

# Drums on the Move:

## An Exploration in Africa-Diaspora Studies

Patrick Manning  
January 2005



# Disclaimer:

## material culture vs. music

- This is a study of material culture of music instruments, not a study of music
- (The author enjoys music and dance, but lacks professional qualifications)
- Terms: membranophones and idiophones

# Objective 1: Tracing the drums

- Material culture: the form of drums
- Musical patterns linking Africa and diaspora
- Drums as metaphor for connections of Africa and diaspora

# Objective 2: Modeling Africa-diaspora studies

- How to study the African diaspora?
- Link the distinct fields of African studies and diaspora studies . . .  
. . . including pan-African and Black Atlantic studies, and studies over time
- Research design: trace links among drums for insights into diaspora-wide linkages

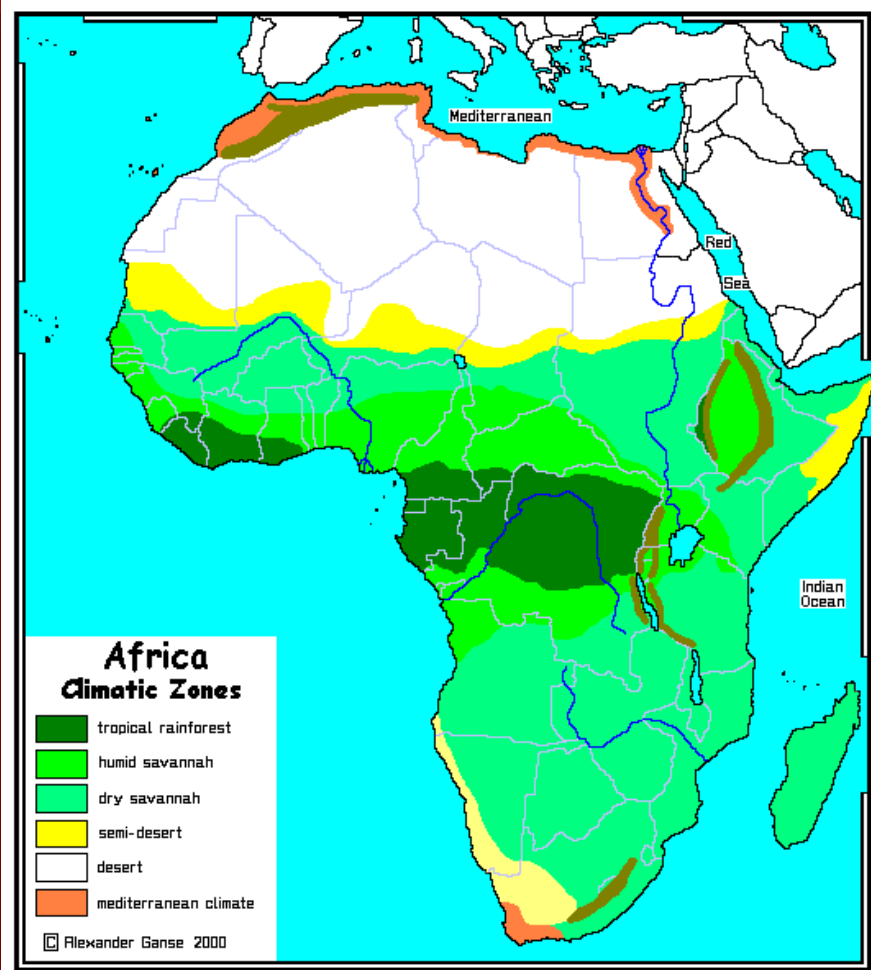


# Drums of the Niger-Congo region

- Shapes and materials of drums
- Membrane materials
- Membrane attachment and tuning
- Percussion tools



