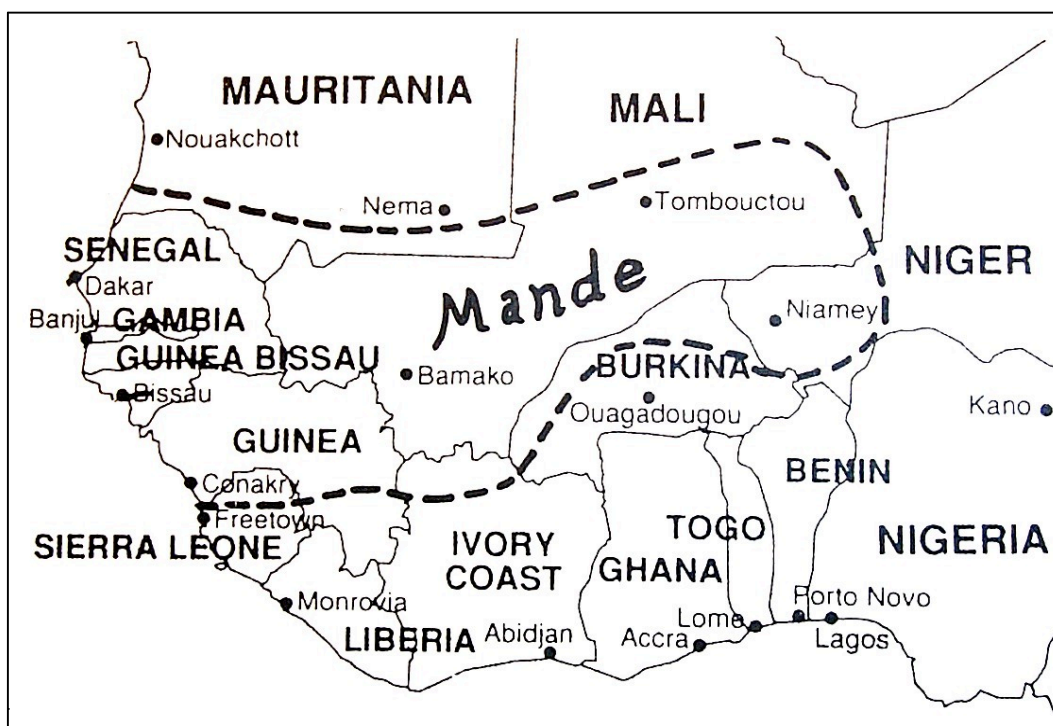


MANDE MUSIC AND DANCE

Performed by Mandinka Musicians of The Gambia
in the Late Twentieth Century



Video documents filmed originally in Super 8
in 1970 and 1982

by

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Revised edition of
Music of the Mande, Parts I, II and III
2005

- I. Music for the Warriors, Hunters, and Ordinary People
- II. Professional Music: Mandinka Jaliyaa with the Kora
- III. Gambian Tantango Drumming

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Republic of The Gambia, with filming locations (and other towns) shown.

Map courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin, with additions.

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PREFACE TO THE DVD EDITION

All of the scenes in this video were made originally on Super 8mm film. The 1970 footage was made with an Anscomatic ST/110 silent camera and conceived as a supplement to doctoral dissertation research. Since sound synchronization was not possible, the approach taken to filming was that of “in-camera editing.” The camera was hand-held, and relatively short scenes were assembled as an event progressed, with camera angles and framing changed frequently. The objective was to maximize visual interest and to cover an event more broadly than would have been possible with a single camera in a fixed position. For most film sessions, a high quality tape recording was made simultaneously, using a Nagra III open-reel tape recorder and a single Electrovoice RE 15 microphone. (This machine, with the microphone resting on the leather case, may be seen in the title slide for Part II, No. 5, Steps in Making a Kora.)

The last two scenes in Part II were made in 1982 with a Canon 514 XL-S camera equipped for sync-sound recording via a magnetic stripe on the film. In 1970 and 1982 alike, film processing was not available locally. The films were sent to the U.S. for processing and not viewed until the research trips were over, at which time, with a minimum of further editing, the best footage was assembled into a series of short movies. For two decades the 1970 movies served their purpose, with the matching but out-of-sync music playing, as visual documents of Mande music when no others were available, in the Music of Africa classes at the University of Washington and at Oberlin College.

In 1992, John Storm Roberts of Original Music learned of these films and expressed an interest in releasing them in video format. The films were converted to video, and with a VHS video editing deck that was state of the art at the time, picture and sound were more carefully matched, achieving sync at isolated moments. In this condition, the videos were released in 1992 and 1995, as *Music of the Mande, Parts I, II and III*.

In the twenty-first century, digital technology has enabled what was once impossible. To prepare this edition, all scenes were reviewed and reworked to provide sync wherever possible. The original editing was retained except where a cut would smooth the synchronization process. The result is still far from perfect; some scenes remain out of sync, but the overall viewing experience has been brought much closer to that of a normal sound-sync film than was possible before. Further notes on the production process are provided under the heading **Technical Notes** for most scenes.

As in the original release, there is no narration, only on-screen titles. This booklet provides background information on each selection, including the nature of the event (whether spontaneous or staged for the sake of filming), the names of performers, and a greatly expanded coverage of the song texts in Mandinka and English.

These films were made to document Mandinka music in 1970 and 1982. Surviving the intervening decades, they re-emerge in this edition not only greatly improved, but also historic. The events in these films, even though foreshortened by the process of shooting three-minute Super 8 reels with in-camera editing, are nevertheless an honest glimpse into the performance of Mandinka music in The Gambia in the last third of the twentieth century. Included are rare instruments, political events of note, and several legendary performers who have since passed

away. But the footage is not only historic. It is also a testament to the timeless and classical nature of Mandinka music, for the vibrant performances seen here are not only a record of the past: today's performers continue in the style seen in these films, carrying the traditions into the twenty-first century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 1970 films were made as part of dissertation research supported by a Fulbright-Hays grant. Later trips to Africa and the video production costs have been supported by internal Oberlin College grants. These sources of financial support are greatly appreciated.

Naturally the performers who appear in these films deserve the greatest vote of thanks. Without exception they performed with zeal and enthusiasm. Those in pre-arranged sessions were clearly intent on showing an outside researcher what their music was all about, and those who were participating in events where the filmmaker merely happened along were always welcoming, eager to make room for the camera in their midst. Their names are included in the on-screen captions and in this booklet. Foremost among them were those who served as both teachers and research assistants, Suntu Suso, Jali Nyama Suso, and Omar Jissay. Other people in The Gambia and in the United States who provided invaluable assistance and inspiration for the completion of this project are the late Aliu Dabo, Radio Gambia announcer, for transcribing and translating song texts while in The Gambia; Alhaji Papa Susso, Mandinka musician, for clarifications and explanations of many details in the films and for the completion of the song text translation process for this edition; David Gamble, anthropologist and renowned expert on The Gambia, for general advice and collaboration; and Mantle Hood, founder and director of the UCLA Institute of Ethnomusicology, for encouragement and instruction in the use of movie-making as a documentary tool. In the field in 1970, my wife Gisela and daughter Jennifer (at the time only one year old), by their very presence with me, enhanced the success of the entire endeavor.



Suntu Suso and Aliu Dabo, 1970.



Alhaji Papa Susso in Oberlin, Nov. 2004.

The production of the video has been a long effort. The impetus came first from Matthew Ballo, Oberlin biochemistry student, class of 1991, who urged the transfer of the films to video, both for their preservation and to enhance their in-class presentation. He also piloted the first video editing. The video transfers were done by Lenny Stitak of Creative Video, and the original titling work was done by Diane Lee. During most of the summer of 1992 Fred Zwegat, Director of Audio Visual Services at Oberlin College, contributed his patience, knowledge, and video editing skills to the production of the VHS masters. John Storm Roberts' encouragement and managerial expertise brought the videos into their original commercial production.

In the summer of 2003 Oberlin anthropology student ElioTrabal, class of 2004, acting on his own initiative, tried his digital editing skills on the VHS footage. Achieving success, he and I then continued, in sessions spanning more than a year. His loyal and relentless work, using his own equipment, has enabled the creation of this edition. Finally, the actual DVD production owes its existence to Stephen McArthur of Multicultural Media, who proposed its release, and to Nick Fritsch of Lyrichord Records for its facilitation.



