

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN PAN
SCHOLARSHIP PUBLISHED FROM
1985 TO 2003

by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Though I read through a variety of Carnival booklets, travel literature, record album liner notes, and other publications, I found newspapers to be the most valuable . . . source” (Stuempfle, 1995, xvi). This statement by noted pan scholar Stephen Stuempfle reveals much about the early documentation of the steelband movement. In its formative stages, pan was not the treasured national symbol it has become for so many Trinbagonians. Conversely, much of the earliest documentation regarded pan as a social nuisance:

Can beating is pan beating in any language and in any form. It does nobody any good, and when it is indulged in all day all night, day in and day out, it is abominable. . . . If it must continue, and by virtue of its alleged inherent beauty and charm it will someday bring popularity and fame to the island and a fortune to the beaters, then by all means let it go on - but in the forests and other desolate places. (Clarke, 1946; as seen in Wade, 2004, p. 6)

Editorials, letters to the editor, and newspaper articles such as this provide pan scholars keen insight into perceptions and attitudes regarding the formative stages of pan (Stuempfle, 1995).

In time, Trinidadian scholars began to situate the steelband polemic within the context of Trinidadian society and politics (Braithewaite, 1954; Elder, 1969; Hill, 1972), while early American scholarship focused on steelpan construction, repertoire, and to a lesser degree, implications for music education (O’Conner, 1975; Seeger, 1961). Scholarship regarding pan construction, repertoire, and uses in music education continued into the 1980s (Barnhart, 1980; Ahyoung, 1981), but most studies began focusing on pan’s genesis and early evolution (Belmosa, 1989; Jones, 1973; Rouff, 1972; Thomas, 1985). More recent scholars view the steelband through the lens of social theory, contextualizing the steelband movement (as it has come to be called) in terms of nationalism, ethnicity, class, identity, modernization, and globalization (Diehl, 1992; Dudley, 1997; Ryan, 1994; Stuempfle, 1995).

The socio-historic circumstances of the steelband movement lend themselves easily to research with the above mentioned types of theoretical orientation. Concordantly, there has been a substantial increase in the amount of recent pan research. It is in light of this trend that the present study is undertaken.

Statement of Problems

In a recent conversation with noted ethnomusicologist and eminent pan scholar Gage Averill, this researcher discussed the possibility of pursuing pan-related research interests. While supportive and encouraging, he also suggested that pan scholarship may soon become a crowded area of research, noting a growing trend in its popularity among scholars not unlike the overcrowding experienced by Africanists in the 1970s, or gamelan scholars in the 1980s (Averill, personal communication, January, 2002). A later telephone conversation with ethnomusicologist Stephen Slawek corroborated this idea, as he relayed a conversation he had recently with a dissertation supervisee (conducting research in Trinidad) who reported that Trinidad was “teeming” with ethnomusicologists (Slawek, personal communication, September, 2003).

A survey of recent pan scholarship demonstrates that, while receiving a larger amount of coverage than it has had historically, the interesting possibilities of research in pan are not in danger of being “tapped out” (Averill, personal communication, January, 2002). Conversely, the increase in recent scholarship is elucidating new possibilities for exploration by increasing the established body of knowledge on the subject, making more focused research possible and suggesting areas of further research (e.g., Kenyon Williams’ 2003 dissertation is predicated on the fulfillment of an “urgent need” detailed on page six of Shannon Dudley’s 1997 dissertation).

This process is leading to a greatly increased number of scholarly manuscripts involving pan being published. For scholars interested in pan research, this is a seemingly pleasant phenomenon, but drawbacks exist to such rapid growth. For instance, how many articles and books can be published before the market is saturated, and from a rapidly growing field of scholars, who authors these manuscripts? Also, where will the growing number of academics who focus on pan research, or

Caribbeanists at large, find academic appointments? Finally, with such a rapid influx of pan scholarship, how will the field organize the numerous new additions to the current body of knowledge?

Statement of Purpose

The last problem presented will be the focus of this study. With a rapid increase in the number of pan-related manuscripts being produced, some scholarship may be overlooked. This phenomenon is analogous to partially covering the end of a water hose: as water volume (pan scholarship) increases, or hose aperture size (room within the academic pan field) decreases, so increases the velocity of the water leaving the hose (recent literature will get little consideration given the increased volume of information to consider).

Recognition of this problem necessitates a need to create viable solutions. One such solution would be a variation on natural selection: scholars whose works do not enjoy critical success will eventually be forced out of the pan scholar population. Another possible solution would be for university programs which train such scholars to monitor and limit the number of students admitted who intend to undertake pan research. A model such as this would encourage would-be pan scholars to find a new vocation or new area of interest within their chosen academic field.

As a pan scholar who enjoys his work and identifies with the desire to learn and share new ideas and discoveries related to pan, this researcher does not find either of the aforementioned solutions attractive. One is then left with the option of finding viable ways to organize and situate the numerous new additions to the current body of knowledge. Where current methodologies are concerned, content analysis has much to offer.

Quantitative aspects of content analysis would provide pan scholars with a succinct introduction to, and familiarity with, the research being analyzed. This information would alert scholars to the nature and variety of recent research. With an emphasis on concision, quantitative content analysis would constitute an efficient (in regard to time invested by pan scholars) framework in which to organize the

voluminous amount of recent scholarship. Moreover, the fundamental suppositions in current research would be presented in a manner that is salient and lucid.

Qualitative aspects of content analysis would yield relatively thorough references (in relation to the information gleaned through quantitative content analysis) of recent pan research. This type of information would alert scholars to the purpose, relevant problems, subjects, methodologies, results, and conclusions of selected pan scholarship. A critique of this scholarship would also be provided. This methodology would provide scholars the necessary information with which to situate a selected work within the current established body of knowledge.

It should be emphasized that the purpose of this research is not to evaluate the quality of the methodology or the significance of recent pan scholarship (though to a certain degree content analysis would address these issues), but to present a viable way for pan scholars to organize and situate the numerous new additions to the current body of knowledge. By presenting “research on research” (Yarbrough, 1984, p. 213) that is cogent, lucid, and salient, the increase in recent scholarship can proceed positively by circumventing the danger of losing important discoveries which could otherwise be overlooked.

Overview of Chapter Organization

As the purpose of this study involves content analysis, a chapter dedicated solely to literature review may seem redundant. This supposition is tempered somewhat given the role of the literature review in contemporary pan scholarship. A brief survey of recent pan research elucidates this: the total pages typically dedicated to literature review range from four pages (Dudley, 1997) to two paragraphs (Williams, 2003). Much pan-related literature is not technically pan scholarship (for clarification, see “pan scholarship” in the definition of terms section found in Appendix I of the current manuscript), but contributes to pan research and should be reviewed. Also, given the concise nature of this project, some important pan scholarship will not be submitted for content analysis, but should be acknowledged. The Chapter Two literature review addresses these needs.