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Source: *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 11 (1979), pp. 1-26

Published by: [International Council for Traditional Music](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/767561>

Accessed: 15/10/2013 08:08

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BASONGYE MUSICIANS AND INSTITUTIONALIZED SOCIAL DEVIANCE

by Alan P. Merriam

The problem to be attacked in this paper concerns the social status, role, and behavior of male musicians in the village of Lupupa Ngye, one of four villages in the Bapupa cluster of the Bala subdivision of the Basongye people of the Republic of Zaïre. More specifically, the questions posed are why life should be organized in the particular pattern described below, and why that pattern should apply specifically to musicians and not, for example, to bicycle repairmen or to horticulturalists. Further, since the pattern involves three quite distinguishable facets, the further question is whether the problem is best approached in terms of each of the aspects taken separately, or whether it is more easily explicable when taken as a whole.

In order to limit and clarify the range of discussion, five explanatory points must be raised briefly. First, the pattern of behavior of the male musicians of Lupupa Ngye is closely paralleled in some other societies, but is distinctly not duplicated in others. Thus it is not suggested that the pattern to be discussed is universal among human beings, although its appearance in other parts of the world points up the value of further study of correlations and possible causes on a broader level than will be undertaken here. Second, this study does not deal with other "artists"¹ in Bala society, simply because the pattern to be discussed is not characteristic of their behavior. Indeed, among artists in Lupupa Ngye, only musicians are identifiable specialists whose behavior constitutes a separable role. The pattern does apparently apply to other kinds of artists in some other societies, but discussion of this matter is not of present concern.

Third, the data presented apply only to male musicians, and not to females. While the behavior of female musicians is considered by the Lupupans to be somewhat idiosyncratic, it is neither as definitely patterned nor as easily identifiable as that of male musicians. This, too, presents a further problem in need of investigation, but it is not undertaken here. Fourth, the methods used are primarily descriptive and analytical, taking into account the points of view of the people involved as well as the critical eye of the investigator. Finally, the methods, then, are not basically either historical or comparative. An historical approach would yield little in the way either of fresh or corroborative insights, simply because the relatively small amount of literature concerning the Basongye has almost nothing to do with music or musicians, and no literature at all exists for Lupupa Ngye except what I have myself written. The comparative approach is a more fascinating and fruitful one, which I have discussed elsewhere (Merriam 1964: 123-44), but it deserves a

much more detailed search of the literature and subsequent exposition than is immediately possible. Indeed, it is hoped that the present study will provide one basis for such widening and generalization—either corroborative or corrective—on the part of other investigators.

I

Because I have elsewhere described the overall pattern which characterizes the behavior of musicians in Lupupa Ngye (Merriam 1964: 135-37; 1973:266-72; 1974:318-19 and *passim*), my intention is only to sketch the broad outline here and to refer the interested reader to the other sources for further detail.

Lupupa Ngye is a small village lying on the savannah of the Eastern Kasai Province of the Republic of Zaïre (Merriam 1974). Its permanent population is 240 persons, with an additional transient group of about thirty-five individuals. Of the permanent residents, about fifty are males in the age range of sixteen to sixty, and it is among these persons that the musicians, budding musicians, and fading musicians, are to be found. I never attempted a census of how many males claimed competence, or even minimal ability, either in playing music instruments or in singing, but two points are germane. The first is that some men clearly and definitely insisted they had no music abilities at all; they neither played instruments nor felt themselves capable of singing, and thus took no musical part in music events. The second is that most men claimed some competence in singing, and a number showed a modicum of performance skill on various music instruments. Four men, however, claimed and exhibited special music skills; they were the “professionals” of the society, called upon to provide either the music itself or the means by which the society at large was enabled to make music at all events which required it.

These four men, then, constituted the “musicians’ group” in Lupupa Ngye; theirs, however, was not an immediately visible group, for they were too few in number and they neither lived together nor maintained particularly close social relationships. Despite this, in the eyes of the villagers, they constituted a separable set of persons, marked by behavior which did not accord with social norms. Indeed, they were labeled as non-conforming people and stereotyped in a number of ways.

This stereotype, as enunciated by non-musicians, included several factors: musicians drink, and smoke hemp, to excess, are lazy, do not like to indulge in physical labor and are poor at it, are excellent lovers but poor husbands, and are improvident and foolish in the management of money; furthermore, they quarrel, like to travel, are inordinately fond of eating, and are apt to fleece the unwary, particularly strangers.

This stereotype is held not only by non-musicians, but by musicians as well. Moreover, it turns out to be true to a very considerable extent; that is, the musicians do tend to behave in these ways. It is particularly important for the present discussion to stress that these judgments are made by the Lupupans, and not by the outside investigator. For example, the Lupupans drink alcoholic beverages of their own, and outside,

manufacture; people become drunk and disorderly, and sometimes have to be restrained by friends and relatives. This kind of behavior, however, is expected; it is an ordinary part of life, and people are prepared to handle it when it happens. But the difference with musicians is that they drink more than other people; they drink too frequently and too much; they break through the bonds of what is considered normal and acceptable and, from the point of view of the other villagers, abuse the canons concerning what is right and proper in drinking patterns.

The same applies in other areas of behavior. The Lupupans accept hemp smoking as an ordinary part of life, but musicians "smoke too much *kabangi*"; anyone may be a wastrel when it comes to money, but musicians are profligate; while adultery is common in life, musicians indulge themselves too much, pick the wrong women, and are thus considered especially untrustworthy around village wives.

In short, the behavior of musicians is deviant behavior, for it breaks the norms established for the other members of society. Furthermore, this kind of behavior is given low value by non-musicians: what musicians do is wrong, what they are is not admirable. Thus "a physical weakling does not conform to the ideals of manhood, and a man who does not farm is almost automatically considered to be physically incapable of doing the work of farming. To be impotent [and one of the four musicians is the single known impotent male in the village] is perhaps the most degrading situation in which a man can find himself" (Merriam 1973:268).

What musicians do, coupled with what others think they do (and the two are not substantially dissimilar), gives them low social status in the village.² One of the clearest indications of this status is evidenced by the fact that Lupupans are unanimous in saying that they do not wish their children to become musicians, a truly powerful statement of preference; this, and other manifestations of attitude, will be discussed further below.

If matters could be left at this point, an analysis of the musician's position in the social organization of Lupupa Ngye would not be difficult, but a second factor, as powerful as the first, must also be considered. This is the fact that while the status of the musician is low, his importance is high; that is, while his behavior may be censured, his presence is highly desired. Musicians are themselves sharply aware of this importance, and comment upon it openly—so do non-musicians. Moreover, non-musicians react with genuine seriousness to the possible loss of musicians, saying that "life in a village without musicians is not to be considered." Non-musicians and musicians alike speak of leaving Lupupa Ngye were no musicians present, and such a reaction is extremely strong, for the people are closely tied to the village by powerful and multifaceted bonds of kinship, economics, and emotion. The importance of the musician to the other members of society, then, is extremely high.

Musicians in Lupupa Ngye are clearly aware of the ambivalent situation in which they are placed. Described, and treated, as persons of low status, they are nevertheless continually reminded of their importance,

and this contradictory situation must somehow be resolved. While the musician is held in low esteem, behavior toward him cannot be so severe or degrading that he becomes offended and either withholds his music-making or, in an extreme case, leaves the village. On the other hand, if he is praised too highly and made too important, then it is no longer possible to keep him in a position of low status. Thus non-musicians must establish and protect a delicate balance of attitude toward the musician, and this is what they do, in fact; their skillful juggling of the contradictions keeps the role intact.

