

Culture



John Miller CHERNOFF, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1979. 261 pages, US \$8.95 (paper)

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[See table of contents](#)

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tions of bridewealth. For those who are concerned with bridewealth and marriage institutions in particular, and also with the notion of ideological transformations, there is a good deal of interest here, if tantalizingly brief in exposition, and such readers may—as they should—be induced to attend more closely to the earlier chapters and the detailed analysis.

John Miller CHERNOFF, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1979. 261 pages, US \$8.95 (paper).

By Chet Creider
University of Western Ontario

This is a marvelous book. In at least six respects it goes against the grain of conventional wisdom for anthropological work on Africa, yet it is successful on all counts. Very little which is new is said in the book about the formal and technical side of African music (the significant work of A.M. Jones here is often acknowledged). The work is strikingly different from the kind of single-people-based ethnography on which Africanist anthropologists have long prided themselves: numerous styles of numerous different peoples are treated, some in great detail, others just touched upon. The 'ethnographic present', insofar as this involves a reconstruction of earlier, 'traditional' ways is not present, and instead the work consistently cuts across traditional and modern African music and attempts to deal with both in a common framework. The author uses African rhythm as a springboard for a discussion of African social life: the book is subtitled, *Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*. It is clear that the work has been written to be read with profit by both professional anthropologists and lay people, by musicologists and the musically naive. Finally, the author has gone native. We are presented not with the haphazard participant observation found in most anthropological fieldwork, but with an account of a thorough-going apprenticeship in the technically difficult craft of drumming.

Despite these potential drawbacks this book is an unqualified success. Indeed, what at first sight appear to be weaknesses turn out to be significant strengths. The ethnographic reality in much of Africa and certainly that part of it which concerns Chernoff is one where numerous peoples are in

constant everyday interaction with one another, and it is one where traditional approaches, both with respect to technique and to social function, are strongly present in popular music. The tendency to superficiality which is present whenever anthropologists compare and contrast diverse peoples is held in check by Chernoff's grounding of his comparisons in the music and speech of actual musicians, both modern and traditional. His discussion of the technical aspects of musical organization and performance gives sufficient detail that the reader is fully aware of what is being talked about, but is clearly subordinated to his larger purposes. Although Chernoff's personal involvement with his subject is constantly present in the book, the work has none of the appearance of a work written while in the field. It is, rather, a scholarly work which happens to also be accessible to a wider audience and in which the author has utilized a novel approach to the collection of his data.

'Scholarship and participation' is the title of the introduction. The most detailed account of Chernoff's personal involvement with the music he studies is given here. Among the many points raised, the author's feeling that his purity of motive was important to what he was able to achieve is worth noting. Chernoff's study of African music was undertaken for the sake of his love for it and with no expectation of reaping any profit (academic, financial or personal are his categories).

The first chapter is entitled, "The Study of Music in Africa". A short eleven pages, it contrasts the separation of art and artistic performance from the everyday world in Western culture with the way in which music is integrated into 'social, economic and political life'. Succeeding chapters are entitled, 'Music in Africa', 'Style in Africa' and 'Values in Africa'; they move in the direction of increasing generalization to make tangible the nature of the involvement of music in the fabric of African culture. 'Music in Africa' presents the most technical discussion of the book: polymeter, call-and-response (and other 'conversational' procedures) are illustrated, and the general tendency to orient to 'silent' beats ('an African drummer concerns himself as much with the notes he does not play as with the accent he delivers') is discussed in detail. Even here the involvement of music in the rest of life is dealt with: lyrics with social commentary, drumming which is related to speech.