Elio Trabal and Roderic Knight

THE MANDE PEOPLE

The Mande are one of the largest ethnic groups of West Africa. They were among the first to develop agriculture in the savanna of West Africa some four thousand years ago, and are still known today as highly successful farmers, but also as cosmopolitan merchants, businesspeople and administrators. The commercial bent of Mande culture is not new, but stems from the 13th- and 14th-century empire of Mali, which commanded the trade routes from the highlands of northern Guinea to the fabled city of Timbuktu in the Malian Sahara, and west to the Atlantic coast. Ancient Mali's wealth in gold was legendary during its own time.

Today there are over twenty ethnic groups identified as Mande on the basis of language, but many of these are distant both culturally and geographically from the heritage of Old Mali. The people of the Mande heartland today are the Maninka in northern Guinea and southern Mali, the Bambara of the Bamako region in Mali, the Soninke or Serahuli in western Mali and Senegal, and the Mandinka, farthest west, in southern Senegal, The Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. The area is part of the western *sahel*, or savanna, where the deep forests of the West African coast give way to a light forest cover and to vast expanses of fields and farmland south of the Sahara. The population is predominantly rural, living in villages and towns, growing rice, millet, and groundnuts (peanuts), but increasingly, people gravitate to the cities, where opportunities in government, business, and artistic organizations are best. Islam is the dominant religion throughout Mande culture and the area as a whole.

A cultural heritage of imperial times is a hierarchical society originally recognizing two major components, the *horo*, or freeborn, and the *jongo*, or slave. A basic distinction was also made between some freeborn who were called *sula*, or "ordinary people" (but including royal lineages as well), and others who were called *nyamaalo*, people regarded as having an intimate connection to a powerful spiritual force (the *nyamaa*) by virtue of their knowledge of manipulation of materials such as leather, iron, gold, and the spoken (or sung) word.

The slaves of ancient times were typically war captives, or in some cases people who were destitute enough to need to rely on servitude for survival. Tradition allowed for the erasure of slave status in four generations; today it is long gone. But among the *horo* or freeborn population, an inherited hierarchy remains between the *sula* and the *nyamaalo*. A key feature of this heritage is a patron/artist relationship, with the leading *sula* families – essentially today's leaders in politics, commerce, and religion – being the patrons, and the *nyamaalolu* (to use the Mandinka plural) being the artists.

Today the *nyamaalolu* who work in physical materials, such as the blacksmiths, gold and silversmiths, leatherworkers and woodcarvers, go about their work as anyone might, making goods and receiving pay in return. For them, the patron/artist relationship is not obvious. But for the “artisan of words,” known as the *jali*, or in French-speaking areas, *dyeli*, the traditional patron/artist relationship still applies in many ways. It is the *jali*’s role in society, whether male or female, to be an oral historian, genealogist, praiser, public speaker, singer or instrumentalist. These genres of performance are known collectively or individually as *jaliyaa*, or “what the *jali* does,” and they are all directed at keeping the vital Mande heritage alive, in words and music. It is the social duty – an obligation, really – for the leading *sula* families to support these expressions of Mande heritage, in other words, to support the performance of *jaliyaa*. In the past, leaders hosted their own *jali* families, providing for all their needs in the form of housing, food, horses, various standard-of-living enhancements, and luxuries such as fine clothing or jewelry. Today *jali* families maintain their own households and work essentially as freelance artists, but the leading *sula* families still serve as their principal patrons, hiring them for political events, festive occasions, and public performances, and paying them with money or gifts, including the traditional clothing and jewelry, but also modern large-ticket items such as electronic equipment or even automobiles. Patronage has been institutionalized as well. Radio and television, the recording industry, the tourist industry, and national ensembles all contribute to the furtherance of *jaliyaa*.

Jaliyaa is a profession. It is tied to the families that built it from ancient times, readily identified by the surnames of Kuyateh, Suso, and Jobarteh (to which several others have been added over the centuries). In the past, if one did not inherit the profession by being born into a *jali* family, one could not take up *jaliyaa*, and conversely, a *jali* did not aspire to non-*jali* roles. In the past century the sharp distinctions of this tradition were softened; Mande society today is much more fluid, with people crossing former boundaries in both directions, but the genre of music called *jaliyaa* – namely praise and historical songs accompanied by various melodic instruments – is still mostly the specialty of the *jali*.

Not all Mande music is *jaliyaa*, however. *Jaliyaa* might be likened to classical music in the West, with a heritage of courtly patronage, while various other genres have either been open to anyone or associated with different entities or lifestyles in Mande culture. Part I of the video begins with some of these: harp music formerly played to encourage warriors in battle or to entertain hunters; songs for personal enjoyment accompanied by stringed instruments, empty calabashes, and drums; and the sounds associated with communal rice pounding (not music, but of musical interest, as will be noted in Part I, No. 4 below). Part III focuses on another non-*jali* music – *tantango* drumming. These non-*jali* musics tend to be overshadowed by the prominence and prestige of *jaliyaa*, but they are valid cultural expressions nevertheless.

Part I. Music for the Warriors, Hunters, and Ordinary People

1. The *bolon*, played by Bajao Kamara

Faraba Banta, May 2, 1970

The *bolon* is associated with warriors; tradition says that *bolon* players once accompanied their leaders to battle to sing of their prowess and steel them for victory. A *bolon* player is not a *jali*, and yet his role is similar: to celebrate the achievements of heroes. The repertory of the *bolon* is separate from *jaliyaa* as well, suggesting an origin in a regional practice in earlier times of lesser warriors or warlords enjoying the entertainment of their constituents without the benefit or formality of *jaliyaa*. Today *bolon* players work in stride with *jalolu*, performing in the national ensembles and other groups, but they are few in number. Earlier in the twentieth century it seems they may have been more numerous. The great scholar of Gambian culture David Gamble notes that a photograph in his collection dating from a visit by the Prince of Wales in 1923 shows a large group of musicians, half of whom are *bolon* players, the other half *kora* players (Personal communication, 1992).

The *bolon*, also known as *bolombato* is a large four-string harp of a type unique to West Africa, the spike harp. The body is made from a large calabash from which the top quarter has been cut away, much like opening a jack-o-lantern (the term *-bato* in *bolombato* refers to a gourd cut in this manner). The opening is covered with goatskin with the hair intact. The neck, of pliable *sumpundingo* wood, is bowed before installation, then passed diametrically through the body beneath the skin face, emerging at the lower end to form the tailpiece (it is this feature that makes it a spike harp). The strings, made of twisted cowhide, are secured to a small piece of wood mounted upright on the skin face (the string holder) and then wrapped several times around the neck to form a tuning ring. The player tunes the strings by sliding the rings up or down the neck, an extremely complex task, since pushing one string up (to raise its pitch) bends the neck more, thus lowering the other strings. A large metal plate called *nyenyemo*, usually of galvanized roofing tin with loops of wire threaded around the edge, is mounted atop the neck. Its purpose is to provide a loud sympathetic rattle as the instrument is played.

The player braces the *bolon* upright in the crook of the knees, enabling both hands to strike the strings. The playing action actually consists of beating both fists on the body in a steady rhythm, causing the *nyenyemo* to sound continuously. The thumbs catch the appropriate strings, creating the melodic line. In addition, players often wear a ring on one or both hands, and this clicks against the gourd. Bajao Kamara is not wearing a ring in this instance. When a *bolon* player joins an ensemble of several types of instruments, he usually plays a slow-moving part like a western bass line, but the true solo style of the instrument is demonstrated here.

This film was made during a recording session at Bajao Kamara's home, the result of seeking out the two or three players active in the country at the time. The title photograph is of Kamara and his father. During the recording session, Kamara sang as he played, but he does not sing in the film. The film session attracted the attention of a group of girls from the village, who requested that he play a simple beat so they could dance to it, and he complied. The result is an impromptu dance known as "Mbarango" or "Lenjengo," such as might be done to the *ji dundungo* (water drum) as seen in No. 5, or to the *tantango* drums, as seen in Part III, No. 1.

Technical Notes: In the first few clips, a pair of hands giving a clap signal may be seen in the foreground. These were inserted originally for the imagined possibility of synchronization in the future. Even though that future is now, synchronizing these short clips would have resulted in a discontinuous sound. Instead, the uninterrupted audio from the session is matched but not synchronized to Kamara's playing. The dancing, however, has been put in sync digitally.