The musician takes advantage of the situation through a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy; since his role calls for deviant behavior, he so behaves, and this helps non-musicians to keep the role intact. At the same time, because he is aware of his own importance in society, the musician pushes at the non-musicians, so to speak, by indulging himself and thus reaping the benefits of what society will allow him to do. He is freed of many of the restraints which operate to constrict the behavior of non-musicians.

Thus musicians can, and do, behave in ways which simply would not be tolerated by non-musicians of non-musicians. A traveling musician engages in an indiscreet sexual liaison with the wife of the highest political dignitary of the village, and the couple is discovered in the act; in the end, he is released by the word of the offended husband who, in effect, says "What else can you expect of a musician?" A local musician, known to be hopelessly in debt, continues to approach villagers for further loans, and instead of turning him away, as they would a non-musician, they continue to lend him money. While such instances could be cited at length, it is important to point out that limits to such behavior do exist. These limitations rest on the quantity of the act, as has been noted, but also upon its quality. It is assumed, for example, that "everyone" indulges in adultery, and while punishments exist, and are carried out, this behavior in the case of the musician is predictable both in its normality and in its certain excess. Similarly, everyone has to borrow more or less frequently; a musician is expected, once again, to engage in this normal and acceptable behavior, but the limits of tolerance are stretched for him. However, the line is drawn at acts which are considered to be dangerously anti-social or destructive, and thus when a musician who was working for me at the time, was discovered to have stolen a small amount of food from my kitchen, the sensibilities of the villagers were deeply outraged, and it was made clear to me that I had no choice except to fire him, which I subsequently did. In Lupupan thought, theft is the most serious possible crime, "worse than murder, rape, or war" (Merriam 1974:291), and it simply cannot be tolerated. While musicians can carry recognized aberrations farther than others, they cannot use their position to commit truly serious breaches of acceptable behavior. It then follows that while non-musicians must be careful to balance off the high importance of the musician against his low status, so must the musician know which rules he can stretch and how far, and which he cannot violate at all.

What emerges, in sum, is that the role of the musician, as conceived in

Lupupa Ngye, is one of low status and high importance; this ambivalence results in deviant behavior which is tolerated by the members of society at large and capitalized upon by the musician.

II

In this discussion the words "deviant," "deviance," and "role," have been used, and the problem now is to ascertain what is meant by these terms and whether they accurately describe and apply to the particular situation at hand.

The concept of deviance has been developed in the United States primarily by sociologists, and two major approaches have been used. Both, however, begin with the basic assumption that members of society establish norms which are for the most part followed and obeyed by individuals in that society. Further, "normative rules relieve some of the anxiety and uncertainty of social interaction by specifying rights and duties, the permissible and the impermissible" (Cohen 1966:8). Each of us is socialized and enculturated at least to the extent that we know and understand the norms well enough to enable us to operate with basic efficiency in society, and to the point that ". . . people *feel* rewarded when they behave as they should" (Edgerton 1976:6). And if basic socialization and enculturation are not enough to make individuals remain reasonably in line with others, social control is exercised, either externally through police, for example, or internally, through learned guilt sanctions.

Deviance, then, refers to the breaking of these norms, and it is in these terms that most sociologists have couched their definitions. Thus Cohen says that "deviant behavior is behavior that violates the normative rules, understandings, or expectations of social systems" (1968:148), and Goffman employs the same understanding when he writes: "Starting with the very general notion of a group of individuals who share some values and adhere to a set of social norms regarding conduct and regarding personal attributes, one can refer to any individual member who does not adhere to the norms as a deviant, and to his peculiarity as a deviation" (1963:140-41). In terms of these definitions, it is clear that the musicians of Lupupa Ngye do break the established social norms and thus can reasonably be referred to as deviants.

Goffman's definition, however, raises a second point in the sociological study of deviance: the individual who does not adhere to the norms is almost always considered to be guilty of behavior which is wrong, and most particularly, "bad." Indeed, most of the literature dealing with deviance is concentrated upon out-and-out lawbreakers in Western society, who are the objects of direct punishment because of their deviance. Thus Edgerton, for example, begins his book on deviance as follows:

There are people in all societies who steal, murder, rape, cheat, lie, betray, bully, blaspheme, or otherwise offend. Such people make trouble for other people who then react with indignation, outrage, horror, or direct punitive action. People who make trouble for others by breaking socially accepted rules are known in the social sciences as deviants (1976:1).

Even when other kinds of deviance are recognized, emphasis remains concentrated upon the lawbreaker. Thus Cohen writes, on the one hand, of the varieties of deviance:

... since we must build upon what we have, this book deals more than I should have wished with those kinds of deviance—crime and delinquency leading the field—that are popularly regarded as serious social problems ... However, it is important that the reader understand ... that deviance ... is just as much concerned with the violation of the normative rules or understandings of households, business firms, fraternities, ball teams, committees, and so on, as with 'social-problem' deviance ... (1966:v-vi).

Despite this broad approach to deviance, the first sentence of Chapter I of the same book declares: "The subject of this book is knavery, skulduggery, cheating, unfairness, crime, sneakiness, malingering, cutting corners, immorality, dishonesty, betrayal, graft, corruption, wickedness, and sin—in short, deviance" (1966:1).

It is at this point that doubts begin to arise concerning the strict applicability of the sociological theory of deviance to the case of musicians in Lupupa Ngye, for while these persons do break the social norms, they are in no sense regarded as criminals, unless, as we have seen, they break the laws to which all members of society are subject. Their deviance seems to be of a different kind from that stressed by Edgerton and Cohen; while they deviate from the social norms, they have no necessary connection with criminality, and their deviance is not only tolerated by non-musicians, but often encouraged. Further difficulties arise when sociological discussions of the effects of deviance are examined, for once again, stress is most often placed both upon the individual and upon non-tolerated behavior which is disruptive to society in a major way. Cohen's discussion serves as an example:

... deviance may undermine organization by destroying people's willingness to play their parts, to make their contribution to the ongoing activity ... 'Idlers,' 'fakers,' 'chiselers,' 'sneaks,' 'deadbeats,' and the like, even if their activities do not directly threaten the interests of the virtuous, offend the virtuous because they share in the rewards ... without undergoing the sacrifices and discipline of the virtuous. ...

But the most destructive impact of deviance on organization is probably through its impact on *trust*, on confidence that others *will*, by and large, play by the rules (1966:4-5).

Most of this generalization simply does not apply to the musicians in Lupupa Ngye. The deviance in which they indulge in no way threatens the organization of society, and while they are perhaps describable as potential 'idlers,' and even, in some cases, as 'deadbeats,' they are held in the same check as other members of society when it comes to truly serious offenses. Further, Lupupans know that almost everyone in their small society will play by the rules, and most importantly, the musicians *are* playing by the rules, even though their behavior is classified as deviant by their fellows.

Other problems arise at other points in the sociological theory of deviance. Since it is most often assumed that deviance is, and must be, punishable, considerable discussion is devoted to the use of force in dealing with it. Becker puts the matter in a nutshell, when he writes: "To

the extent that a group tries to impose its rules on other groups in the society, we are presented with a second question: Who can, in fact, force others to accept their rules and what are the causes of their success? This is, of course, a question of political and economic power" (1963:17).