# Language groups



# Climate and vegetation

# Drum materials:

## West Africa

## Central Africa

■ wood



■ wood



■ gourd



# Drum forms:

## West Africa

## Central Africa

- cylinder



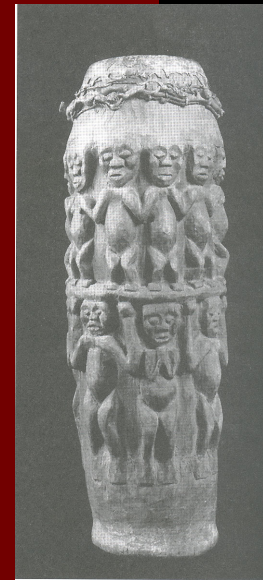
- cylinder



- barrel



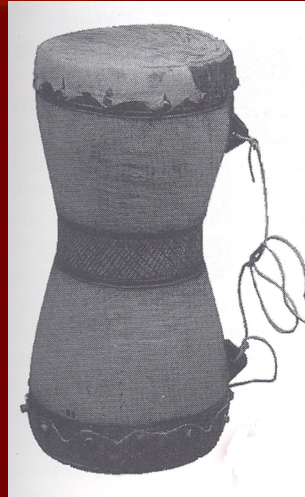
- barrel



# Drum forms:

## West Africa

- waisted



- goblet



## Central Africa

- waisted



- goblet





# Drum forms:

## West Africa

- footed



- pot



## Central Africa

- footed



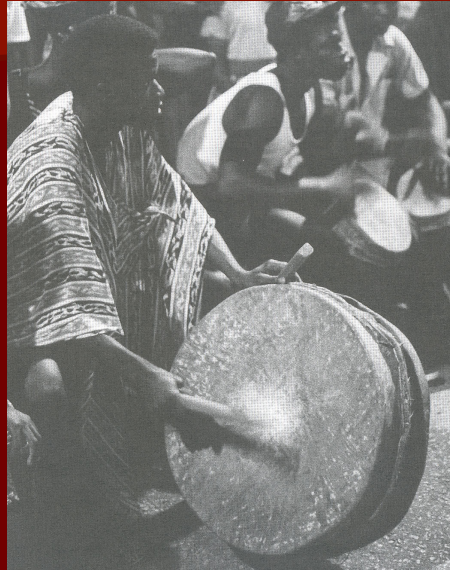
- pot



# Drum forms:

## West Africa

- frame



- slit



## Central Africa

- frame

- slit



# Membrane materials:

## West Africa

- goat
- sheep
- cow

## Central Africa

- goat
- antelope
- monkey
- reptile



# Membrane attachment:

## West Africa

- nails



- pegs



## Central Africa

- nails



- pegs



# Membrane attachment:

## West Africa

- laces



- flexible laces



## Central Africa

- laces



# Membrane attachment:

## West Africa

- belts

- screws

(20<sup>th</sup> century)

## Central Africa

- belts

- screws

(20<sup>th</sup> century)

# Percussion tools:

## West Africa

- hand



- bent stick



## Central Africa

- hand



# Drums of the Niger-Congo region

- West Africa





# West Africa



# Drums of the Niger-Congo region

- Central Africa



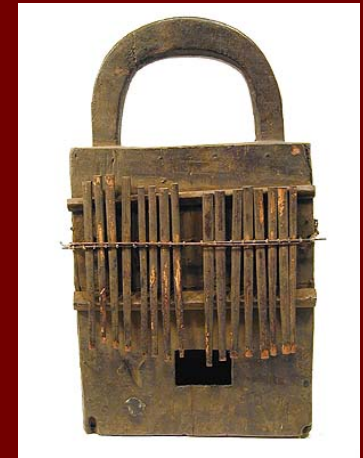
# Central Africa





# Examples of musical borrowing

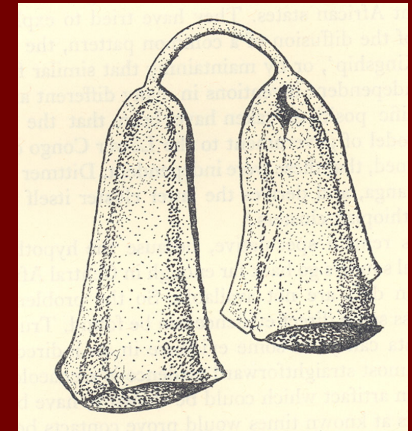
- *mbira (sanza)* – from Zimbabwe to West Africa