Note on the transliteration and translation of the Mandinka texts: The Mandinka words are printed in italics. For some lines, as in the example below, where a literal translation is of interest, a word-for-word gloss is aligned beneath the Mandinka, resulting in odd spacing for both lines. With or without the gloss, the idiomatic English translation is indented below the Mandinka. In a few instances the Mandinka is omitted, with only a synopsis in English.

[The girls sing]

Mba Fenda la kulung da diyata
Mother " 's mortar mouth sweet
The millet pounded in Ma Fenda's mortar is delicious.

A woman says: *A ta kung* ("Take it easy.")

2. The *simbingo*, played by Malang Fatti Kiang Jaali, December 27, 1970

The *simbingo*, like the *bolon*, is a rare instrument. It is the instrument of the *dana jali*, or hunter's musician, and represents a tradition in decline: hunting for subsistence is no longer a way of life, so the music associated with it is disappearing. Some hope for its continuance is found in Mali where an instrument styled on the hunter's harp and called *kamaleng ngoni* ("youth harp") has emerged and is popular with young people.



The *simbingo* is a spike harp with six strings. The body is a gourd cut in half vertically from stem to base, and covered with an antelope hide from which the hair has been removed. It has two slender hand grips mounted parallel to the strings, and two crossbars to help support the string holder. The strings are made and attached in the same manner as on the *bolon*. In this instance there is no *nyenyemo*, although the instrument normally has one.

Although referred to as a *jali*, the hunter's musician, like the *bolon* player, is not a *jali*; he is called *dana jali* only because he performs (or one should say performed) a similar role, entertaining the hunters of his village before they embarked or returned from a hunt. In an

amusing twist, sometimes a performer would assume the role of a hunter's wife, urging him to procure meat to feed his hungry children.

Most of the repertoire of the *dana jali* consists of songs about fearless hunters and clever animals. A performance typically alternates between two singing styles – short phrases answered in chorus by the villagers, such as “The Great Hunter kills today, eats today,” or “Today I will eat meat; I’m sharpening my knife,” and long descending phrases in narrative style, often with the villagers interjecting *Nam!* (“Yes!”) at appropriate moments. In the narrative sections, the singer first enumerates the ancestry of a hunter, then describes in detail, and often with humor, an episode from a famous hunt.

Already in 1970 hunter's music had nearly disappeared from The Gambia. At the end of a year of research, three performers had been identified and recorded: a woman who knew the songs, and two men who sang and played the *simbingo*. This film was made at the end of a recording session with one of the men, Malang Fatti. He is playing an instrument made by the other, Ndani Manneh, since he had sold his own. The instrument has nylon strings rather than the traditional rawhide because a leatherworker who knew how to make the old style strings could not be found.

In this performance, Malang Fatti sings about a famous hunter named Momodu Konteh, miming the stealth of the hunt as he plays. Enjoying this short-lived revival of the tradition, two of his fellow villagers showed up with their shotguns and danced beside him.

Technical Notes: This is a single reel of Super 8 film. The recording, made simultaneously, has been put in sync digitally.

[Fatti and the villagers repeat a chorus several times]

Jara Madi Madiye (name of a famous hunter)

[Fatti continues in narrative style]

(Lines for Jara Madi): Jara Madi was a brave hunter; [I used to say to him] Jara Madi, give me antelope meat, deer meat, leopard meat, lion meat.

N nata duniya ka kuo ke meng si i to tu kuma.

We come into this world hoping to do something that leaves our name behind.

Kujubo banta, a la nafulo fanang banta.

Kujubo is gone, and his wealth too is gone with him.

Mamadu Koli nyolu ye duniya bula.

The people of Mamadu Koli's time have all left this world.

M be molu menu (or mengu or meng?) be f'ala, wolu bee tilo banta; i be labang dula.

All of these people I'm speaking about, their time is gone; they are in their final resting place.

Badingmalu kiling kiling meng be nying kuolu ke nola.

Among us today there are few (“one-one”) who know how to do these things.

Ninki Nanko dingo jalan banta.

“Dragon” child power gone

Son of Ninki-Nanko, his power is gone.

Fajama tilo banta, aning ninsiringo domo.

Fajama day over and calf eat

Fajama's days are over; our meat-eating days are over.

Fakadi Jata Wurambanna la munko banta.

Fakadi Jata Wurambanna's gunpowder is gone.

3. The Bambara *ndang*, played by Mamadu Kurubali

Banjul, July 14, 1970

The *ndang*, like the *bolon* and *simbingo*, is a rare instrument. Eric Charry, conducting research in Mali in 1989, saw and recorded an old man playing a small *ndang*, and learned from him that it was one of the instruments played for hunters (personal communication, 1992). It has received virtually no attention.

The *ndang* is classified as a multi-neck lute. This one has six strings. It is made from a large half calabash and six bamboo staves, one for each string. The opening of the gourd is left uncovered and faces downward. The strings are made of thin steel wire. Each is wrapped closely several times at the top of its stave, then spirals down several inches. Tuning is accomplished by spreading or closing this spiral, thus changing the length of string and the tension on the neck. Just below the point where the strings contact the curved surface of the gourd, small sticks are wedged behind the strings and adjusted until the tone takes on a twangy buzz. The player holds the *ndang* upright by hooking his middle finger in a loop of twine attached to the leftmost neck. He plucks the left three strings from behind with the thumb and two fingers. He plays the right three strings by pinching them and pulling them towards him. In playing technique the instrument is thus more like a harp, even though it is called a lute.

On the occasion shown in this slide sequence, the performers were young Bambara people from Mali living in Banjul. Mamadu Kurubali, playing the *ndang*, also led the song, called “Bajalama.” A performer next to him thumped an enamelware bowl overturned on a cushion in place of a drum. The other performers and dancers were Musa Konaté, Musa Jarra, Burama Kamara, Segi Traoré, Adama Kamara, Ibraima Kurubali, Mama Kurubali, and Baba Kwina. The refrain is *Da ye ti ye* (meaning unclear).

The group was performing for their own enjoyment late one afternoon. Spontaneously documented with only tape recorder and still camera, this slide sequence is intended to give some idea of the energetic jumping dance that goes with the song. This is the only known commercial release of the sound of the *ndang*.

4. *Maani Tuuro* (Rice Pounding)

Sotuma, September 2, 1970

Rice is the staple food of West Africa. Farmers take their crop to the mill to be hulled and bagged, but still in the 21st century there may come a demand for a small amount in a hurry. For this purpose, women and girls use the traditional method of mortar and pestle. The job is lightened when two work in one mortar together, alternating their strokes. Although less common, as many as three may work in one mortar, causing the pace to quicken enough to resemble a medium-tempo drum beat. This is actually musically significant: when women provide a handclapping part at drumming events, they play a fast triple beat in exactly this way. This may be seen in the next segment, No. 5, *Ji Dundungo*, where women are dancing and handclapping. It may also be seen in some of the drumming scenes in Part III of this video.

This film, made under a spreading mango tree in the village of Sotuma, famous for its large *jali* population, was made to document the triple-pounding effect. Enthusiasts at the session brought out two mortars. Even though the event was staged for the camera, such a scene might occur at the approach of a festival if much food were needed and the money not available for milling. The three women in the opening scene are Kitimu Dindingo, Jabu Sakiliba, and Kutubo Jebateh.

Technical Notes: This footage was shot in two long scenes, imagining possible synchronization in the future. It has been brought close to sync with the digital process. Unfortunately the mortars, only barely visible at the bottom of the frame of the movie, were cut off in the transfer to video.

5. *The ji dundungo* (water drum)

Bakau, August 14, 1970 Title photograph by David Gamble.

The clatter and deep thump of the water drum coming from a residence in Bakau, a suburb of the capital of Banjul, prompted this spontaneous one-reel document. A large group of women had organized an event for their own enjoyment called “Dimba Tulungo” or “Young Mothers’ Play.” According to Peter Weil, “Dimba Tulungo” emerged in the 1950s in Kiang District to publicize women’s health concerns, such as fertility, infant mortality or the spread of a disease. Today it is more widely known as “Kanyelango,” a term borrowed from a Jola fertility ritual, and is usually staged by a women’s association called the *kanyelang kafo*. A woman seeking the aid of the *kafo*, or club, is first initiated into it. Members of the *kafo* gather bush medicines (herbs from the forest), local traditionalists are consulted regarding possible supernatural causes and cures, and a dance is staged with a hired drum troupe. A large public event of this sort in a town square with drummers is included in Part III. [For further information on the *kanyelango*, see Peter Weil, “The staff of life: food and female fertility in a West African society,” *Africa* 46/2 (1976), 182-95, and Didier Fassin and Ibrahima Badh, “Ritual buffoonery: a social preventive measure against childhood mortality in Senegal,” *The Lancet*, January 18, 1986, 142-43.]