But such discussion is inapplicable to the case under consideration here, for no question of force occurs. Once again, musicians are not "punished" because they are musicians, even though their behavior is considered deviant by other members of the society; they *are* punished, however, when they break norms which cut too close to the bone. The musician who stole from me did not steal because he thought the tolerance accorded his deviant behavior would result in his going unpunished; that is, he did not steal because he was a musician. Rather, he stole under another set of assumptions—the norms which apply to all members of society—and he was punished on the basis of those assumptions.

This leads to the conclusion that at least two kinds, or levels, of deviance must be separated, at least in the case under discussion. In both, the term "deviance" is applicable, since the breaking of the norms of society occurs. But in one case, that of theft, the deviance is not tolerated, and is punishable; in the other case, the deviance is expressed in ways which are not considered truly harmful by other members of the society, even though they are sometimes annoyed or even outraged by it. Thus a double standard is in operation, and everyone in Lupupa Ngye knows it and its rules.

A final problem in applying a sociological theory of deviance to the musician in Lupupa Ngye arises when the implications of deviance are carried to the point at which the perpetrators are seen as outsiders in the society. Becker has discussed this point most fully; it can be summarized briefly as follows:

When a rule is enforced, the person who is supposed to have broken it may be seen as a special kind of person, one who cannot be trusted to live by the rules agreed on by the group. He is regarded as an *outsider*. . . . What, then, do people who have been labeled deviant have in common? At the least, they share the label and the experience of being labeled as outsiders (1963:1, 9-10).

Becker is not precise about what characterizes an outsider, save that it involves an individual who has broken a social rule. But once again, the concept does not seem to apply to musicians in Lupupa Ngye; despite their acknowledged deviance, they are never ostracized from society because they are musicians, though they may be for other reasons which apply both to non-musicians and musicians; and neither are they, in the sense implied by Becker, true outsiders. Although they are different, although (once again) they are considered deviant, in most aspects of their lives they come and go as ordinary citizens. While their general behavior is always considered to be at some variance to that of others, they farm, build houses, sit around the fire, fish, and carry on many of the usual activities of Lupupan life, interacting vigorously with others, who interact just as vigorously with them.

Most of the earlier sociological literature, then, deals with deviance in terms of the individual (the deviant) who breaks established norms; such individuals are bad for society, their behavior is considered dysfunctional and non-tolerable, they are punished by force represented in political and economic power, and they are banished from the central currents of society as undesirable outsiders. But we have seen that most of this model is not applicable to the musicians of Lupupa Ngye; indeed, the only application is that they are considered by other members of society to indulge in deviant behavior, i.e., the breaking of norms. Beyond that, however, they are a group, nothing indicates they are bad for society, their behavior is far more functional than dysfunctional, they are most certainly tolerated, they are not punished by force for their deviance, and they are not outsiders.

Something seems to be wrong with the model and, indeed, in the early 1960's, sociologists began to look at deviance from quite a different point of view, one which is more useful in understanding the situation under discussion. In the new model, attention swung away from the strong focus on the individual and the ways in which his behavior was punishable, toward an interpretation which emphasized the interaction between the individual and his society; in short, the change was from emphasis on deviants, to attempts to explain deviance.

At the forefront of this change of focus was Becker, who wrote in 1964:

The conventional style of studying deviance has focused on the deviant himself and has asked its questions mainly about him. Who is he? Where did he come from? How did he get that way? Is he likely to keep on being that way? The new approach sees it as always and everywhere a process of interaction between at least two kinds of people: those who commit (or are said to have committed) a deviant act and the rest of society, perhaps divided into several groups itself. The two groups are seen in complementary relationship. One cannot exist without the other . . . (Becker 1964:2).

Becker also suggests that the emphasis should be placed upon the process by which deviants are defined by others in the society, a process known as labeling. A year earlier he had written:

. . . *social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance*, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender.' The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior so label (1963:8-9).

More recently, this point of view has been espoused in the social interactionist camp, and Schur, in writing about labeling and those of the 'labeling school,' says that earlier scholars held the premises

. . . that 'deviance' is not simply a matter of social definition and that to understand it we should focus primarily on the characteristics of the deviating individual. . . . rather than on the process of response and counterresponse through which behavior takes on social meaning. . . . Research and writing by sociologists identified with what has come to be called the 'labeling school' stress the ways in which deviance is 'created' through processes of social differentiation and rule-making, through process of interaction with individuals and organizations . . . (1971:3).

Two further points then follow:

'Deviant' individuals and situations involving deviant behavior result not simply from discrete acts of wrongdoing or departure from norms; they also reflect patterns and processes of social definition (1971:4). [And] deviance is viewed not as a static entity but rather as a continuously shaped and reshaped *outcome* of dynamic processes of social interaction (1971:8).

This point of view, then, takes the stress off the individual action, *per se*, and instead sees deviance as a social process involving labeling; this allows emphasis upon much broader patterns of action as well as much more flexible views than was formerly possible. Without this recasting of ideas, the following analysis could not have been written; Cohen says:

It is necessary to distinguish between what a person has done and how he is publicly defined and categorized by members of his social world. It is mainly the latter . . . that determines how others will respond to him. To steal is not necessarily to be defined as 'a thief'; to have sexual relationships with one of the same sex is not necessarily to be defined as 'a homosexual'. . . .

The distinction between violating normative rules and being socially assigned to a deviant role is important. To explain one is not necessarily to explain the other. On the other hand, they interact in such ways that each must be taken into account in explaining the other (1968:148).

This new approach introduces an additional element into the analysis, i.e., that of social status and role, and once again, some comment and clarification are necessary.

The classic discussion of status and role was a contribution of Ralph Linton, who wrote that ". . . the functioning of societies depends upon the presence of patterns for reciprocal behavior between individuals or groups of individuals. The polar positions in such patterns of reciprocal behavior are technically known as *statuses*. . . . A status . . . is simply a collection of rights and duties" (1936:113). On the other hand, "*a role* represents the dynamic aspect of a status. . . . When [an individual] puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role. . . . There are no roles without statuses or statuses without roles" (1936:114).

Linton went on to point out that two types of statuses are found in all societies. "*Ascribed* statuses are those which are assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities. They can be predicted and trained for from the moment of birth. . . . *Achieved* statuses are . . . not assigned to individuals from birth but are left open to be filled through competition and individual effort" (1936:115).

Later social theorists have not significantly changed Linton's basic definitions, although the concepts have been sharpened and further clarified. Sarbin, for example, noted three decades later that the term ". . . 'role' continues to be used to represent the behavior expected of the occupant of a given position or status . . ." and that it involves expectations held by other persons concerning appropriate behavior for the occupant of the role, as well as enactments, or particular conduct, on his part (1968:546). Banton suggested that "society may be pictured as systems of roles" (1965:19), and Turner summarized the contemporary position when he wrote:

. . . the following elements appear in the definition of role: it provides a comprehensive *pattern* for behavior and attitudes; it constitutes a *strategy* for coping with a recurrent type of situation; it is *socially identified*, more or less clearly, as an entity; it is subject to being played recognizably by *different individuals*; and it supplies a major basis for *identifying* and *placing* persons in society (1968:552).

