordings and ideas back and forth, determining for themselves what issues to prioritize with regard to the "materials" for their publications. Perhaps most striking was the correspondence between Herzog and the Evans sisters, Bessie and M.G., who used Herzog's transcriptions and recordings for their book *American Indian Dance Steps* (1931). These three scholars wrote back and forth at least five times discussing relatively minute details of the music sound represented by Herzog's transcriptions. Impressive for their attention to detail, these letters nonetheless reveal the process of scholars discussing between themselves what is important in representations of music long removed from the context of the people who created it. Again, the voices of the performers are silent (Herzog 1931c; Evans and Evans, 1930).

Turning back to the press, we see in a *Seattle Post Intelligence* article—about Herzog's 1952 visit to the University of Washington campus—a clear example of the assumption of academic authority and its representation to the general public. Including a photograph with the revealing caption "Dr. George Herzog: *Knows Primitive Music*," the article portrays Herzog as a specialist with the authority to decide what is good and bad in native American music. Under the headline "Expert Lauds Indian Music," the article reads:

A noted anthropologist [Herzog] Friday termed the "Indian Love Call" and the "Waters of Minnetonka" strictly "musical junk" when compared to native melodies of Pacific Northwest Indians. . . . "The [Northwest Indian] music is rich and varied, showing true artistry," Dr. Herzog said. "It is an indication that the early Indians of this area had a more sophisticated culture than primitive peoples in most of North America. Some of the music is good enough for a concert tour." (Seattle Post Intelligence 1952)

Herzog, by virtue of his credentials, was able to proclaim to the public not only the value of selected primitive musics, but the level of sophistication of whole culture groups. Of course, this sense of sophistication is based simply on a few recordings judged according to western ideals. Just as any tendency toward western-style rational thought among primitives was laudable, so any music that could be presentable in a western concert setting ("good enough for a concert tour") was worthy of authoritative praise.

Yet another issue that has emerged from Herzog's publications and letters was the issue of ownership of recorded materials and musical ideas. While today, the issue of copyright law is beginning to be discussed in ethnomusicological circles (cf. Seeger 1992a:345-59), during Herzog's period, standards of ownership were quite different. I mentioned above the way that recordings were sent around and borrowed by scholars for various research purposes. One such exchange took place between Herzog and anthropologist Rachel Commons. Herzog wrote to Commons in 1932, asking to borrow recordings she had made so that he could "work on them" (presumably analyze them musically). In this letter, Herzog wrote, "Of course, technically they are the property of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago" (Herzog 1932b:1). These records were not the property of the native American musicians who sang them, nor of their tribe, nor even of Commons who had recorded them; rather, they were the property of the department under whom she was working when she made the recordings. Thus, music of other peoples was (and still is) freely transferred and "worked on" by scholars without any consideration whatsoever as to the possibility of the music "belonging" to the musicians who created it.

Similarly, Herzog wrote frequently about the utility of preserving primitive music for future use by western composers. In an application essay for a Guggenheim fellowship, he wrote: "The music of our age has much to gain from a study of Indian music. . . . The songs, when presented in adequate form, can be utilized by our modern composers" (Herzog 1933b:2). Again, there was no consideration of the ownership rights of the people who originally made the music. Once recorded, these songs were available as useful material to inspire or be incorporated by composers into their compositions. This phenomenon has continued in more recent decades, as western recording artists have incorporated into their own recorded compositions actual field recordings, building these compositions around "exotic" sounds of primitive peoples (cf. Mitchell 1975; Byrne and Eno 1981). However, Herzog did mention the issue of ownership in a short 1935 article on the subject of recording Primitive Music:

On the Northwest Coast of America and among primitives in some other places, this sense of songs as property approaches our ideas of copyright. This 'property sense' for songs naturally conditions negotiations between collector and informant. (Herzog 1935b:190)

Unfortunately, Herzog did not go on to discuss exactly how this property sense conditioned interactions between collector and informant. Still, the fact that he mentioned ownership at all as an issue to be considered was unique during this era.

As I have mentioned, the method of intensively analyzing recordings that one may or may not have actually recorded oneself originated in von Hornbostel's time, but continued to be a common method during Herzog's period in America. The obvious result of such study is a complete silence of indigenous voices in the resulting work. When Herzog and the Evans sisters discussed back and forth the way certain passages in a Sun Dance song should be conceived—in what time signature, what exact note, etc.—they were adopting and assuming the authority to decide for themselves. For an expert, these answers were in the "text"; no discussion with the musicians was necessary.