On this occasion, impromptu and informal, the women had assembled in a compound and had no drum troupe. Instead they played two instruments readily made from household items

and typically played by women: the *ji dundungo*, literally “water drum,” and an empty mortar rapped with an empty calabash. The water drum is made by floating an overturned calabash in a basin of water and hitting it with two sticks. The sticks on the calabash make a loud clattering sound, but the air trapped beneath produces a deep drumlike tone (not readily apparent in the recording). Sometimes (though not in this performance) the deep tone may be varied by a second person lifting and lowering the calabash on the water. Two water drums are sometimes assembled to produce a two-tone instrument. [An excellent recording of this, made by Gilbert Rouget in 1950, may be heard on the CD *Guinée: Musique des Malinké*, Le Chant du Monde, CNR 2741112.]

As some women dance and others clap, note the fast triple beat created by steady claps at medium pace, timed in exactly the same manner as for synchronizing three pestles in one mortar (see No. 4, above).

Technical Notes: These were neighbors (note the researcher’s wife and daughter looking on from the veranda). The women were amused to have their event documented, even playing to the camera at one point. The scene has been put in sync digitally.

[The women sing]

Julolu le, julolu le

Where are the merchant folk, where are the merchant folk?

M be n donna julolu ye.

We are dancing for the merchant folk.

6. **Siko drumming**

Kwinella, August 11, 1970

The performers, from Kulikunda, are Lamin Njai, lead singer; Lamin Cham, big drum; Dembo Mas, small drum; rattle player unidentified.

The *siko* drum ensemble emerged in The Gambia in the early 1960s. It was associated with the P.P.P. (People’s Progressive Party), the party of the Mandinka majority, pitted at the time against the U.P. (United Party), promoting Wolof candidates. David Gamble notes the following: “Young men in the Busumbala-Brikama area, who came from prominent families which provided *imams* (prayer leaders), and for whom it would have been dishonorable to play a traditional drum, invented a new type using old oil drums. The drum, style of drumming, and songs spread along with the influence of the P.P.P. in this region and upriver, and contributed to the popularity and success of the P.P.P. in the 1962 election” (Personal communication, 1992).

This film was made at a P.P.P. rally for the installation of a new district chief in the town of Kwinella, 90 miles up the Gambia River from the capital of Banjul. Among the P.P.P. members mentioned in the song is Alifa Sisay of Pakaliba, one of the party founders. *Siko* drumming has since died out. In 1992, no drummers could be found to play for the 30-year anniversary of the party in Banjul.

Lamin Njai sings, answered by the chorus:

Jali Bambo kari Ma Bintu le kili; a be Jarra Pakali.

Jali Bambo is calling [singing about] Ma Bintu; she is at Jarra Pakali.

Aning Lamin Njai

And [we're singing about] Lamin Njai.

Ni i tata marase da la, i s'a je, m be rumba donna.

If you go to the market entrance, you will see me dancing the rumba there.

M be nying bee ke kang, katu Kairaba ka bee banko ta le.

We are doing all this because [we believe Sir Dawda] Kairaba [Jawara] will take the entire country [in the upcoming election].

Bara mano te banna Ramu Sarr iya.

Work rice won't end Ramu Sarr home

Locally grown rice is plentiful at (Ms.) Ramu Sarr's place.

Part II. Professional Music: Mandinka *jaliyaa* with the kora

Jaliyaa, the music of the hereditary professional musician, has been introduced above. The melodic instruments of *jaliyaa*, always played by men, are the *balo* or *balafon*, a frame xylophone, the *kontingo* or *ngoni*, a slender oval plucked lute, and the *kora*, a 21-string bridge harp. (A bridge harp is a variety of spike harp with a bridge [the strings pass over it] in place of the string holder [the strings are knotted to it]. A bridge harp usually also has a straight neck.) Women in *jaliyaa*, known as *jali musolu*, play a tubular iron bell called *neo* or *karinya* and sing, either as chorus members, or as soloists.

In The Gambia the *kora* is the dominant *jali* instrument, while in other areas the *kontingo* or *balo* dominates. All have borrowed repertoire from each other over the years and often play together in various combinations. Part II features the *kora*, both as a solo instrument, and in groups.

1. A welcoming party

Yundum Airport and Banjul, May 20, 1970

On April 28, 1970, five years after achieving independence from Britain, The Gambia declared itself a republic within the British Commonwealth. Prime Minister Sir Dawda Jawara was now President of the Republic of The Gambia. A month later, he received his first state visitor, Siaka Stevens, Prime Minister of Sierra Leone. The Gambian Field Force Band and a group of about twenty *jalolu* were sent to the airport as a welcoming party. The band dominated the event with marches and the two national anthems, but as the motorcade to the capital formed, the *jali* ensemble performed.

The videotape shows the band briefly, followed by the *jali* ensemble. This was long before the magnificent air terminal at Yundum was built, and the dignitaries can be seen walking across the tarmac. President Jawara is in a dark suit, Siaka Stevens in a green suit, with hat. The welcoming remarks and national anthems were not filmed. In the foreground of the *jali* ensemble may be seen the *bolon*, seen in Part I, surrounded by *kora* players and singers. In the middle distance is Fabala Kanuteh, leader of the group, playing the *balo*. Near him may be glimpsed for a moment a *kontingo* player. They play as the motorcade forms and departs.

Following the departure of the motorcade, the musicians were hurriedly transported ahead in order to set up at the entrance of the parade grounds in Banjul, where they played again as the motorcade arrived. The last scene shows instruments raised on high as the players struggle to get through the crowd that quickly formed on the parade ground.

Technical Notes: The sound was recorded at the event, but has not been put in sync.

[The *jali* ensemble performs “Lambamba”]

Ye, jaliyaa, Allah le ka jaliyaa da.

Yes, *jaliyaa*, it was Allah who created *jaliyaa*.

Ye, i mansayata, i mansayata le.

Yes, you have become king, you have become king indeed.

Keletigi-o, i mansayata, Allah ka di i ma

Champion of war, you have become king, Allah has awarded you.

2. “Kumbu Sora,” by Bai Konteh and Dembo Konteh

Brikama, March 1, 1970

Bai Konteh became a celebrity in the U.S. in the mid 1970s through his appearances at folk festivals and the release of his solo album on Rounder Records, produced by Marc and Susan Pevar. This film was made on a visit to Konteh’s home in Brikama, at a time when he was renowned in The Gambia but not yet known internationally. Bai died in the 1980s, but his son Dembo continues as a prominent performer and teacher. In this performance, Bai plays “Kumbu Sora,” a song for a wealthy patron of *jaliyaa*. Dembo joins in the refrain of the song, singing in parallel thirds that resolve to the unison in typical Mande fashion, and knocks rhythmically on the back of the *kora*. The knocking part is known onomatopoeically as the *konkong*, and is a highly desirable addition to all spirited *kora* playing.

Technical Notes: This segment began as a single reel of Super 8 film with a duration of less than three minutes. Synchronization was possible for this footage, but at the expense of some of the footage. Even though much abbreviated, this performance showcases Bai Konteh and his son Dembo in their typical style.

As the performance begins, Bai announces his name and the title of the song. The lines he and Dembo sing in the video are as follows:

Sano le be Kumbu fe.

Kumbu has gold.

Bure sano be Kumbuya, Sutukung.

Gold from Bure is at Kumbu's place in Sutukung. [repeat]

Ah, n dandang Kumbuya Sutukung.

Ah, take me to Kumbu's place in Sutukung.

Mo ming nya ye Kumbu je

One who has seen Kumbu [can tell]

Baa ning faa duwa le jabita al' ma.

His mother's and father's prayers have been answered.

More lines from the same performance may be heard under the title screen for Part II, where Bai and Dembo sing:

Ah, n dandang Kumbuya Sutukung.

Ah, take me to Kumbu's place in Sutukung.

Suto kungo to Sutukung, Sutukung Kumbu Sora je.

Deep in the forest Sutukung, Kumbu Sora there.

Mo ming nya ye Kumbu je

One who has seen Kumbu [can tell]

Baa ning faa duwa le jabita al' ma.