- *xylophones* – from Indian Ocean to West Africa



the bells of  
kings

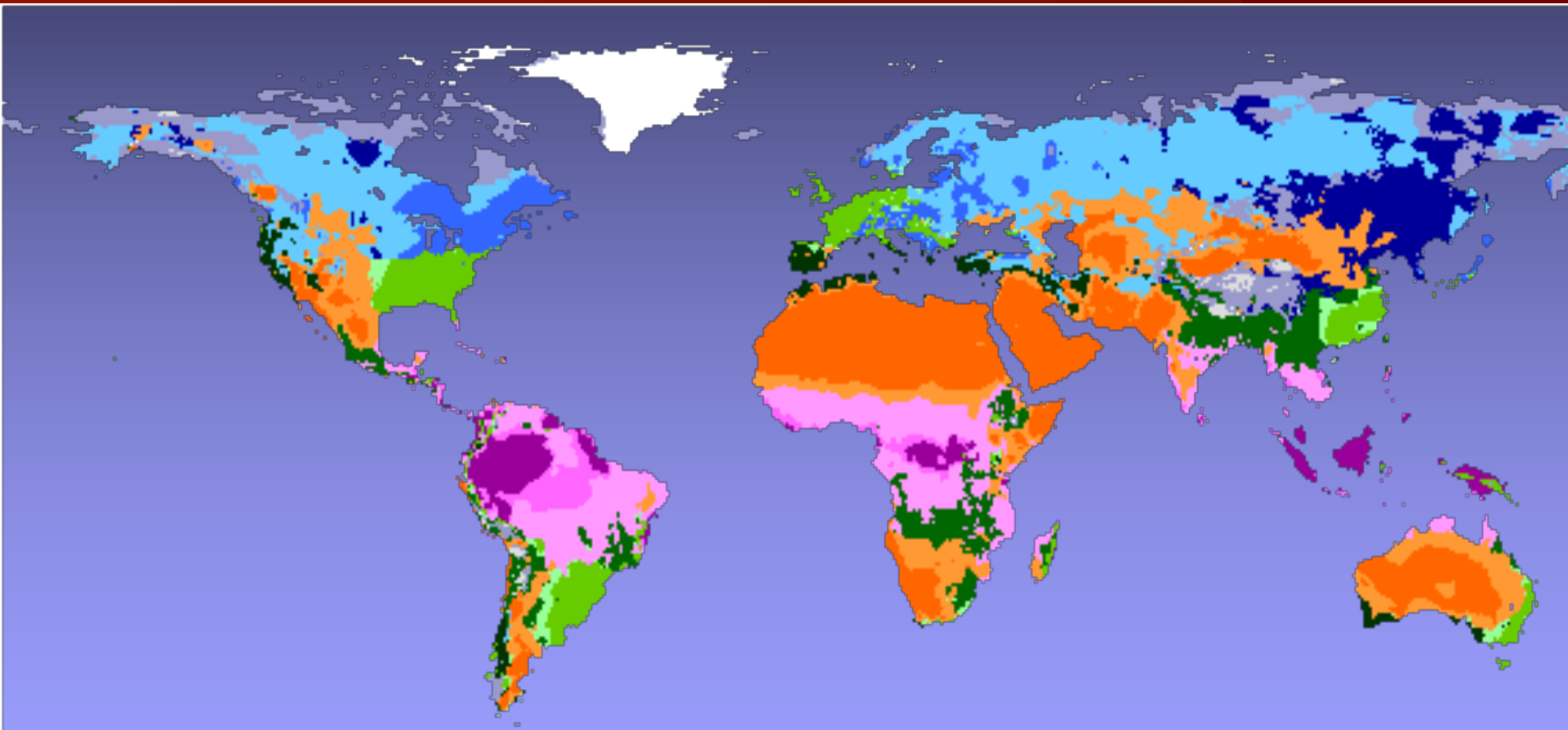


# Hypotheses: African drums to 1500

- Drums and polyrhythms as a deep Niger-Congo tradition (generic Bantu term “ngoma” for drum)
- Drumming repertoire shared throughout the Niger-Congo region, with local variation
- Drums functioned in groups, rarely as individual instruments
- Instruments and music often crossed ethnic lines
- Innovations sometimes spread widely