It has been noted that the status of the musician in Lupupa Ngye is low, and it can now be added that it is both ascribed and achieved, a further ambivalent situation. It is ascribed in that Lupupans believe the child of a musician, or musicians, is more likely to become a musician than a child whose parents are non-musical. In this respect, the Basongye hold a theory of the inheritance of talent, but at the same time, no musician appears full-blown at birth, nor is it considered necessarily unlikely that children of non-musical parents will not become musicians. As musicians improve their skills, they can move up in a hierarchy of roles, each step increasing status, both among musicians and non-musicians, but always within the confines of the role labeled "musician." A musician who is expert on all music instruments, but a master of the *lunkufi*, or wooden slit drum, and who plays all music instruments with outstanding skill, may become an *ntunda* in a particular village. If, however, he decides to become a wandering musician, available for particularly significant events such as funerals; if he decides to attempt to gain the largest part of his income through making music in this manner; and if he is successful at it, he can attain the highest grade in the hierarchy, known as *ngomba* (see Merriam 1973:256-57, *passim*). Thus status, within the role, can change through achievement, and the status of the musician in Lupupa Ngye can be described both as ascribed and achieved.

In respect to the question of whether the musicians' behavior constitutes a social role, no more than a quick reminder of Turner's summary is needed. That is, the behavior of musicians is clearly patterned; it is identified as an entity by members of society; it is clearly played recognizably by different individuals, and it does serve to identify and place individuals in the society. It also constitutes a strategy for coping with a recurrent type of situation, that situation being the making of music; the fact that it also constitutes a strategy for coping with life in Lupupa Ngye will be discussed below.

The relationship between the concepts of deviance and role can be explained in terms of the cultural concepts held by the members of any given society. Since deviance is by definition constituted of acts which violate the norms of society, it must be a cultural behavior which is particular to that society of which it is a part. The only exception to this situation occurs in the case of pathological behavior in which it is assumed that the individual is unable to avoid or correct his non-valued actions, although even in such cases it appears that a cultural component is part of his behavior. If deviance is culturally defined, then, some further matters are clarified. Cohen writes:

The expectations attaching to a role differentiate it from other roles and define the terms on which a person can be deviant. . . . To occupy . . . roles is to be exempted from some rules otherwise applicable, to be subjected to other rules, and to create special obligations for others in the role set . . . What it takes [to play a role], that is,

the criteria of the roles, depends on the culture of the system. In any case, however, membership in . . . roles must be validated in terms of *those* criteria (1968:149-50).

In other words, only musicians can play the role of musicians. Or again, in order to be a musician in Lupupa Ngye, the individual must know what is demanded of him, and must be able to fulfill those demands, not only in terms of what we would call his musicianship, but also in terms of his social behavior based on the cultural norms for this particular role. In assuming these responsibilities, he is, as Cohen points out, "exempted from some rules otherwise applicable," subjected to some other rules, and placed under a certain set of obligations. The rules by which he operates are established in his society through the application of culturally-defined norms.

Thus it is that deviance can become codified and stabilized until it constitutes both a status and a role. In Lupupa Ngye, being a musician involves deviant behavior; that behavior gives him a particular status; because his music is important to society and because he realizes this, he is a prominent figure and is in a position to take advantage of his importance; all this is codified into a role. Further, this role is normative in society; that is, it is a tolerated role, despite the fact that it involves deviance. Indeed, the role is not only accepted, but it is viewed as a useful role in society; its occupants are accepted for what they are, and are even admired for what they do.

This *institutionalized social deviance* seems to have been touched upon only briefly, and in isolated instances, in the literature on deviance. Daniels and Daniels, for example, in discussing the individual they call "the career fool," remark that such a person "may occupy a low and ridiculed position in society" and that he "has a licensed freedom; he can do things others cannot risk . . ." (1964:229). Similarly, Edgerton points out that overuse of alcohol

. . . often provides an occasion for socially sanctioned misbehavior. On such occasions, where drunkenness is accompanied by . . . violence, sexual impropriety, irresponsibility or the like—it is typically the case that this behavior, which would otherwise be very troublesome, is largely or completely excused. Such drunken misconduct will still be confined within certain limits . . . but as long as this behavior *is* within the prescribed limits, even certain kinds of homicide may be excused (1976:59; see also MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969).

Both these examples provide parallels to the situation of the Basongye musician, but neither provides an exact parallel. What is important in these descriptions, however, is the fact that we *can* find roles in Western society which are low in social status and which give the individual certain license, as in the case of the career fool; and that we can also find roles which are deviant and tolerated, as in the case of drunken comportment. Furthermore, as is the case with the Basongye musicians, such behavior has limits beyond which the individual cannot go.

Finally, Becker remarks that while "deviant behavior is often proscribed by law . . . this need not be the case," and he notes that in Western society, "Dance musicians . . . are a case in point. Though their activities are formally within the law, their culture and way of life are suffi-

ciently bizarre and unconventional for them to be labeled as outsiders by more conventional members of the community'' (1963:79; see also pp. 79-119). This is perhaps the closest parallel to the case under discussion here, but once again, it differs in a major respect: the musicians in Lupupa Ngye are not outsiders but insiders, despite the deviance which marks their behavior.

III

The situation in Lupupa Ngye constitutes a paradox, for the musicians' behavior is simultaneously deviant and normal; it is this paradox which calls for explanation. But returning to the beginning of this discussion, the specific questions posed are why the life of the musician should be organized in this particular way, and why the pattern should be applied to musicians and not, for example, to bicycle repairmen or horticulturalists. In seeking explanations, I wish to discuss the three analytically separable variables described above, from three different points of view, insofar as this is possible. The variables, which together constitute the role, are low status, high importance, and resulting deviant behavior upon which the musicians capitalize. The three points of view are those of the individual musician, of other persons in the village, and of the analytically-oriented outside observer, defined not only as the investigator *per se*, but also as social theorists in general.

The first question to be asked is why musicians in Lupupa Ngye have low social status. The most obvious answer is "because they are social deviants," but this, in turn, only leads to the next logical concern which is why musicians should play the deviant role: the answers to this question are complex, varied, and sometimes mystical.

One kind of response suggests that musicians control technical skills, i.e., music-making, which not everyone in society *can* control, so far as we know. Possession of such skills frequently sets the possessors apart, and this may be particularly true in the case of music, since it is reported from a wide variety of societies. Gilbert Chase, for example, in speaking of musicians in Latin America, writes that "although the musician may have professional interests and political motives that give him a certain solidarity with artists in other fields, the nature of his art—'comprehensible only to persons who can remember sounds'—tends to isolate him from society as a creative artist" (1964: 105). Jazz musicians in the United States have in the past actively sought social isolation, partly on the basis of their own perception of the special nature of their skill (Merriam and Mack 1960; Becker 1963:79-119). But while such technical skill is highly functional in society, so are other skills, such as repairing bicycles, which, in Lupupa Ngye, are not regarded as deviant occupations at all.

It has been suggested that music is set apart, however, by virtue of the fact that it is a touchstone through which man both alters reality and controls the forces of life. It is often argued, for example, that music changes man's perception of time and, indeed, creates its own special kind of

time. Much of this argument derives from the work of Alfred Schutz, who wrote: "For our purposes a piece of music may be defined . . . as a meaningful arrangement of tones in inner time. It is the occurrence of inner time . . . which is the very form of existence of music" (1971:170). What Schutz means by "inner time" is the unrolling of the piece of music itself; the sequence of its events as they unfold, or "flux." This differs from outer time, which is the time measured by clocks, and it goes at its own pace: thus a slow and a fast movement of a musical piece may each take the same length of clock time, but seem temporally very different to the listener. This idea of the alteration of time in music has been discussed by a number of authors, for example, Blacking with his "actual" and "virtual" time (1971:37), and Lévi-Strauss with his idea of the "immobilization" of the "passage of time" in music (1966:61).