His mother's and father's prayers have been answered.

Kodo le be Kumbu fe, Sano le be Kumbu fe.

Kumbu has silver, Kumbu has gold.

Bure sano be Kumbuya, Sutukung.

Gold from the Bure mines is at Kumbu's place in Sutukung.

3. A *kullio* or child-naming

Bakau, September 20, 1970

A week after a child is born, a *kullio* ("head-shaving") is held to bless the child and announce its name. The ceremony, usually held in the morning, lasts from thirty minutes to an hour. Friends and musicians are invited. It is the most frequent event for which the *jalolu* perform on a regular basis. On this occasion the baby was the daughter of Lamin Jawara and Mariama Sanneh (who, in traditional fashion, has kept her own surname in marriage).

As the scene opens, the guests are gathering on the porch of the house. Among them are a number of *jali musolu* with their *neolu*, and behind them, a *kora jali*, playing "Kelefabaa," one of the staples of the *kora* repertoire.

After the guests have arrived the child is brought outside, carried by her father's sister. The *jali* women gather around, and the *imam*, prayer leader at the mosque, shaves a patch of hair from the baby's forehead and a small amount from the back of the mother's neck. These are given to the mother. From a bowl of *kola* nuts resting in water, the imam selects one, chews a portion into a paste, and applies this to the baby's forehead for good luck. (*Kola* nuts, native to Africa, have a bitter taste (from caffeine) and are chewed as a stimulant. They are given as a sign of good will among friends, and are essential offerings at most social occasions. After the ceremony, the *jali* women, who have been playing their bells and singing over the baby, chide the *imam* to give each their share of *kola* nuts.



Alaji Jobarteh

The baby's name is announced and prayers are offered (guests can be seen holding their hands palms upward and slightly apart), then the baby is taken back inside the house, accompanied by the *jali* women. Refreshments are served to the guests, and they depart.

Technical Notes: This footage could not be synchronized exactly, but a generalized matching of the sound has been accomplished.

The song is “Kelefabaa,” a staple of the *kora* repertoire, performed by Alaji Jobarteh. Selections of the text are included below. The rapid narrative lines in *sataro* style have been omitted:

Moriba Janneh, . . . (a person's name)

Jola Kelefa, Badora jola ye, sansango da la jola y'e la.
 “Payer” Kelefa Badora payer bamboo fence gate at payer has lain down
 Kelefa the Avenger from Badora, eh;
 The avenger from the bamboo stockade has died.

Duniya, Jola be laring Bariya, Mariama Nanki la Kelefa Sanneh balanna.
 Ah world, he is lying at Bariya,
 Mariama Nanki's Kelefa Sanneh, the “no-sayer.”

Malu man diya foroya; Yara, ning foro maluta, a nyanta fala le.
 Shame is not good for noble people;
 You know, if a noble is shamed, he would rather die.

M be ke n fa ti, jalolu b'e ke fa ti,
Jali n'a jiati m be ke n fa ti.
 I'm following my father's footsteps, all jalis do this;
 Jali and patron, we do as our fathers did.

Lamin janjungo diyata Musu Kebba Sarr, Jammai Sarr, Koringo Sarr.
 The times in Lamin (town) were good for Musu Kebba Sarr, Jammai Sarr,
 and Koringo Sarr.

*Marolu ban ne, kelo ye marol' ban ne,
Damang kelo ye marolu ban ne.*

The warriors are gone now, the war chiefs are gone,
War among them has finished them off.

4. "Leopold Senghor" performed by Jali Mori Suso

Ziguinchor, Senegal, October 13, 1970

Assisted by Lamin Kasama, Talibo Kamara, and Meseng Suso.

In 1970 the buzz among Gambian *kora* players was about a man named Jali Mori Suso from the Casamance region of Senegal south of The Gambia. He had four extra strings on his *kora* for a total of 25, and a unique style of playing. This film emerged from an expedition with *kora* players Jali Nyama Suso and Malamini Jobarteh to meet this man.

In the photo at right, the extra bass strings on Jali Mori's *kora* may be seen mounted in holes near the top of the bridge. He reaches for them with the right thumb. Not shown but visible in the film is the *nyenyemo*, a metal plate mounted atop the bridge. Small wire rings around the edge of the *nyenyemo* provide the "sizzle" that was an essential component of the sound of the *kora* in former times. Today it has become rare.



Jali Mori Suso composed this song in honor of Leopold Senghor, Senegal's first president and poet laureate, who led the country from 1960 to 1980. In the song, Suso sings in French of Senghor's renown:

*Afrique presideno Senghor
Afrique tout le monde Senghor
Africa, President Senghor
Africa, all the world, Senghor
[repeated in various combinations]*

[He continues in Mandinka]

Arjana Faring Kamara nya meng.

Like heaven is Faring Kamara. [sung four times and repeated by the chorus]

[chorus chants as the music switches to a dance beat] *Leopoli Senghor*

[Suso sings]

Kana wo ke; kana wo ke; mune kana wo ke.

Don't do that; don't do that; I say, don't do that.

Moi je pense de toi. Tu as quesque dit? [French]

I am thinking of you. What did you say?

Dinding i de, kana kumbo, wai nge manene.
Child be quiet, don't cry, I beg of you.

Dinding i de, je jibe.
Child be quiet, look there.

Aha!

With his special *kora* and distinctive playing, Mori Suso had carved a niche for himself. He typically played for recreational dances in the manner of a drum troupe and had a large following. In the film, as he switches to the dance beat, children may be seen giving the steps a try.

Upon hearing his style, both Gambians who came along remarked that Mori's playing style and repertory were indeed unique. The extra strings and altered tuning made it impossible for others to do what he was doing. Nyama Suso (visible at the right edge in the green robe near the end of the film), also heard a resemblance to the xylophone music of the Balanta people of the Casamance region.

This song is unusual in two ways. First, in western terms, it uses a "Mixolydian" scale, with a flat seventh but major third, not typical in the Mandinka repertoire. Second, it is in seven counts, again not typical. It should be noted that African musicians do not quantify rhythms or think in terms of meter, but it is nevertheless possible to perceive these features. Although the footage is not in sync (see below), making the visual cues inaccurate, the sound track reveals a *konkong* part (the handclaps and slaps on the back of the *kora*) that delineates the catchy rhythm of seven, as follows: 1 _ 3 _ 5 _ 7 | 1 The vocal line and *konkong* part are transcribed and discussed further in Knight, 1992. Jali Mori Suso was legendary in his own time, but he passed away within a decade of the filming. At present, this is the only recording available of his playing.

Technical Notes: This film was made the morning after an evening recording session. The musicians were anxious to get about their business, so a new recording was not made during the filming. This plus the numerous short scenes of in-camera-editing made synchronization impossible. Note that even though Jali Mori is holding a pipe in the film, it is indeed he who is singing the lead part in his song.

5. Steps in building a *kora*

Filmed on several occasions in 1970

Woodworking: Braima Sedi and assistants, in the town of Lamin.

Calabash and hide preparation: Jali Nyama Suso, Falai Kuyateh, Lamin Faye, in Bakau.

Konso (tuning ring) braiding: Bai Konteh, in Brikama.

Every *kora* player learns to make his own instrument, but today it is also common to have one made by a *jali* who specializes in making instruments. In this sequence, compiled from several different occasions, the steps leading up to stringing the instrument are shown.

The materials required for a *kora* are wood for the neck, handgrips, crossbar and bridge, a large half calabash, a cowhide for the face and tuning rings (or antelope hide for the latter), nylon fishing line of different strengths for the strings, and an iron ring to anchor the strings at the bottom of the instrument.

The preferred wood is *keno*, or African rosewood. It is becoming scarce since it is also used for xylophone keys and for firewood. In the first scenes, Braima Sedi and his assistants cut a *keno* tree killed earlier by a fire built around its base. The sound of forest birds for this segment is not in sync. It was recorded on a different day, when it was raining.

The next segment was filmed in Braima Sedi's compound two weeks later, after the logs had been left to dry further. They are being cut to size for the various *kora* parts, using a traditional axe and adze, augmented by a carpenter's plane. The sound heard with this segment is a recording made later the same afternoon of Braima Sedi conversing with some of the children in the compound while playing the *bongo*, an instrument played for domestic entertainment, especially by the Jola people. In later scenes, some boys can be seen playing the instrument, and finally Braima himself is seen playing it. The sound is not in sync.