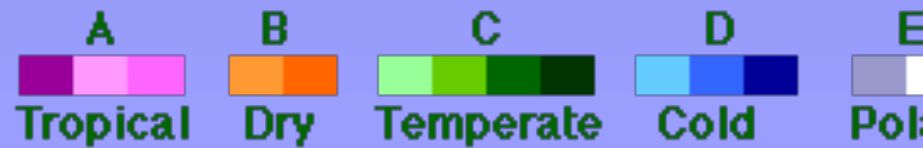
# Drums in the Americas, 1500-1900: Hypotheses

- Drums spread from Africa to all corners of the African diaspora in the Americas through slave trade
- Drums followed population movements as they varied in space and time
- Drums became modified with New World materials, language, and social patterns
- New drumming ideas developed in the Americas and spread

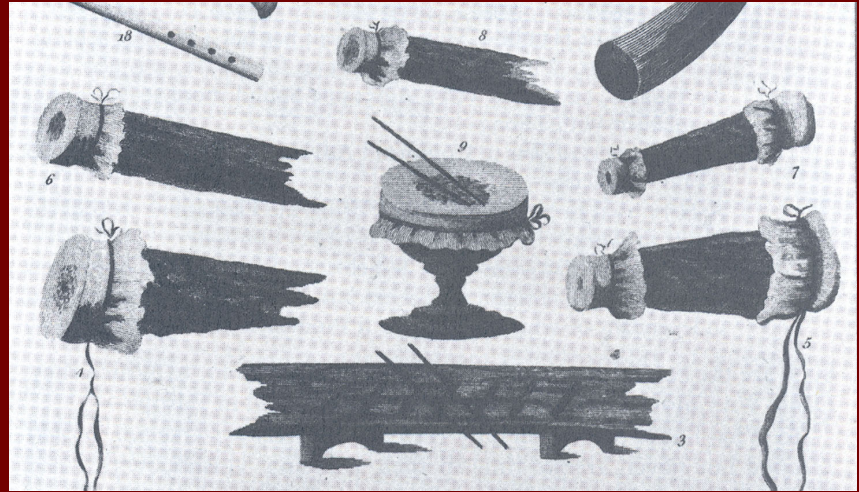


## Koeppen's Climate Classification

by FAO - SDRN - Agrometeorology Group - 1997

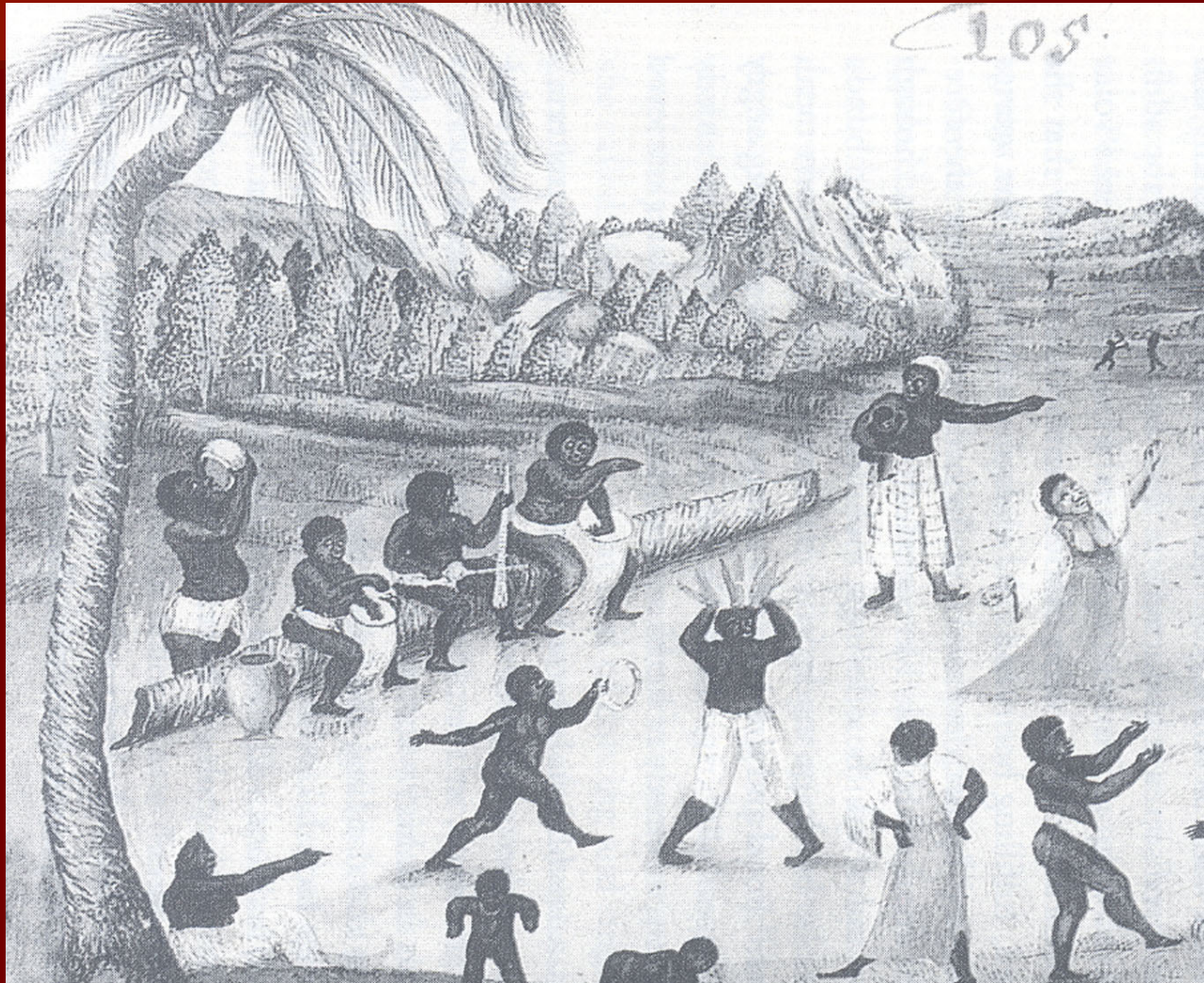


# Drums in the Americas, 1500-1900

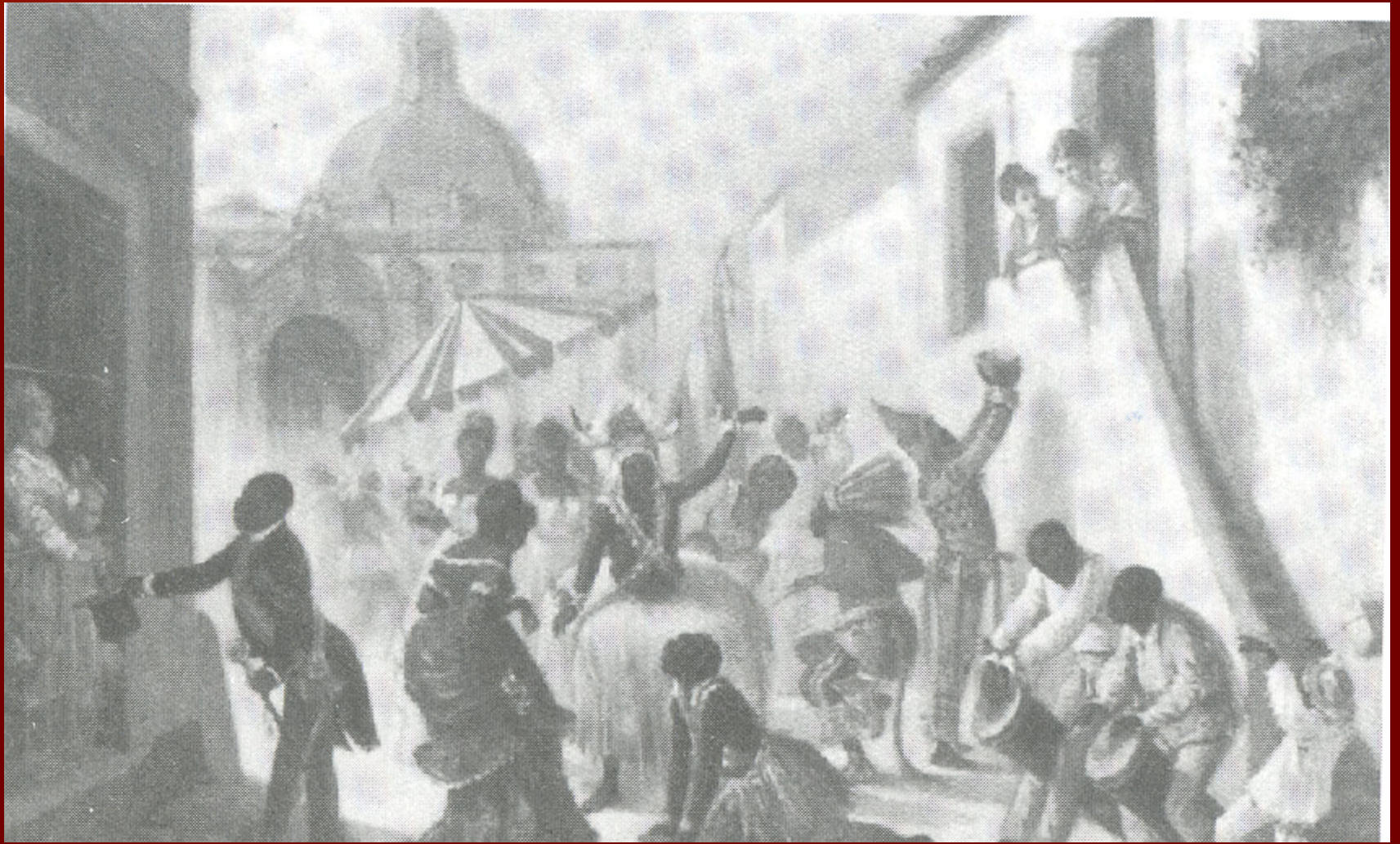




