A REPLY FROM AFRICA

In an article, "A Very Preliminary Statement," published in the March issue of THE FOLKLORE AND FOLK MUSIC ARCHIVIST, William Hugh Jansen listed six basic problems faced by public archives of folklore and folk music. In a recent communication Mr. Hugh Tracey, Director of the International Library of African Music at Roodeport, Union of South Africa, was kind enough to offer brief answers to Dr. Jansen's questions from the point of view taken and the procedures followed in the International Library of African Music.

Since we believe Mr. Tracey's remarks to be of general interest we print below Dr. Jansen's questions, each followed by Mr. Tracey's answer.

1. (Q) How many archives should there be? How large an area can a single archive serve? Must every political, geographical, cultural area have an archive?
   (A) It is our belief that there should be a single Archive for the whole of Africa, South of the Sahara, with local duplications in each Territory which will specialise primarily upon their own regions. This might eventually be broken down into two Archives—one for Bantu speaking regions in South and Central Africa and the other for the Sudanic speaking regions in West Africa. On account of the great distances involved, each Territory should have as full an Archive as it can afford over and above a complete collection of its own local material which should be situated at some convenient Administrative Headquarters.

2. (Q) How should archives integrate their services? Should single archives store verbal folklore, folk music, recordings and pictures of folk dances, "physical folklore" as collected in museums, once-popular publications (song-sheets, records), photographs of folk products? Should there be super-regional archives to coordinate (and duplicate) the efforts of local archives? Should there be a national archive cooperating with the regional or local ones?
   (A) We feel that Archives should have as much detail as possible which revolves around their main interest which, in our case, is Folk Music. This means Folklore in which music occurs, all varieties of Folk Music recorded on discs or tapes and photographs to illustrate the recordings.

There are several museums throughout Africa which already specialise in physical Folklore and it would not be necessary to duplicate their collections. Special collections of recordings should be selected and made available for the teaching of indigenous music in Secondary Schools and Universities throughout the whole Continent.

3. (Q) Should the material archived be grouped according to its collector, donor, place or time of collection, type, or shape? How should it be stored?
   (A) Our practice here is to group each collection according to the tribe or language used. These recordings should, if possible, be stored both physically on discs and magnetically on tapes. It is the production of discs which can be easily distributed and made use of for scientific, educational and recreational purposes that is the main pre-occupation of our Library.

4. (Q) How should it be indexed? In what various ways cross-indexed?
   (A) We publish a Card Index System with all our recordings, in four colours, for convenience, under languages, types, instruments employed and numerical or alphabetical. This is sufficient for our present purposes in Africa and more detailed study can proceed from this point wherever necessary.

5. (Q) What is the minimum physical plant, the minimum personnel, for an archive? What is the minimum operating budget?
   (A) The minimum physical plant for an Archive such as ours includes a Field Recording Unit with two vehicles and generator complete and offices for Headquarters Staff include fire-proof rooms for the material collected both on magnetic tape and on disc.

The minimum operative budget must depend upon the extent of the work contemplated and the possibility of disposing of a proportion of the recordings so published economically. In our case it will amount to approximately £10,000 a year with an additional £15,000 required for the cost of processing discs (100 copies of each), providing at least half this number can be disposed of economically.

6. (Q) What activities (local historical museums, hobbyists' collections) bear on folk archives? How to discover, how to utilize them?
   (A) In the case of Africa very few private collections are of any value to our present Archive as most of them have not been recorded sufficiently well to warrant publication. On the other hand we keep not only a distributing catalogue but also a Reference Library for such work.