

## Culture



**Ruth M. STONE, *Let the Inside Be Sweet. The Interpretation of Music Event among the Kpelle of Liberia*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982, 180 pages, US \$20.00 (cloth)**

Chet Creider

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ed in the weaving process itself and the income from weaving, detailed appendices are provided. It is not, however, a book for the casual reader. Extensive detailed description requires perhaps too careful reading for some very important points to emerge. One only wishes that these had been highlighted and made more salient for the less committed reader and thereby also more accessible to a broader audience. Notwithstanding this drawback, it is a book which, if one does read it, rewards one with nuggets of information that are thought provoking and offers a distinctly different view of Indian society and the potential for social change than one is likely to find elsewhere.

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The author's aim in this book is to bridge the gap between the perspectives of the 'sound-ethnomusicologist' and the 'behaviour-ethnomusicologist', i.e., between the work of scholars primarily interested in musical structure as abstracted from the cultural matrix in which it exists and the work of scholars interested primarily in the social conditions in which music takes form. The music of the Kpelle of Liberia seems to provide an ideal context for such an effort. The music is formally richly structured, yet a good case can be made for the claim that social factors are intimately involved with the formulation of the music.

Stone puts forth the concept of the musical event as an analytical unit that is at an appropriate level to permit a research endeavour encompassing both perspectives. The effort seems successful, and at the very least it has been clearly demonstrated that it is possible for a single scholar to acquire the necessary sociological and musicological skills to carry out a combined research effort.

The most interesting parts of Stone's work, however, lie not in the area of methodological innovation, but in the specifics of the analysis of Kpelle music. She argues that Kpelle music is conceptualized by the Kpelle in terms of a framework which treats time not as any of the familiar lineal, cyclical or spiral processions, but as a 'three-dimensional spatial construction'. The 'inside' of

the book's title refers to musical performance, and in addition to numerous usages attesting to the treatment of time as a closed interval (i.e., as unidimensional), there are usages involving terms meaning 'over', 'underneath', etc. Kpelle time and music is characterizable not in terms of a linear progression but as consisting of 'moments' or 'presents' (in the temporal sense) which may then be filled and expanded. This leads naturally to an aesthetic based on density of texture (suggesting comparison with the work of the ethnomusicologist Judith Becker on Javanese music).

There are only a few negative aspects to the presentation made in the book. Some of the argumentation is weak, e.g., Stone claims that the Kpelle consider their musical instruments as surrogate participants since they use body part names for parts of instruments. This is somewhat analogous to considering a river to be animal-like because it has a mouth. Many African languages make extensive use of body part terms in a variety of non-body contexts, but although the metaphors are available for resuscitation, I feel that in most cases they are dead. Thus, calling a window in a house an 'eye', does not give a house a face. The writing in the book does not often match the interest generated by the book's ideas. It is too often turgid, academic prose: 'the performer plans and creates music performance which is audited and experienced by other performers and event participants' (p. 7). A good editor would have enormously improved the pleasure given by reading the book. Finally, on the positive side, it should be noted that in a context (African ethnography) in which vernacular material is presented by most anthropologists in hopelessly primitive and inadequate transcriptions, all Kpelle utterances are given in a fully phonemic (including tone-marking) orthography.

Renaud SANTERRE, Céline MERCIER-TREMBLAY et le Centre National d'Éducation de Yaoundé, *La quête du savoir; Essais pour une anthropologie de l'éducation camerounaise*, Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1982, 889 pages, bibliographie, \$ 30.

Par Joan Ryan  
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Ce volume impressionnant comprend 25 con-

\* traduction française de Chantal Collard