The *bongo* is an *mbira* or lamellophone, made from a box resonator with four hacksaw blades mounted on top. The free ends of the blades are plucked to produce a tone, and the player also taps on the box with a small tin can. This type of instrument is often called a "thumb piano," but as the film shows, the term is not always applicable – the *bongo* is played with the fingers. The song is "Galgan Chi Reomi," a Wolof song popular at the time.

[Conversation about getting tools to work the wood]

Sama dokuo koleyata nyinang, aning keno bee nyojela le.

Rainy season work is hard this year, and to see any *keno* wood [is hard].

Katu kora dokuo mu ku kolemba le ti.

Because *kora* work is a difficult undertaking.

A yiro soto man diya.

To find the right tree is not easy.

Katu yirolu mennu soto, molu ye kilingo sunya.

Because among the trees we sought, somebody stole one.

Aning Jali Madi fango le tata wo yiro nyining.

And Jali Madi himself went [with us] to find that tree [ref. to the author].

[Song in Wolof, translation unavailable]

[The conversation continues]

Baa, dokuo fele diyaring.

Friend, look at this work we're enjoying.

Ni i ye Malang je, a ka sepuro ke nyameng.

If you see Malang, he cuts wood this way.

M fu i la jorango la, ni i y'a samba, i y'a nati.

I loaned you that tool; if you take it away, be sure to bring it back.

Jola ku, i fango y'a lon ne.

That's a Jola thing; you know it yourself.

Tubabo, nte le be dokuo le; i fango y'a long, a koleata le!

White man, I'm working here; you know yourself, it's hard!

* * * * *

With the wooden parts ready, the other materials are assembled: a large half calabash, or *mirango*, and an untanned cowhide. In this sequence of stills, taken in Nyama Suso's compound, the construction of the body is shown. The background music for this and the next segment is the tune "Bamba," composed and played by Amadu Bansang Jobarteh and recorded at his home in Kembujeh, near Brikama, March 21, 1970.

A sound hole and holes for the neck are cut in the calabash. The one shown has also been inscribed with a Koranic blessing, and people have dropped coins and kola nuts inside as good luck offerings. The cowhide, which has been soaking in water, is scraped to remove the hair. A solution of water and the sap of the *bano* tree, a member of the acacia family (see King 1972), is used for this purpose. The hide is then laid on the ground with the hair side down, the calabash placed at the center, and the hide trimmed to a circular shape. A strong cord is threaded through slits cut around the edge of the hide, drawn tight, and then repeatedly laced back and forth across the back to tighten the hide. The folds of hide are pressed flat against the calabash with a stick.

With a strip of cloth marking the vertical center line, measurements are made for the crossbar and hand grips. The crossbar is sharpened at one end to facilitate pushing it through slits cut in the hide at the edge of the calabash. Later the point will be cut off. The handgrips, made with a tapered shape already, are inserted next, passing over the crossbar. These steps finished, the body is placed in the sun, and the drying process monitored for one to three weeks. After the first day, the hide is secured with small tacks in a circle and the lacing is then cut away. Another day later the hide is cut away from the pre-cut neck and sound holes.

* * * * *

The next step in the construction of a *kora* is to braid the tuning rings to the neck. Each string is attached to its own tuning ring, or *konso*. The *konsolu* are usually made from the same softened cowhide used to cover the body. But on this occasion, filmed at Bai Konteh's compound, they are being made from an antelope hide. Since this hide is considerably thinner than cowhide, the hair is scraped in the dry state with the aid of ashes. The hide is then cut into thin strips and these are placed in water to soak.

Using a bamboo needle split sideways and a metal awl (*loyo*) to bore a space for the needle, Bai Konteh braids the *konsolu* onto the neck, or *falo*. The braid is known in the West as a “Turk’s Head” knot (Shaw, 1976:64). The strip is taken three or at most four times around the neck. The film shows Bai braiding the first two *konsolu*, then admiring the finished job at the end of the day. With all twenty-one completed, the neck is placed in the sun to dry (two are shown in the slide). As Konteh works, chicks and a guinea fowl can be heard in the background. Bai, his adopted son Malamini Jobarteh, and Nyama Suso are conversing. The sound was recorded at the session but is not in sync.



Above: The author learning to make *konso* with Bai Konteh.

Right: The bamboo needle is inserted in the *konso*.



[Nyama Suso talks to Bai’s students about working hard for their future.]

[Amadu Bansang sings]

Ye Bamba, Bamba i bara do mina jenjen na, ye Bamba.

Yes, Bamba, you have captured one at the side [a reference to victory in battle].

[Bai Konteh speaks]

Kabiring n wuluta, nene mang sama ke n fama ye mane la.

From the time I was born, I never spent time away from my father.

M b’a bulu dorong.

I was always at his hand.

Nga feng soto, m be siring wo misikineya;

If I had something, I sat here in this poverty nonetheless;

M mang feng soto, m be siring dorong; wo le nyama.

If I had nothing, I sat here only; that’s how it was.

M be ate kantala puru Allah hajo a kana a bata; (?)

I watched over him so that God willing nothing would bother him;

A tinyata meng o meng ke la suo kono. (?)
Or ruin anything in the home.

A sio, a siata sanji keme ti.
That “sitting” [his life] is over one hundred years now.

Nte mu a ding laban ne ti.
I’m his last child.

Bari bitung, nte fanan n na simayandingo kono, serun nama a banta.
But you know, in my own short life, he passed away last year.

Ni m be tamala wo tumo, a kari lungu dung bulu.
If I traveled during those days, he gave me a day limit.

N’a ko nya dang tili saba, wo tili sabo, n ga feng soto, m mang feng soto, m bi na.
If he said come back in three days, when those three days were up, whether I had something or not, I came back.

Bari ni n ga feng soto, a warata nya o nya,
But if I got something, no matter how much it was,

N t’a kela feng ti fo n ga a bee nati a ye.
I did nothing with it until I had brought it to him.

[Malamini speaks]

Nte nene mang, n fa jibe le, nying Bai;
One day I looked at my father there, this Bai;

Feng m’a kila kinna fo a la bata, fo n kumbota
He had so many troubles it made me cry.

Wo tumo nte le be doyaring; m mang feng no.
At that time, I was a small boy; I didn’t know anything.

Wo tumo, a fama, a ye soso fe ba.
At that time, his father, he started a bean farm.

A fama kiling, a ko a ye “Ta kantaro la.”
His father alone said, “Go and guard the fields.”

Wo tumo ntelu dindingma dokula te a bulu.
At that time, we were so young, we couldn’t help.

Mune ye n kumbondi hamo, wo le ye n kumbondi.
That made me cry; that’s why I cried.

A be ning forosewo dorong.

He [Bai's father] was always forcing him.

I m'a je bi, a be siring dorong.

But look at him [Bai] today—he can just sit back.

[Nyama Suso speaks]

Ni i ye mo je ku kono, kana wo jibe; i mira kunung na.

If you see someone today, don't just look at that; think about their past too.

[end of scene]

The remaining steps, not documented in the film, are to make the bridge (*bato*, formerly carved with a knife, but today cut by coping saw), make the cushion for the bridge (usually several layers of cardboard with a cloth cover), mount a large iron eye (*sune*, forged by a blacksmith) into a hole burned at the base of the neck, then attach the strings, *julolu*, made of graded strengths of monofilament nylon fishing line, between the iron eye and the tuning rings. The complete process of kora building is covered in detail in two articles: King 1972 and Pevar 1978.

“Lambamba”

To close this segment, we see a brief performance by Amadu Bansang Jobarteh, whose music has been playing in the background. Here he performs “Lambamba,” or “Lambang Silaba.” It is one of the only pieces in the *jaliyaa* repertoire that has a dance associated with it, and the women of his compound demonstrate it as he plays. They are Jobarteh's wife Kumbuna Sakiliba, joined by Lala Konteh, Sukuta Jobarteh, Musukeba Kuyateh, and Mawude Sedi. The film was made on March 21, 1970. Amadu Bansang Jobarteh, one of The Gambia's greatest musicians, who toured England and the United States while in his eighties, died in the early 1990s.

Technical Notes: The flicker in this short scene results from adjusting the projection speed during the transfer to video to correct for low batteries at the time of filming. The sound, not in sync, is from Jobarteh's recording of “Lambang Silaba” on *Amadu Bansang Jobarteh, Master of the Kora*, used by permission.

“Lambamba”

Jaliyaa, Allah le ka jaliyaa da.