'Style in Africa' continues the technical discussion but now moves to a consideration of what good performance is. The deemphasis of flashy technique and the achievement of clarity of form through repetition with subtle variation are perhaps two

points of similarity between African music and the traditional music styles of other parts of the world. Again what is not done is as important as what is: 'The music is perhaps best considered as an arrangement of gaps where one may add a rhythm, rather than as a dense pattern of sound'. A richness of commentary by African musicians on what constitutes good style plus a discussion of those moments where the author, by his playing, succeeded in moving his audience make this chapter the richest in the book. 'Values in Africa' presents a fascinating musical perspective on the nature of social order in African societies.

A tape cassette is available from the publisher which illustrates the rhythms discussed in the book and which is keyed to relevant passages in the book. While not necessary to follow the arguments given in the book, it is certainly a wonderful adjunct to it.

Not many scholars will ever be able to achieve the kind of synthesis of 'doing' and 'writing about' their subject matter that Chernoff has achieved, but he has given us an excellent illustration of what is possible.

Alain TESTART, *Les chasseurs-cueilleurs ou l'origine des inégalités*, Paris, Société d'Ethnographie, 1982. 250 pages, bibliographie.

Par Jérôme Rousseau
Université McGill

Cet ouvrage est une discussion systématique des facteurs qui permettent ou amènent une complexification des systèmes sociaux chez les chasseurs-cueilleurs. L'auteur montre en particulier qu'il est aberrant de considérer comme des exceptions les sociétés de chasseurs-cueilleurs sédentaires où est présente une différenciation sociale: les chasseurs-cueilleurs ne constituent pas un type de société. On peut tout au moins différencier deux catégories majeures: les sociétés nomades et les sédentaires. Ces dernières forment l'objet de cet ouvrage, et en particulier celles de pêcheurs sédentaires. L'auteur s'attaque aussi à l'idée que l'adoption d'un mode de vie agricole représente le tournant majeur dans l'histoire de l'humanité.

Selon Testart, le facteur central dans la différenciation et la complexification des systèmes sociaux dépend de l'importance donnée au stockage des ressources de base. C'est le stockage, et non l'agriculture, qui est l'élément stratégique de la sé-

dentarisation, de la diversification de la technologie, de l'expansion démographique et du développement de l'inégalité sociale et de la guerre.

L'auteur commence son propos en décrivant plusieurs de ces sociétés réputées exceptionnelles: celles de la côte nord-ouest américaine, du sud-est sibérien, de la Californie, du delta de l'Orénoque, ainsi que le cas natoufien (où la sédentarisation a précédé l'agriculture). Il base son propos à la fois sur des données ethnographiques et archéologiques. Après avoir dégagé les grandes lignes de ces systèmes sociaux, il étudie quelques cas limites, et pose ensuite la question du lien entre contraintes naturelles et développement d'une économie de chasseurs-cueilleurs où il y a stockage.

Cet ouvrage montre clairement que c'est au niveau de l'économie, et non à celui de l'écologie, que l'on doit commencer l'analyse des systèmes sociaux. Il ne s'agit pas là bien sûr d'un point de vue nouveau; plusieurs ouvrages récents ont analysé l'importance du stockage et du développement de l'inégalité dans des sociétés de chasseurs-cueilleurs. Le mérite de cet ouvrage est de présenter de façon systématique, et avec une série d'exemples, un argument qui a été avancé ailleurs à propos de groupes spécifiques. L'ouvrage est clair, bien présenté, et agréable à lire. Il sera particulièrement utile à des fins didactiques.

David J. HUFFORD, *The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982. 278 pages, US \$25.00 (cloth).

By William L. Rodman
McMaster University

The paranormal and the supernatural remain fields of study peripheral to anthropology, happy hunting grounds for would-be shamans, positivist debunkers, crypto-phenomenologists and a few die-hard functionalists. Given the marginality of the field, and given a title that sounds more like a creature-feature than a work of serious scholarship, *The Terror That Comes in the Night* may not receive the wide readership within anthropology that it deserves. That would be a pity, because David Hufford has written a monograph that is innovative, provocative and just a bit unsettling.

Most scientists, like most members of the public, believe that the supernatural is a domain built on