Assuming this alteration of time to be a fact, and assuming further that it is a human universal of music perception, then it also seems logical to assume that persons who control this ability to alter time must, indeed, be special. Furthermore, music has an intimate connection with the very cycle of life itself, and those who practice it live in intimate association with basic life forces. It is musicians who are able to lead non-musicians into altered states of consciousness (see Merriam 1977:5) and to put them in touch with the superhuman world, and all these attributes and abilities, both of music and musicians, combine to make the latter special people. Indeed, it can be argued that the powerful nature of their skill makes them rather dangerous, that they must be set apart in some way, and that one means of doing this is to give them low status which minimizes their effectiveness as generalized forces in society.

If all this be true, it is not evident that the people of Lupupa Ngye recognize it as such. Musicians are treated with what might be termed "scornful and indulgent affection," and not with reverence or fear. It will be recalled that both musicians and non-musicians state emphatically and unanimously that they do not wish their own children to become musicians. The chief reason given for this attitude is that musicians are people who "are not their own masters, that the nature of their work makes it imperative that they accept the orders of others. The most frequent comparison made is to the village *lukunga*, who is the lowest of the notables and who serves as the town crier. 'No, I don't want my child to be a simple musician who plays all the time for other people. I want other people to play for him. An *ngomba* is like the *lukunga*; everybody orders him about'" (Merriam 1974:267-68).

While the explanation of the separation of musicians from the rest of society may lie, then, in the nature of the special materials they manipulate and the consequences of that manipulation, such an explanation comes from outside the society. Internally, "explanation" lies in the stereotyping discussed previously, the strong view that musicians are inferior because they are ordered about, and the expressed knowledge that musicians do break social norms.

A second set of explanations is based not upon the stuff of music itself and the consequences for its practitioners, but upon the psychology of the individual. Such interpretation depends upon intimate knowledge of

those concerned, as well as upon their separate thoughts, aspirations, and mental processes. I do not have this kind of information for the musicians of Lupupa Ngye, but some examples of the type of explanation involved may present possible solutions to the problem posed.

In his useful summary of explanations for social deviance, Edgerton has suggested five different approaches. The first, attributed most particularly to Merton, explains deviance in terms of social strain or anomie; that is, “. . . man will deviate from the expectations of his fellow men only if he experiences some major disjunction between his *goals* and the legitimate *means* of attaining them, or if the rules themselves become contradictory or meaningless” (1976:19). This explanation seems to shed no light on the situation in Lupupa Ngye, for it emphasizes the situation of each individual alone, and our problem involves a group. Furthermore, the necessary major disjunctions simply do not seem to be present; the individuals involved have music as a goal and have taken entirely legitimate means to achieve that goal.

The second kind of explanation for deviance noted by Edgerton is labeled the “sub-cultural,” by which is meant that “people violate the rules of a society because the very act of conforming with their own way of life forces them into conflict with the culture of the dominant society. . . . They act in accord with the expectations of their *own* reference group . . .”, but not in accord with that of the dominant group (1976:20). This seems more a description of the situation than an explanation of it, and does not move us forward significantly.

The third type of explanation deals with the purely psychological; included are the behavior of the psychopath or sociopath, the importance of early experiences in creating psychological tendencies to deviate, deviance as reaction formation, and so forth (1976:21-23). None of the musicians in Lupupa Ngye show evidence of psychopathic or sociopathic behavior, and information concerning the other possibilities is simply not available.

A fourth kind of explanation suggested by Edgerton concerns biological defect, or faulty genetics (1976:23, 81-9), and it seems too coincidental to suppose that all those who choose a particular social role do so for this reason: once again, the explanation is tailored to the single individual, and not to a group. Edgerton's fifth class of explanation lies clearly on the group, rather than the individual, level, and will be referred to below.

Other kinds of explanations seem equally disparate, and often equally unsatisfactory because of their reference to the lone individual. Hatterer, for example, suggests that the artist is a neurotic, and that it is this predisposition which sets him off as a deviant. Careful to separate the psychotic from the neurotic, Hatterer writes:

A more constructive approach may be to allow that there are common psychological phenomena that occur both in the creative and in the neurotic personality. All too frequently, abnormal psychological phenomena simulate what occurs normally in the creative process to such an extent, in fact, that they may be confused . . . For example, during a period of creative warm-up and reflection, an artist can experience a variety of disturbing emotions, such as anxiety, tension, depression, rage, guilt, and

elation. . . . Any one or all of these can also occur in persons with neurotic and psychotic illness (1965:28).

At another point, Hatterer cites the Freudian concept of sublimation, remarking that "Freud hypothesized that the creative act is rooted in transformed sexual energy, in the diversion of these energies to higher, more socially acceptable aims. Creativity, he felt, arose out of the artist's unconscious need to rid himself of mental tension. . . . In his view, artistic creation permits the artist to successfully escape reality . . ." (1965:19). Coser also suggests that deviant behavior "may serve to release tension accumulated during the socialization process and through frustration and deprivations in adult roles" (1956:51). Still another suggestion is that the artist ". . . separates himself from society to express his dissatisfaction with accepted norms. He feels that many of society's values are destructive, not only socially, but personally. His creative practice and way of life becomes his protest, his protection, and his escape" (Hatterer 1965:34).

A third major attempt at explanation suggests that people become deviants because society needs such individuals; such needs are of several kinds. Cohen, for example, remarks that "a certain amount of deviance, disparaged but not rigorously repressed, may perform a 'safety valve' function by preventing the excessive accumulation of discontent and by taking some of the strain off the legitimate order" (1966:7), and this interpretation is argued by others as well (Shoham 1976:141). An extension of this idea is that deviants provide a means through which social rules and norms are changed; that is, if a sufficient number of persons are frustrated by the rules, refuse to obey them and thus, in a sense, become deviants, the rules and norms will be changed (Cohen 1966:7). Taking this another step, Shoham writes:

. . . otherness and sameness help to define and emphasize each other. The socially conforming are defined in contrast with the socially deviant, the law-abiding by the criminal, and the socially in through the exclusion of the undeserving outs. . . .

As a direct corollary of this reasoning, innovators are perceived as harbingers of desired and 'progressive' social change. But innovators, by definition, are deviants. They have special qualities, unusual insights, and subtlety of perception, all qualities that almost guarantee they will be labeled deviant. Consequently, innovator-deviants are responsible for much of the progress of society and culture, in the Spencerian sense. The sad part of this story is that the group usually repays the innovators with ostracism, sometimes even death—only to raise monuments to their memory afterwards (1976:136-37).

The point here is that the view of the deviant as instigator of social and cultural change is not incongruous with the situation of musicians in Lupupa Nyge, although it is perceived from the outsider's, and not from the insider's, point of view. It could well be argued that society, seeing in the deviant the potential for destruction of things as they are now, would regard him with considerable wariness and, as a means of neutralizing his impact upon normative social rules, relegate him to a low social status. While the notion is analytically applicable to the case, it is not applied by the participants.

