



Defiant Maids and Stubborn Farmers: Tradition and Invention in Mende Story Performance (Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture)

Donald J. Cosentino

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The domei is a popular narrative art form among the Mende people of Sierra Leone. Although it is a traditional form, the narratives are not remembered or retold, but on each occasion the performers recreate out of a common stock of characters and plots domeisia, which are singular and sometimes brilliant expressions of a singular, and often brilliant, culture. In this book Donald Cosentino presents a large selection of these narratives, as he collected them in dramatic performance on the verandahs and around the cooking fires of a Mende village. The domei is told to please, and Dr Cosentino details the various elements that constitute the pleasure of an oral performance. But beneath the surface glitter of these ironic, horrifying, bawdy and haunting narrative performances, there is an intellectual hardness of argument and debate which shines through the domeisia included here. Dominating these performances, and emblematic of the entire artistic tradition, are the 'everywoman' figure of the Defiant Maid, Yombo, and the 'everyman' Stubborn Farmer, Kpana.

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