Similarly, when a "native" voice was required, one was sufficient to represent an entire culture group. When Sapir studied Gwaebo language, Blooah was his sole informant; an adequate source, in Sapir's eyes, to allow him to write with confidence and authority about the language of an entire African tribe (Sapir 1931:30). Yet, here again Herzog shows a glimpse of awareness of the limitations of doing research out of the context of the people he studied. In discussing new technologies being developed for sound recording analysis, Herzog wrote:

It should not be overlooked, however, that the more refined the technique becomes, the more its material is taken out of context. The more "objective" and microscopic the technique, the more distortion is apt to be introduced by the inevitable separation from the setting in which the material functions. (Herzog 1936a:8)

Herzog again demonstrates a remarkable level of awareness, yet, it is a limited awareness nonetheless. Occasionally there are other clues of his awareness; in fact, the following quote suggests recognition of the limitations of his methods and of his circumstances:

The field worker in primitive music is seldom in the position to extend his study into attempting to acquire on the spot a very intimate knowledge of tribal life—a life which in North America has become impoverished or has vanished altogether. (Herzog 1936a:6)

Thus, since the way of life that he *would* study has vanished, it made perfect sense to undertake his analyses of music sound in isolation.

But isolation from context can result in significant misunderstanding, and often did for Herzog and his associates. For instance, Herzog in 1934 wrote to Andrade, who did research in Central America: "Too bad there is no Indian music (apparently none, anyhow) among the Maya" (Herzog 1934b:1). This statement might reveal a lack of contextual experience; on the other hand, it may point to another limitation that primitive music researchers placed upon themselves: that of studying only "pure" primitive music. Herzog may have been referring to the fact that there was no Mayan music that was not in some way affected by the Spanish presence in the region—a much more reasonable assertion. Concern for purity emerges as a constant theme in Herzog's writings. In 1936, he lamented the emerging phenomenon of the folk festival on the grounds that "singers from different areas are brought into contact with each other," thus permanently tainting previously pure musical styles (1936a:49). Music could be kept pure and could be studied in its pure form by "capturing" it on "objective records" (Herzog 1936a:3,14).

### Herzog's Work Presaging the Future

A pattern has clearly developed by now, that is, that I can no sooner discuss work of Herzog that appears from our perspective limited, before I am compelled to discuss work of Herzog that to some extent predicts or is more in alignment with ethnomusicological ideas today. In fact, Herzog's written attempt to unify the field (1936) contains many ideas that resonate with standard notions of ethnomusicological thought today. I have shown above that Herzog valued music in pure isolation, in objective records, or secure from the tainting of outside sources. Yet, Herzog also predicted that, while commercial music may be considered in 1936 "hybrid and cheap" from a scholar's point of view, "future research will find these same hybrid forms worthy of study" (Herzog 1936a:57). Time has certainly proven this prediction correct, as many ethnomusicologists today concern themselves with popular and other "hybrid" forms of music.

Furthermore, while Herzog valued "objective records" and conducted a great deal of research out of the context of the people he studied, he hinted an awareness of the pitfalls of this type of research. Discussing technological innovations regarding methods of transcription and analysis, Herzog sounded a warning: "It should be emphasized, however, that while graphs of sound waves are more 'objective,' they are not real from the viewpoint of musical or esthetic experience" (Herzog 1936a:17). Again, Herzog's ideas can be seen as visionary, as he recognized the shortcomings of research methods that removed sound from human experience. Likewise, Herzog had a

sophisticated notion of artistic creation and variation. He recognized the limitations of recordings and manuscripts in giving the impression of what we may call a “fixed text”:

Our ideal and concept of the fixed artistic form communicated to future generations through written record, in the “true” or “correct” version, is to be contrasted with a more fluid form which is recreated rather than “reproduced” every time it is performed. . . . The costs of music printing, however, often prevent publishing more than one “characteristic” version of the melody. . . . What has been published so far in extended form has been offered without an analysis of variation. (Herzog 1936a:11-12)

Herzog went on to suggest printing multiple transcriptions of the same songs in ethnomusicological publications in order to more accurately represent music as fluid. He portrayed Jabo proverbs not as static forms that are passed down, but as verbal forms that exhibit “flexibility in imagery, thinking, and application.” He wrote:

Proverbs may be one of the means by which tradition and the community domineers over the individual in primitive society; but this flexibility indicates that the individual may make terms with both tradition and the group. (Herzog 1936b:14)