# Drums in the Americas, 1500-1900







# Population flows: Africa to Americas

- 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries
  - Senegal to Louisiana
  - Gold Coast to Jamaica
  - Fon to Haiti
  - Fon to Bahia
  - Igbo to Barbados
  - Loango to Venezuela
- 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - Yoruba to Cuba
  - Igbo to Cuba
  - Yoruba to Bahia
  - Congo to Rio



# Drums since 1900: Africa & abroad

- Recent patterns give insight into earlier dynamics
- Innovations are modest modifications to the inherited repertoire
- New drum forms spread if associated with successful musical and social traditions
- New materials are adopted wherever they fit the music

# Drums since 1900: Africa & abroad

- Conga drums from Cuba



- Bongo drums from Cuba



# Drums since 1900: Africa & abroad

- Drum sets from the United States



# Drums since 1900: Africa & abroad

- Steel pans from Trinidad



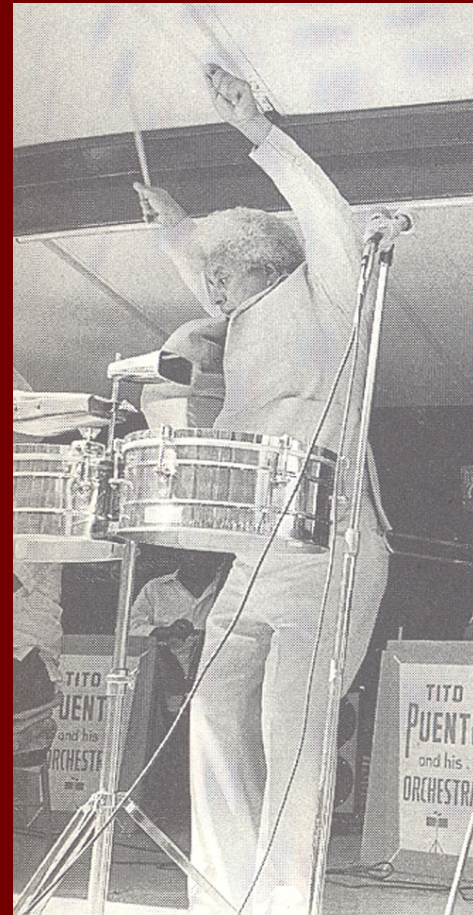


# Drums since 1900: Africa & abroad

- Djembe drums from Guinea



- Timbale drums from Puerto Rico



# Drums since 1900: Africa & abroad

- Drumming of Babatunde Olatunji from Nigeria



# Drums since 1900: Africa & abroad

- Surdo drums from Brazil (Olodum)