Beidelman suggests that persons such as priests and prophets exhibit

“cultural hostility,” but that they “help their fellows and provide guidance towards socially approved ends which benefit others as well as themselves,” and thus that their behavior “. . . achieves a new synthesis in terms of the most basic social norms” (1971:402). Although this may apply less directly to musicians than to priests and prophets, its suggestion that deviance and cultural hostility are associated may help us to understand why deviants are sometimes relegated to a low social status, for culturally hostile people are regarded warily by society.

Although he is speaking about non-tolerated behavior, Shoham suggests a social need for scapegoats:

The criminal serves the legitimate society in many ways. First, he allows the law-abiding bourgeois to release some of his aggression. . . . Punishing the criminal also helps to ease the guilt felt by respectable citizens. . . . The criminal and his punishment also help the respectable and law-abiding citizen to remain respectable and law-abiding . . . (1976:137, 138, 139).

Finally, in this brief catalogue of some of the ways social theorists have viewed the role of the deviant, attention may be called to Erickson’s view that:

As a trespasser against the group norms, [the deviant] represents those forces which lie outside the group’s boundaries: he informs us, as it were, what evil looks like, what shapes the devil can assume. And in doing so, he shows us the difference between the inside of the group and the outside. It may well be that without this ongoing drama at the outer edges of group space, the community would have no inner sense of identity and cohesion, no sense of the contrasts which set it off as a special place in the larger world.

Thus deviance cannot be dismissed simply as behavior which *disrupts* stability in society, but may itself be, in controlled quantities, an important condition for *preserving* stability (1964:15).

Shoham echoes this point when he writes that “. . . the denunciation of an outgroup . . . always helps the cohesion of the ingroup. There is no better way to arouse solidarity in a citizen’s action committee than a vivid description of a threatening crime wave” (1976:140).

At this point, summary of a rather bewildering variety of theories and ideas is in order. The question with which we began concerns why musicians in Lupupa Ngye hold low social status. The most immediate answer is that they are considered to be deviants. From the insider’s view, musicians are perceived as people who break social norms, which is, of course, also the classic Western definition of deviance. They are also seen as people whose professional lives are regulated and controlled by others, a situation which is not valued and which leads to the assignment of low position and esteem by non-musicians.

From the outsider’s point of view, three main theoretical orientations have bearing on the question. The first suggests that musicians are treated as deviants because they have special technical skills which not everyone can control and which put them into close association with life forces and the superhuman world in a village like Lupupa Ngye.

A second set of explanations revolves around the suggestion that deviants exhibit specific, and unacceptable, personality characteristics for one of a number of reasons: as a result of anomie, the formation of sub-

cultural norms, psychopathic or sociopathic tendencies, biological defect, because artists are closely equated with the neurotic, or because the artist functions as a social malcontent.

The third set of explanations consists of a group of ideas which proposes that society needs social deviants and creates them: as a safety valve, a means through which social rules and norms are changed, scapegoats, persons who through their deviance help define what is normal, or persons whose deviance helps create social solidarity.

None of these explanations seems completely satisfactory; although each helps us to understand, two problems remain. The first is that the theorists persist in viewing deviance on the basis of the individual, which means that in order to understand the deviance of the musicians in Lupupa Ngye, each individual's personality and mental attributes must be examined and understood. While this would provide extremely fruitful insights, the data are not available, they are not likely ever to be available, and more important, it is the actions and position of the group which is of interest to us *per se*. The second problem is that while these ideas, in part or in whole, do explain a number of reasons for deviance, they do not tell us why this particular group exists in its particular social situation in Lupupa Ngye.

This brings us to the second of the three variables under discussion—the high importance of the musicians in Lupupa Ngye. In this case, explanations are much more evident; the answer to the question seems clearly to be that the musicians do control technical skills which enable them to produce music which, in turn, is of great value to the people of the village. Society needs the services of musicians, for without music, normal life patterns simply cannot continue, at least as that society is currently construed by its members. Without the *ngomba*, the traveling professional, a major funeral cannot take place; without the *ntunda*, celebration of the village protector figure cannot operate on its regular lunar cycle. Birth, death, and most major events in between take place to the accompaniment of, or are celebrated through, music of one form or another. Nor is this view of the importance of music valid only from the outsider's view; as I have written elsewhere:

Though as an individual [the musician] may be scorned and stereotyped as a person of little consequence, his functions in the society make him essential. Indeed, nonmusicians, when proffered the suggestion that the village might be better off if these n'er-do-wells were banished from it, reacted with seriousness and, in some cases, almost horror. Life in a village without musicians is not to be considered, and people spoke of leaving the village were no musicians present. This reaction cannot be taken lightly, for the bonds of kinship and economics which tie an individual to his village are extremely difficult to break. Without musicians a village is incomplete. People want to be happy, and music-making is associated closely with happiness. . . . Musicians perform a variety of functions in village life which no one else can replace; life without them cannot be normal and is not to be contemplated seriously (Merriam 1973:269-70).

The matter hardly need be discussed further; the high importance of the musician is readily and verbally acknowledged by all members of the society.

The third variable to be discussed is the capitalization by the musi-

cians on the ambivalent situation in which they find themselves, and thus the reinforcement of their deviant behavior. Crucial to the argument is the demonstration that this is a conscious process on the part of the musicians.

Musicians in Lupupa Ngye value their life style; as Goffman has suggested, “. . . social deviants often feel that they are not merely equal to but better than normals, and that the life they lead is better than that lived by the persons they would otherwise be” (1963:145). While this statement is perhaps a shade strong in comparison to village musicians’ verbalized evaluation of their lives, it is basically reasonable and apt. Furthermore, musicians are verbal about their importance in the society:

. . . no musician fails to add that he and his fellows are among the most important people in Lupupa Ngye. Nkolomoni, after pointing out . . . deviations [in behavior among musicians] adds that ‘people like musicians and help them with their fields and to pay off their debts. People don’t want them to leave the village, and this is why they help them. People do not like to be in a village where there are no musicians. Musicians are more important than ordinary people because when there is war it is the musicians who give strength and force to the people; it is the same when there is work to do.’ Mandungu says: ‘Musicians are more important than ordinary people. They are required for a funeral, they are paid when others are not, and they work for everyone. The musician is like a chief. People always gather around musicians.’ Mwepu adds: ‘Musicians are more important than other people because everyone likes them and because everyone is happy when they play.’ Chite says: ‘Yes, the musician is like the *lukunga* in that he is ordered about by others, but he is more important and more respected than the *lukunga*. A musician is like a woman because everyone likes him, and because he is difficult to replace’ (Merriam 1973:269).

These remarks speak for themselves: the musicians’ high sense of the importance of their own selves is evident in them.

It is almost surely the high importance accorded them by other members of society that makes the musician’s strong self-evaluation possible; and without this view, as well as the knowledge of the role he is expected to play, he could hardly take advantage of society in the obvious ways he does. Thus when a musician commits adultery with the wife of a leading political dignitary and is excused for it; when a musician, hopelessly in debt, continues to ask for loans, and to receive them; when still another boasts of his prowess in an unseemly way, and is excused for it with a laugh—all are taking advantage of the license allowed them by other members of society. It is important to reemphasize that not only does the musician know he is acting in ways which are outside that usually allowed, and which redound to his own profit, but also that non-musicians are aware this is happening. It is only when the behavior goes too far, asks too much, probes too deeply, that non-musicians draw the line, and thus it is only in certain areas and to certain degrees that musicians can take advantage of their deviance. These behaviors and situations, and their fit with other behaviors and situations, are clear to the outside observer. They result from the ambivalence of the musicians’ position and role: censured for their flouting of social norms, but irreplaceable in ongoing life, they are “paid” in terms of tolerance beyond that which is exhibited toward other citizens. Whatever the social cost engendered, it is clearly worth it, both for the musician and the non-musician.