Thus, Herzog suggested a fairly sophisticated notion of individual and group interaction in the human creative process, as opposed to the static notion of tradition that was dominant during this era. As I have already shown, Herzog valued “native” ideas about music. I have also discussed examples in which Herzog’s perspective on primitive music was to a great extent trapped in notions about music in the West. Yet, he believed strongly in recognizing the importance of “studying Indian music as special forms developed in a special setting,” at one point criticizing music researcher John C. Fillmore, who argued that Indian songs exhibited an “implicit” feeling for harmony (Herzog 1936a:4). Herzog wrote on numerous occasions about the ways musical categories of the West are not necessarily cross-cultural:

Music, it appears, is not a universal language. Features which in one style carry a certain emotional or symbolic value may have an entirely different significance in another style, or may function in an entirely different realm. (Herzog 1936a:7)

Herzog also wrote of the importance of recognizing that ideas about music do not necessarily align across cultures:

The element of aesthetic appreciation is not absent from primitive life, although the forms in which it is expressed and enjoyed may not be strictly equivalent to our own. To miss this lack of direct equivalence would be to miss one of the most important "experiences" the collector can undergo or transmit. (Herzog 1935b:181)

In the above quotes, Herzog appears almost phenomenological in his emphasis upon recognizing that categories of musical thought are culture-bound, and that awareness of these differences is a critical aspect of the "experience" of the researcher.

In certain passages, Herzog also foreshadows today's trend toward personal involvement (participation) and personal awareness (reflexivity) in music research. I was shocked to read his account of learning to play "every signal, first on one drum, then on two" as part of his methodology for learning about Liberian drum signaling, more than twenty years before Mantle Hood's *The Ethnomusicologist* (1971) made performance fashionable as a method (Herzog 1945:221-2). While I have shown above that Herzog preferred to study primitive arts that remained pure and un-mixed with other cultures, he was apparently comfortable with the idea that *his* presence influenced the material he collected. Regarding the collection of Jabo proverbs, he wrote:

Many proverbs were quoted by the natives in connection with the expedition's stay. The circumstances under which a proverb was quoted were always recorded, no matter how trivial the occasion. It is hoped that this background will give the reader a view of native life, of the manner in which proverbs function and are applied and, incidentally, of the native's attitude towards the white man who is temporarily his neighbor. (Herzog 1936b:vi)

That Herzog would take into account, and write about, the impact of his presence on the materials he collected was extraordinary for his time. The manner of presentation of the text in *Jabo Proverbs* is also quite impressive. Herzog published the text in the Jabo language, followed by a literal translation in English, and finally a version in common English language usage. Herzog wanted to extend this kind of linguistic detail to the study of sung text as well:

It ought to become standard practice that whenever native music is recorded, the cooperation of qualified linguists be made part of the work of recording and analysis; many basic musical features can be

fully appreciated and understood only when they are seen in conjunction with poetic and textual detail. (Herzog 1990 [1942]:206-7)

Again, Herzog presaged something that was to become standard practice in the discipline. Not only have ethnomusicologists drawn heavily on linguistic theoretical models, but understanding language to the point of being able to unpack indigenous terminology has also become the norm for many ethnographers of music.

In conclusion, Herzog emerges as a scholar who perhaps deserves more credit for innovation than he has received. While he exemplifies in many ways the historical period in which he worked, in other respects his work appears as nearly visionary. Nettl writes that Herzog was innovative in the way that he “combines approaches from various sources” while also providing a strong leadership role and publishing “practical, evenhanded, and comprehensive models” (Nettl 1991:272). This interdisciplinary approach resonates with much ethnomusicological study today.

Herzog clearly deserves credit for his practical and sometimes innovative ideas. Yet, there also is much in Herzog’s work that many of us today would probably prefer not to repeat. Some of the issues that emerge from this study, however, are not so easily avoidable. Individual voices were often lost in the grand scheme of Herzog’s studies of “primitive peoples.” At other points, he gave voice to the people he studied (much as we try to do today), albeit always invoking his scholarly authority to do so—an authority that shows remnants of an elite, dominating culture in control. This dynamic remains with those of us engaged in cross-cultural study of music today.

### Notes

1 George Herzog and Charles G. Blooah are mentioned as co-authors of *Jabo Proverbs from Eastern Liberia* (1936) in Herzog and Courlander (1947: 139).

2 See p. vi of Herzog (1936b) for explanation.

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