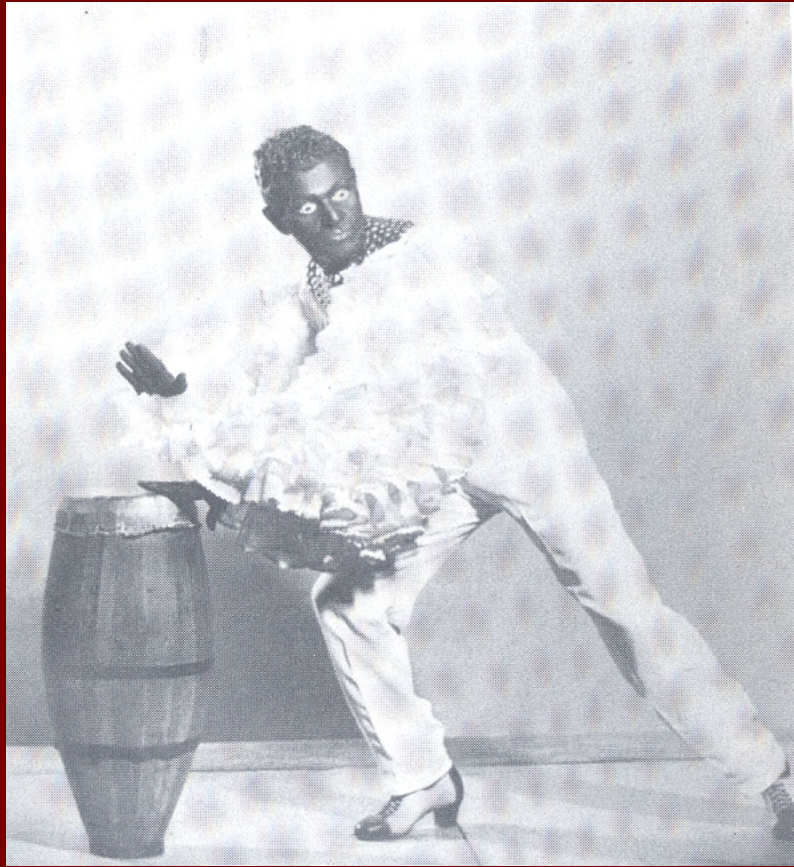
# Conclusion: Research Design 1 – Tracing Drums in Movement

- Patterns of drum movement from Africa to overseas
- Patterns of musical change in Africa
- Innovations in drumming in the Americas
- Atlantic and global exchange in drums and drumming