Jaliya, it was Allah who created *jaliyaa*.

Kuo bee, julo bee, sa balila.

All things, all ways [of Allah] refuse to die.

Jalinding fara jaliba kang.

The young jali follows upon the elder.

Meng be wawala, aning meng te wawala,
Those who sing, or even those who don't,

Ni i be na wayela, i s'a folo:
If you are going to sing, you must start with:

"Nyankumolu kabala, simbong ning jata be Narena."
"The cats are running, the *simbong* tree and lion are at Narena."
[praise lyrics for the Keita surname]

6. "Allah l'a ke" and "Sherif Sidi"

Performed by Jali Nyama Suso and Alhaji Suntu Suso
Bakau, July 14, 1982

These songs were filmed at a short session arranged to bring together the two men most responsible for the author's understanding of the *kora* and Mandinka music. During the 1970 research each of them devoted half of their week to lessons and tours to meet and record other musicians, but their paths rarely crossed. Here they perform together for the first time.

This film was made with a Canon 514 XL-S camera and magnetic-striped film, and is thus in sync. Each song was filmed in one continuous scene at 24 frames per second. The plan was to perform each song in a condensed version that would fit on one reel of film, for a duration of less than three minutes. A song is typically much longer than this, but the length is determined by a singer's knowledge and the interest of the listeners, not by a fixed amount of text that must be sung. Thus, even though these are abbreviated performances, they display the typical features of a song in the *jaliyaa* tradition, with the *donkilo*, fixed lines sung by the two performers in chorus, some *sataro*, reciting lines sung by Nyama Suso, and instrumental passages in between. This is the last film of Jali Nyama Suso, who died in 1991. An earlier film was made of him in 1972 while he was in residence at the University of Washington (see the video *Jali Nyama Suso, Kora Player of The Gambia*, OMV 003).

"Allah l'a ke"

"Allah l'a ke" ("Allah's Deed"), a staple of the *kora* repertory, was composed by Hamadi Suso and stems from an event in Fulladu in 1913. Two years earlier, Chief Falai Kora had died. By tradition, his eldest son Mamadi should have succeeded him, but Mamadi was not particularly popular in the community. Since he was away at the time of his father's death, the villagers contrived to have Mamadi's younger brother Kemonding installed instead. When Mamadi returned, the colonial justice system came to his aid and he was eventually reinstated. Rather than create more ill will over the incident, Mamadi dropped the matter, saying "Allah l'a ke" – it was Allah's will. The opening *donkilo* line of the song amplifies on this theme.

Technical note: The on-camera mic picks up the sound of the camera motor in this clip.

[Suntu speaks] *Yo, mba!* Yes, friend!

[both sing the opening *donkilo* line]

Ye, Allah l'a ke, silango jongo m'a ke

Yes, Allah has done it, now it was not a man (lit. "slave," *i.e.*, slave of god).

Kuo bee kari bayi le, Allah la baro, jon' te bayi la

All things can be postponed, [but] Allah's work, man cannot put aside.

[Suntu announces]

Jali Nyama Suso, aning Suntu Suso,

Jali Nyama Suso, and Suntu Suso,

[Nyama interjects] *Tonya!* (True!)

Wolu le be "Allah l'a ke" kosila jang.

We two are playing "Allah l'a ke" here.

[Nyama] *Tonya, a baraka.* (True, thank you.)

[both sing]

Ye, Allah l'a ke, silango jongo m'a ke.

Yes, Allah has done it, now it was not a man.

Kuo bee kari bayi le, Allah la baro, jon' te bayi la

All things can be postponed, [but] Allah's work, man cannot put aside.

[Nyama sings in *sataro* style]

Bar' Allah l'a ki kuma be Binta Janneh ma.

Allah calls us to sing words for Binta Janneh.

[Suntu speaks] *Janneh ngana Manding Mori.*

Janneh the noble, learned Manding.

[Nyama continues]

Ali m'a long, Tanjikora muso dimma, Binta Janneh;

Don't you know, the child of Lady Tanjikora, Binta Janneh;

Alaji Landing dimma, Binta Janneh, wei Nana Kamara mamaringo.

Alaji Landing's child, Binta Janneh, yes, Nana Kamara's granddaughter.

[end of scene]

"Sherif Sidi"

"Sherif Sidi" is dedicated to Sidi Haidara, a *sherif* (Muslim cleric) from the Casamance region of Senegal. It was composed upon his death in the early 20th century by Makan Darameh, using a tune dedicated earlier to Sankalima Koli. The lines mourn Haidara's death: "Sidi has fallen, man from the Sahel, Sidi has died. Manjang woman's son, Sidi has died. The *jinns* (spirits) are crying, the angels are weeping. Death passes nobody by, Sidi Haidara." Jali Nyama again adds to these lines some extended passages of *sataro*, employing standard praise lyrics and mentioning various relatives of Haidara.

Sidi y'e la, Sahelinko, Sidi y'e la; ali n ga Sidi kumbo.

Sidi has died, man from the Sahel, Sidi has died; we weep for Sidi.

Manjang muso dimma, Sahelinko; ali n ga Sidi kumbo.

The Manjang woman's son, man from the Sahel; let's weep for Sidi.

Bani nabiu Serifo y'e la, Fanta Njai kema.

[Arabic title] Sherif has died, Fanta Njai's husband.

Sibikuroto Serifo banta, bari aning malo te lakira Yomali Kiyama.

Sherif of Sibikuroto [in Casamance] has died, but he went without shame to the other side in Heaven.

Fanta Njai . . .

Serifo Burama fama, Haidara

Sherifo Burama's father, Haidara

Jinolu b'a kumbola, setanolu b'a kumbola.

The jinns and witches are crying.

Ali m'a long duniya; mo ning Allah si diya nya o nya,

You don't know, world, person and God be sweet this way, that way

As everyone in the world knows, no matter how many ways you please God,

Fo a ye jamfa lung kiling na.

He must deceive you one day [you must die].

Fanta Njai la Serifo Haidara, Ibraima fama, Haidara

Fanta Njai's Sherifo [praise name], Ibraima's father, Haidara

Ibraima fama, Haidara

Ibraima's father, Haidara

Mulai Bakari dimma, Haidara

Mulai Bakari's child, Haidara

Kuntinya lio aning Serifoya te benna, Haidara.

(?)

Ji kandi mingo aning Serifoya te kiling ti.

(?)

Hot water drinking was not part of Serifo's life.

Ah, Sumaila fama Serifo, Serifo be Yomali Kiyama.
Ah, Sumaila's father, Sherif is in the Afterworld.

Sahelinko . . .

Jinolu b'a kumbola . . .

7. "Lambamba"

Performed by Alhaji Suntu Suso and his ensemble
Serrekunda, July 13, 1982

Performers: (Front row, l-r) Alhaji Jaju Kuyateh, *kora*; Denano Jawara, *balo* and lead singer, Alhaji Suntu Suso, *kora*. (Second row) Sherifu Kamara (a *fin*a, or praise singer), Jali Sira Kuyateh, lead singer, Bakoto Jebateh, singer and *neo*, Masireng Kuyateh, lead singer. Jewuru Suso enters later and adds the *konkong* part.

"Lambamba" or "Lambang Silaba," meaning "Big Lambang" or "Lambang, Main Way" is a song performed for the enjoyment of the musicians themselves. It is also known as "Manding Bulo" or "Manding Julo" ("Manding Hand" or "Manding Tune"). It was originally played on the *balo*. According to tradition, a closely related piece called simply "Lambang" dates from before the time of Sunjata, founder of the 13th-century Mali Empire, making it one of the oldest pieces in the repertoire, and one of several songs associated with Sunjata. In either version, it is a song to which jali women dance, stepping slowly, swinging their arms and tossing their heads back, as seen at the end of No. 5. In this film, Jali Sira Kuyateh does the same briefly.

This film was made at the author's request, to replicate the type of ensemble performance one sees at large events such as political rallies, weddings, and child-namings for wealthy families where many musicians are invited. The group was assembled by Alhaji Suntu Suso and consists of family and friends. Bakoto Jebateh, in red, is his wife. Jali Sira, in blue, is his sister-in-law. Her husband, Suntu's brother Jewuru, joins later to perform the *konkong* part. The others are neighbors and friends, regular performers at events in Serrekunda, Bakau, and Banjul.