IV

The final question is a summary of all those raised in previous pages, and in fact it is three questions asked together. Why should such behavior exist? Why should it exist in Lupupa Ngye? Why should it exist most particularly among musicians? At least three major answers can be suggested, but underlying them all is the crucial fact that the musicians in Lupupa Ngye are not viewed by the non-musicians as disruptive forces in the society. Theirs is not dysfunctional deviance; quite to the contrary, it is highly functional deviance, and the fact is acknowledged by all concerned. Indeed, the point that musicians are tolerated in Lupupa Ngye precisely because their behavior is not dysfunctional leads us to one of the three possible explanations; simply put, it is that inherent in human beings is a need for escape from boredom, and for the variety that contrast brings.

Edgerton has noted that deviance occurs in all societies: "it occurs in the small as well as the large, the simple as well as the complex. . . . Deviance is ubiquitous" (1976:73). Further, he speculates, deviance may be "natural to man or necessary for social health" (1976:6), and others have speculated along the same lines. In commenting on the nature of man as a species, Linton wrote:

This tendency toward unnecessary and in some cases even injurious elaboration of culture is one of the most significant phenomena of human life. It proves that the development of culture has become an end in itself. Man may be a rational being, but he certainly is not a utilitarian one. The constant revision and expansion of his social heredity is a result of some inner drive, not of outer necessity. It seems that man enjoys playing with both his mind and his muscles. The skilled craftsman is not content with endless repetitions. He takes delight in setting and solving for himself new problems of creation. The thinker derives pleasure from speculating about all sorts of things which are of no practical importance, while the individuals who lack the ability to create with either hand or mind are alert to learn new things. It seems probable that the human capacity for being bored, rather than man's social or natural needs, lies at the root of man's cultural advance (1936:90).

In a similar vein, Edgerton has noted that Freud held the view that "man seems to be the sort of creature who can experience intense pleasure only through contrast," and Edgerton continues:

Should a need for contrast exist as an attribute of human nature, its significance for deviance lies in the possibility that once a primary need for security has been established in a predictable and stable environment, people will tend to become *bored* and may seek new experiences or variety even though such contrasts involve danger or risk of rule violation . . . Societies with elastic rules may successfully permit contrast-seeking behavior within the limits of what is permissible; more confining societies may compel people to deviate in order to satisfy their need for contrast (1976:99).

Finally, this need for variety, contrast, escape from boredom, has been expressed by Wallace in cognitive terms. He writes:

. . . we ask whether the fact that cognitive sharing is not a *necessary* condition of society does not mask an even more general point. Not only *can* societies contain subsystems, the cognitive maps of which are not uniform among participants; they *do*, in fact, invariably contain such systems. Ritual, for instance, is often differently conceptualized by viewers and performers; public entertainment similarly is variously perceived by professional and audience; . . . Indeed, we now suggest that

human societies may characteristically *require* the non-sharing of certain cognitive maps among participants in a variety of institutional arrangements. Many a social sub-system simply will not 'work' if all participants share common knowledge of the system. It would seem therefore that cognitive *non*-uniformity may be a functional desideratum of society . . . For cognitive non-uniformity subserves two important functions: (1) it permits a more complex system to arise than most, or any, of its participants can comprehend; (2) it liberates the participants in a system from the heavy burden of knowing each other's motivation (1961:39-40).

In different ways, each of these three thinkers is making the same point. Assuming their expressions to represent one view, and assuming that view to have validity, its application to the situation of musicians in Lupupa Ngye seems direct and clear. The musicians provide relief from boredom through their very deviance; that same deviance contrasts sharply and visibly with the normal behavior of non-musicians; and the knowledge and behavior they share makes manifest the fact that their cognitive maps differ from those of non-musicians, thus enriching the total knowledge of the society. As will be explained later, the social organization of Lupupa Ngye does not provide for a great variety of tolerated behavior, thus making the role of the deviant particularly visible, and thus particularly important. In the end, however, the validity of this interpretation depends upon one's belief in the positive function of, and indeed, the necessity for, diversity in society.

This leads us to the second potential explanation for the behavior of musicians in Lupupa Ngye, and it is perhaps a corollary of the first: the deviant behavior of musicians is tolerated, and even encouraged by non-musicians, because such deviance represents at least partly what everyone in the society would like to do. Again this point has been touched upon in the literature on deviance; Erickson writes:

If we grant that deviant forms of behavior are often beneficial to society in general, can we then assume that societies are organized in such a way as to promote this resource? Can we assume . . . that forces operate within the social order to recruit deviant actors and commit them to deviant forms of activity? . . . one observation can be made which gives the question an interesting perspective—namely, that deviant activities often seem to derive support from the very agencies designed to suppress them (1964:15).

That such activities must be kept in check so that all citizens do not engage in behavior which breaks the rules seems evident (Shoham 1976:139), but even the deviant behavior of musicians in Lupupa Ngye, as noted, runs only in certain channels and only within certain known limits. In almost all respects, this explanation seems to fit the situation well. While what musicians do is outside the pale, it *is* controlled, and this makes it potentially feasible behavior for others. Musicians and their antics are enjoyed by non-musicians; they are considered funny, just slightly dangerous, titillating. Their freedom from a number of the restraints placed on the non-musician is attractive. Even though non-musicians do not wish their children to become musicians, they would clearly like to drink more than usual, make more money and spend it prodigally, feel free to act without fear of the usual retribution. Their actions and attitudes toward musicians show it, and even their toleration shows it.

But this raises two further points. The first is that while this represents behavior in which most might like to indulge, it also represents a way of life which is not respected. Thus non-musicians walk a line just as do musicians; for them it is the question of how to indulge themselves without accepting the concomitant role responsibility. Most of them, of course, make the decision not to become musicians, and instead, take other, less sharply defined outlets open to them.

The second point is that the size of the society makes a considerable difference in this situation. The 240 people who make up the population of Lupupa Ngye all know each other intimately, and this may well be what makes it possible to have tolerated, normal, functional, positive deviance in a society. So long as people know each other personally, and know to a considerable extent what each person is likely and not likely to do in a given situation, deviance is possible and non-threatening. As a society grows in size, deviance looms larger and becomes more frightening, for the deviants are unknown and their deviance is not so well understood. Even criminals, as defined in Lupupa Ngye, are not frightening; neither are people whose nature makes them violent, for unless their behavior becomes unpredictable, people know how to cope with them. Thus it is with musicians: the behavior which we define as deviant is not really deviant in a major sense; non-musicians know what musicians will do and what they will not do; their lives flow in normal, though unique, channels, and they appear as a positive force in the society. Deviance in a large society is much more difficult to handle.

The third potential explanation for the behavior of musicians in Lupupa Ngye, and the one which seems to fit the particular situation best, suggests that individuals become musicians in order to escape the normal male role in the village. Furthermore, the codified role of the musician is virtually the only way such an escape can be made while still allowing the individual to remain within the boundaries of the society.