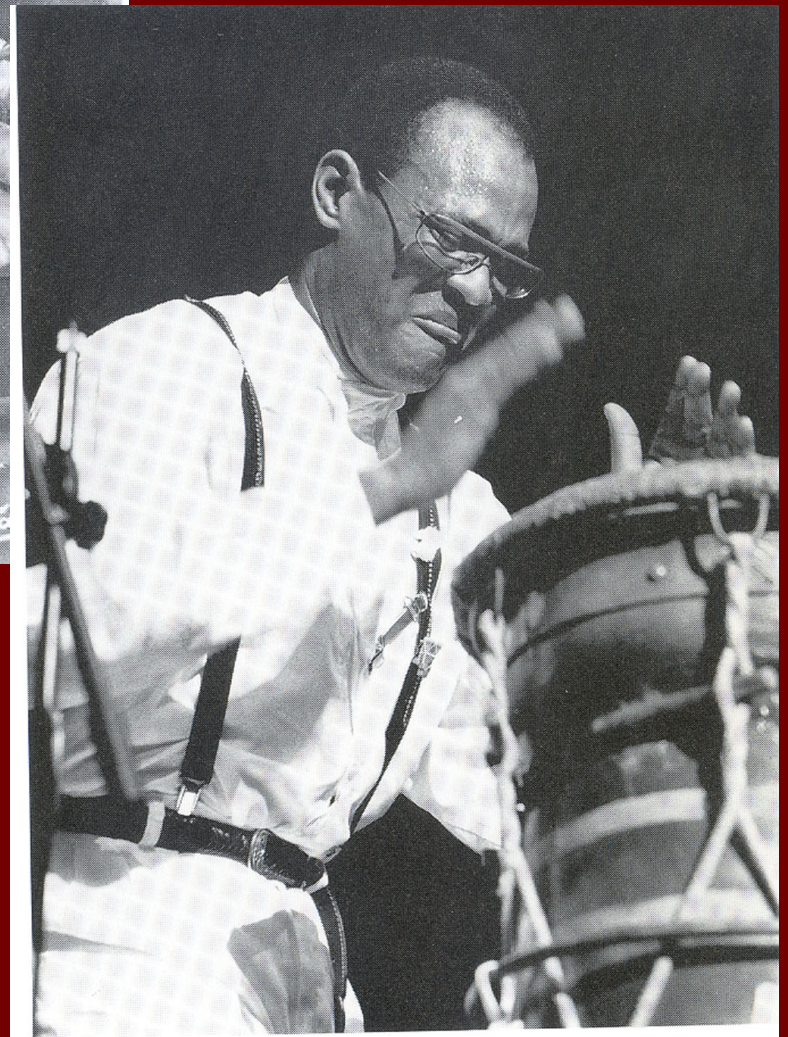
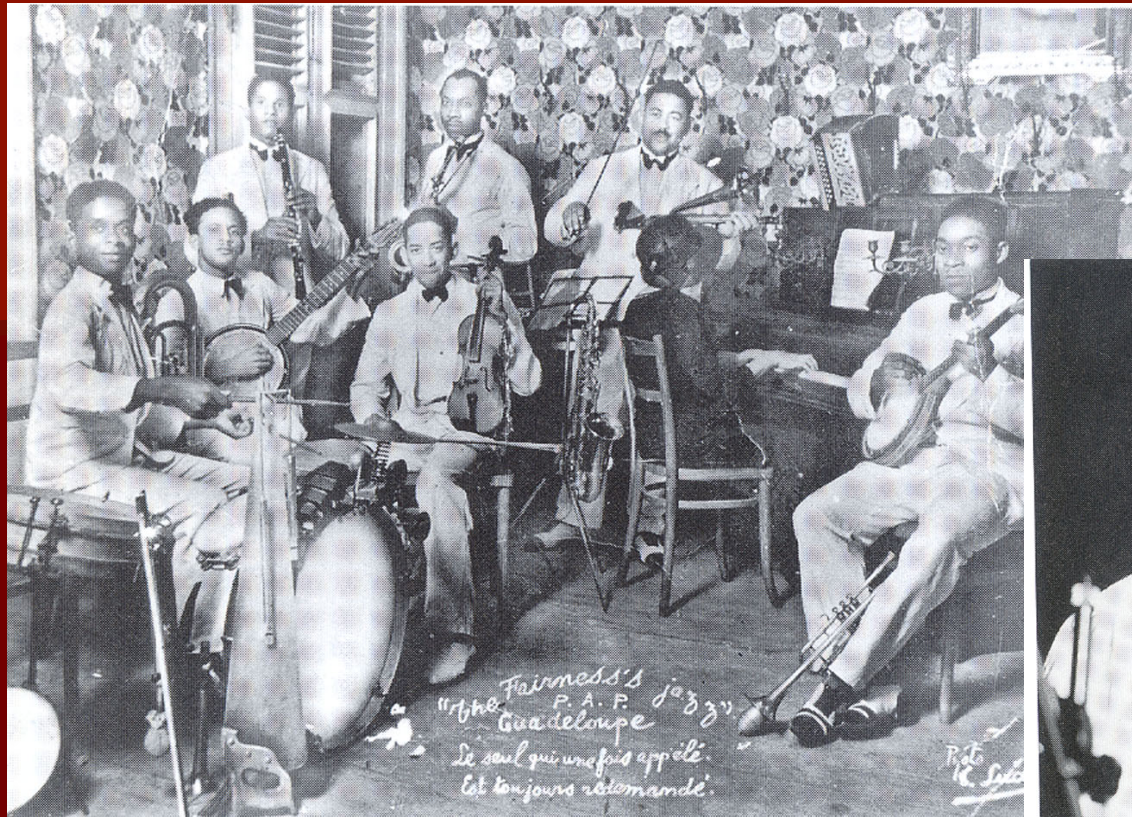


# Research Design 2: Designing Africa-Diaspora research

- Overview of data for all of Africa and diaspora over time
- Identify specific local characteristics
- Trace innovations and their movements
- Identify interactions among traditions











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