

Music in West Africa
By Ruth Stone

Instructional Manual
By J. Bryan Burton

<u>Code</u>	<u>Level</u>
AA	All Ages
E	Elementary school (particularly grades 3-6)
S	Secondary (middle/high school)
C/U	Collegiate/University classes (including music and non-music majors)

Getting Started With the Study of Music in West Africa

A number of overarching themes recur throughout Music in West Africa serving to organize knowledge about Kpelle music, in particular, and West African music, in general, through examination of examples and discussions of Kpelle music in this text. As identified by the author in Chapter VI, Cutting the Edge, these themes are:

1. Music is part of a bundle of performance that links music sounds to dance, instrument playing, and even speech in narration.
2. All people are expected to be minimally competent in music making, particularly in singing and dancing.
3. The instruments played by the Kpelle are extensions of their human performers. Instruments and humans have voices.
4. Performers in a broad range of musical events relate to one another in a part-counterpart arrangement.
5. The most valued form of performance among the Kpelle is hocket, or the combining of facets, where each player or singer contributes a short pattern that interlocks with the motifs of other performers.
6. Performers value the faceting of sound into small components that are then recombined. This faceting appears in singing, dancing, and song text alike.
7. Tone color or timbre is much noticed and admired in music.
8. Musicians create rhythms that are often asymmetrical and then interlock with other performers in a very precise way.
9. Key soloists are expected to improvise against the background of a rich and layered backdrop.
10. Continuity in music performance builds through the density of many discrete parts.
11. Parallels to these central themes abound in everyday Kpelle life, and reinforce our conviction that these themes have some importance for the Kpelle conceptualization.

Purchase a small notebook or binder and divide the pages into eleven sections, one for each theme identified by Dr. Stone and mark these sections with an index tab for ease of reference. As you read each chapter, listen to each song or instrumental piece, participate in each suggested activity in both this manual and the text, enter your reflections regarding how each song, dance, discussion, or activity serves to illustrate one or more of these themes. Join a group of your fellow students periodically to discuss these themes, sharing your thoughts, reflections to build a greater understanding of Kpelle music, in particular, and Kpelle culture as a whole.

Table 0.1 May be used to collect information. Using one page for each theme, note references to or reflections about themes as they occur in each chapter. Please keep in mind that some themes may not be addressed in each chapter.

Table 0.1

THEME # _____
<u>Chapter One:</u>
<u>Chapter Two:</u>
<u>Chapter Three:</u>
<u>Chapter Four:</u>
<u>Chapter Five:</u>
<u>Chapter Six:</u>

The contrasting rhythmic patterns of West African music and the diversity of the instruments that produce them reflect the effervescence of life itself. Nature provides West Africa with the perfect amplifier: the acoustic resonance of a hollowed-out calabash intensifies the vibrations of the Mandinka kora, a double-bridged harp, the Jola akonting, a banjo-like lute, the Hausa goje, a bowed, two-stringed fiddle, or Dagaaba, Sambla and Malinké xylophones, the gyil, baan, and balafon respectively. West Africa stretches from the Sahara Desert to the Atlantic Ocean. The region's musical heritage includes a variety of popular music styles, especially from the countries of Senegal, Ghana, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Griots, wandering musicians and praise singers, are found throughout the region, and some musical instruments (such as the kora, xalam, djembe and talking drum) are found in a majority of West African countries. View wiki. West Africa stretches from the Sahara Desert to the Atlantic Ocean. The region's musical heritage includes a variety of popular music styles, especially from the countries of Senegal, Ghana, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Griots, wandering musicians and praise singers, read more. West African Music (from Sankofa performance). African Relaxing Music | Tuko Pamoja. African Folk Music Instrumental | Marimba, Kalimba, & Drums. Transcription. Instruments. There are commonly drums found in West African music. The main types of drums in Western Africa are the Djembe and the Talking Drum. Also an instrument named the Balafon is very often found in West African music, such as Yiri. There are String instruments found throughout the region. These include the Kora, Ngoni, Adjalin and the Xalim.