It is a truism that the world is made up of people who act individually; it is also a truism that they are organized into societies and together establish norms and rules of behavior for themselves. If we ask what motivates each individual to behave in a particular way, we are asking questions on the psychological level; if we ask, on the other hand, why groups of people behave in particular ways, we are asking social questions. Similarly we can seek individual or social answers to our questions. Throughout this discussion, both kinds of questions have been asked, but the ultimate answers have lain on the social level. The most valid explanations are couched in terms of an understanding of the role itself rather than of an understanding of the individual behavior of each person who can be identified as living within that role. We are speaking, then, primarily of deviance rather than of deviants, and in this sense it is vital to understand something of the society with which we are dealing if we are to understand the role.

Although I have discussed this matter elsewhere (Merriam 1974:306-26), a few salient points must be repeated. The culture of Lupupa Ngye, like all cultures of the world, is marked by powerful themes which are potent influences on behavior. One of these, for ex-

ample, is the belief in male predominance and dominance over females, but the most important is what I have called the principle of normalcy. "This is the attitude that behavior must be normal, and that abnormal or abnormal behavior is to be viewed with the greatest suspicion. The principle of normalcy runs through the culture of Lupupa Ngye with great regularity; it is found in mundane matters more or less shared with most cultures of the world, in observable forms specific to this particular culture, and in deep attitudes and beliefs which put strong pressure upon the individual to make his behavior accord generally with that of others" (Merriam 1974:311).

This goal is achieved through a variety of techniques, such as strong shame sanctions, among others, but "the Lupupans . . . lay a very special emphasis upon being like other people, upon a pattern of normalcy that reaches beyond usual societal emphasis on learning to do things properly. This pattern runs throughout the organization of society and culture and is manifested in scores of ways, some of which are subtle and indirect, and others which are primal and sharply objectified" (1974:313-14).

Thus persons should not do things alone, for that is abnormal and may open one to accusations of being a witch. Bachelorhood is a strange and suspicious state; people should have many formalized friends; marriage partners should match in their physical configurations; a good reputation depends upon being normal in as many ways as possible, and sanctions are brought to bear, directly or indirectly, upon those who step outside the norms.

Such a situation in a small community like Lupupa Ngye provides regularity, safety, and comfort to its members, but it cannot be supposed that all persons agree to conform. Some individuals deviate from the norms, and the remaining members of society must deal with them in some fashion. In Lupupa Ngye, three choices are available: ". . . such persons must be expelled from the society, as is the case, for example, with thieves . . . ; or room must be made for them in roles which, however deviant, are still useful; or they must simply be tolerated on the edges of society, even though they perform few useful tasks," as is the case with the *kitesha*, or male transvestite (Merriam 1974:317; see also Merriam 1971). It is the "deviant-but-useful role" which applies to the musicians.

In fact, being a musician is the only way a male Lupupan can escape the dominant male role with its heavy load of "normalcy," and still be tolerated as a useful member of society.

Where the Lupupan male horticulturalist is hard-working, the musician is a loafer; where the former is frugal, the latter is spendthrift; where the one is expected to be a family man, the other is expected to be a chaser after women who neglects his own wife and family. . . . Whatever the 'mainstream man' of Lupupa Ngye is, the musician is not (Merriam 1974:318).

But in this case, we do not have to worry about whether the role creates the personality or the personality creates the role, for whatever the beginnings of the institution, it is now fixed in the society as one of its rec-

ognized modes of behavior. It *is* a social role. Looked at in this way, the apparent paradox of the musicians' role is resolved: the musician is both deviant and normal simultaneously, for his normal role, accepted by society, consists of deviant behavior.

Despite the normality of the role, it is not bought cheaply by the musicians or given cheaply by society—both sides must “pay their dues” to resolve the inherent conflict. For the musicians, it means being different in the face of the strong societal drives toward normalcy, and vulnerable as well. Musicians are psychologically jostled on almost any given occasion. They are jeered at publicly, reminded of their shortcomings, and subjected to regular, if relatively mild, verbal abuse.

Their response is usually good-natured acceptance, at least on the surface. Sometimes they return jibe for jibe, sometimes they are quiet, frequently they respond at the moment of stress by clowning. Thus the villagers reinforce the role by carrying out their part in it, and the musicians further reinforce it by acting as musicians should. If the musicians are forced to accept their low status, non-musicians are forced to tolerate deviant behavior.

It has been suggested that “creative people” use their creativity to “escape reality” (Hatterer 1965:19), but the musician of Lupupa Ngye is, to the contrary, in the midst of reality. Constantly walking a tightrope between what he can and cannot do both to keep non-musicians satisfied and to retain his own status as an accepted deviant, he is paralleled by the non-musician who walks his own tightrope between overstepping the bounds of his behavior which would result in losing the musician and his services, and still keeping the musician within the limits of acceptable role behavior. What we can account for here is the role as role and the delicate balance of forces which keeps both sets of players satisfied. Through the role—deviant but normal—the musician escapes what society requires of other men; he pays for his escape by doing what he says he wants to do, i.e., making music, but under conditions which constantly remind him of his low status in society.

This analysis has answered some of the questions posed, but not all of them. Some of the theories suggested seem to account reasonably well for why the musician in Lupupa Ngye has low social status; his importance is easily demonstrated. His indulgence in deviant behavior stems clearly from the ambivalence of his social position, and the behavior itself is the result of the established social role he has chosen, a role non-musicians allow him to play as the price they pay for his services.

What we still do not know is why certain individuals choose this role, but that is a psychological question which is on quite a different level from most of the present discussion. Neither do we know why this particular role should have been taken by musicians, rather than people who repair bicycles, unless it is because of the nature of the special materials musicians handle. Finally, the suggestions made here have not been comparative, either to other “artists” within the society or to other

musicians outside it. We have much reason to believe that further inquiry into these questions would be of significance in helping us to understand the role of the musician—and of other artists—in human society.

NOTES

In 1959-60, field work was carried out under grants from the National Science Foundation, the Belgian American Educational Foundation, and the Program of African Studies of Northwestern University, with the close cooperation in the Republic of Zaïre (then the Belgian Congo) of l'Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale and l'Université Nationale du Zaïre, Campus de Kinshasa (then l'Université Lovanium). Research in 1973 was undertaken with grants from the African Studies Program of Indiana University and the Joint Committee on African Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies, with the cooperation in the Republic of Zaïre of l'Institut des Musées Nationaux. Grateful acknowledgment is hereby made to all these organizations and institutions.

Portions of this paper have been presented in various forms and circumstances to seminars at Indiana University, and more formally, to the plenary session of the Midwest Chapter meetings of the Society for Ethnomusicology, April 8, 1979, under the same title. I am grateful for the many suggestions and positive criticisms put forward by my students and colleagues, and I have tried to consider them carefully.

James H. Vaughan has pointed out that the problem under discussion might well be approached in terms of exchange theory, and this led me to see that equally fruitful analyses could be undertaken along the paths of individual psychology, interactionism, and other models as well. It would be a fascinating experiment to attempt to rewrite the paper from several different perspectives, but life is short, and I have chosen to cast my presentation in terms of the concepts of deviance and role which seem to me to be basic to the situation.

1. I hesitate to use the word "artist" because of its inevitable Western connotations and implications, but thus far no truly satisfactory substitute has been suggested.
2. The term, "status," has been used to indicate both position and prestige; in the case at hand, both are low.

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