Groups such as this assemble spontaneously for events. No rehearsal is needed, because all *jalolu* in a given area share a core repertoire and a local repertoire and can play together on demand. Every song has its basic *donkilo* lines, which will be sung in chorus, while those who excel as soloists will provide the *sataro* or reciting style, singing formalized praise lyrics and extemporizing lines that are appropriate to each performing situation.

After the opening *donkilo* lines, Masireng Kuyateh, the lead singer, begins a passage in *sataro* style, elaborating on the theme of the opening line and including some standard praise lyrics. In typical fashion, the other performers shout words of encouragement and agreement. Later the solo role passes to Jali Sira Kuyateh, who begins, *Su kili o*, ("Call the horses ...") a line evoking heroism of the past, and continues with some praise lyrics for the Suso surname. She later gets up to dance. Next Denano Jawara sings as he plays the *balo*, adding more lines in the *sataro* style. Masireng Kuyateh resumes the solo role at the end of the film. Since the time this

was filmed, soloists Masireng and Denano have passed away. This film, showcasing *jaliyaa* in its full heroic and exuberant style, is a tribute to them.

Technical Notes: As with No. 6, this film was made with the Canon 514 XL-S camera at 24 fps. The performance spanned four reels of film, necessitating the loss of some moments as cartridges were exchanged. In *jaliyaa*, these gaps can go almost unnoticed, for *jaliyaa* consists of an instrumental ostinato (the *kumbengo*) and both the length and sequence of vocal parts are improvised. A “missing” line or a few less repeats of the *kumbengo* might easily represent the way the song could be performed the next time around.

The film should be perfectly in sync, but the microphone failed, making the sound track unusable. Fortunately an audio tape was made at the same time, with a Marantz-Superscope CD 330 cassette recorder and a Sony ECM 99 microphone. To save this footage for the 1992 VHS release, this audio was matched to the footage, but with only limited success. Thanks to many hours of devoted digital editing by Elio Trabal, the sync has now been restored, with only minor discrepancies.

“Lambamba”

[Opening *donkilo* line, sung in chorus]

Ye, jaliyaa, Allah l'e ka jaliyaa da.
Yes, *jaliyaa*, it was Allah who created *jaliyaa*.

[Masireng Kuyateh sings]

Ah, jali musolu ning jali kelu
Ah, jali women and jali men

Lung be te jaliya ti
Not every day is a day for *jaliyaa*. [sung three times]

Bi le be dula. Tonya! [spoken]
But today we are doing it. True!

Da le be mogolu lala bari mogolu mang kang.
People say that people are all on one level, but people are not the same.

Ali n ga m fo nyo duniya, duniya la bambali.
We are here together in this world, but life is not everlasting.

Kunung tambita, m be bi kono, sama be manso buru.
Yesterday has gone, we are here today, tomorrow is in the king's (God's) hand.

Malaiko ke faniya fola a bada.
The angel of death never lies.

Lung mang bo lung kang, kari mang bo kari kang.

One day does not overlay another, a new month does not emerge mid-month.

Mansaya te mansaya kang.

One king's rule is not superimposed on his predecessor.

Ni i ye mira duniya la, Saibolu tilo banta.

If you think about life, the sheik's days are over.

Keme saba ning tan ning saba, wolu tilo banta.

Three hundred and thirteen (messengers of God), their times are over.

Bulunding fula, sininding fula; mogolu bee mogonya sumayala.

Two small hands, two small feet; all people must help each other.

Ali n ga m fo nyo duniyala.

We're here in this world together.

Jukung kili! [spoken]

Call Jukung!

Ye, jaliyaa, Allah l'e ka jaliyaa da.

Yes, *jaliyaa*, it was Allah who created *jaliyaa*.

Saibo Mamadu

Sheikh Mamadu

Ye, jaliyaa, Allah l'e ka jaliyaa da.

Yes, *jaliyaa*, it was Allah who created *jaliyaa*.

Gambia, ali nyo nane, Gambia; Gambia ali nyo muta kung, Gambia.

Gambia, let's all pull together; Gambia, let's all hold tight. [repeated]

Suruwa ning Mandinko, Gambia

Wolofs and Mandinkas alike, Gambia

Yamaruwo . . .

Ndaka Kuyate . . .

[Jali Sira Kuyate sings]

Yamaru-o, n ga nying fo nafa molu ma; nafa molu doyata.

Yamaru-o, I have sung this for the wealthy people; the wealthy are few.

Su kelu-o, su kelu-o, Musa Bala baba

The horsemen, the horsemen, Musa Molo's father

M man la duniya la.

I don't trust this world.

Nying Allah mu mansa nyimma ti.
This Allah is a beautiful King.

Fatumata Fune ke aning Funeba, keme nani
Fatumata Fune's husband and Great Fune, [giver of] four hundred

Ni i ye kuo meng sang, ngaralu wo le fo le koma.
If you thing which buy, singers this say after.
If you acquire fame, singers will talk about it after you are gone.

(unclear)

Ni i nata Serrekunda, sankumba ya.
If you come to Serrekunda, [it's] harvest time.
[In Serrekunda, we are earning money today]

Kiliya Musa ning Noya Musa, Nda be Sankumba la (?)
Kiliya Musa and Noya Musa, it's harvest time.
[Standard praises for the Suso surname and leader of this group.]

Ye, jaliya, Allah l'e ka jaliya da.
Yes, jaliya, it was Allah who created jaliya.

[Denano Jawara sings]

Ye, yamaru-o, Tati ke, m b'e kumala.
Yamaru-o, Tati's husband, I am talking of you.

Su ka di keba do la, wula man di a la.
Home is sweet man one to, bush not sweet him to
One man does well at home and does not like to go away.

Wula ka di keba do la, su man di i la.
Bush is sweet man one to, home not sweet him to
Another man excels abroad but is uncomfortable at home.
[Praise for generosity born of worldly knowledge through travel]

A baraka [spoken]
Thank you

Yiro san keme la, Allah ning Mama Dening Suma.
Buy the tree for a hundred [with the help of] Allah and Mama Dening Suma.

Na diyata mo meng na fo Yomali Kiyama ti.
Whatever is good for a person will last till the next world.

Na kuyata mo meng na fo Yomali Kiyama ti.

One's difficulties, too, will be with one till death.

Bari eh, Alhaji Sankung sumayata; Sora Musa Bankalung.

But yes, Alhaji Sankung has died; Sora Musa Bankalung. [praise for Suso]

Eh, Madiba Bayo la Sankung, Jula Bayo, Jula Bayo

Eh, Madibo Bayo's Sankung, Trader Bayo

Ye, jaliyaa, Allah l'e ka jaliyaa da.

Yes, *jaliyaa*, it was Allah who created *jaliyaa*.

[Masireng Kuyateh sings]

Saibo Mamadu, tilo kili Mohamadu a baraka.

Saibo Mamadu, commander of the day Mohamadu, thank you.

Tilo kili Mamadu banta, karo kili ye manta.

Day-commander Mamadu is gone, the month-commander [Mamadu] has disappeared.

Ah, lung bee te jaliyaa ti.

Ah, *jaliyaa* does not happen every day.

Ni i be sembering molu la, i be sembering tumbu ning bakabaka.

If you rely on people, you are relying on worms and maggots.

Hadamading mogo mu lung do ti.

"Adam's child" (a person) is a sometime thing.

Ni nafulo si jongo bali sa la (?)

[meaning unclear]

Ana Bilahi Suleyman

Messengers of Allah and the iron workers

Wo ye duniya mara, bari a tilo banta.

They ruled the world, but their day is gone.

(words unclear)

Kiliya Musa, Nogoya Musa, Wanjaki Musa, duniya

[praise names for the Suso surname]

Hamadi Suso la Bamba, a baraka!

Hamadi Suso's "Crocodile," thank you!

[Praise for Suntu Suso (kora player at right), son of Hamadi, and the hero ("Crocodile") of the day, for arranging the recording session.]

Jali musolu ning jali kelu
Jali women and jali men

Ali n ga baru ke duniya [unsaid: *katu baru te Yomali Kiyama*]
Let's put conversation in our life, [for there's no conversation in the next world].

Mo ye meng ke duniya
Whatever you do in this life

Hadamading mogolu be wo le fo le ye i ko.
Adam's children will talk of it after you are gone.

Sora Musa a baraka; Jebateh muso la ke, a baraka.
Sora Musa, thank you; husband of Jebateh [Bakoto Jebateh, in red], thank you.

Part III: Gambian Tantango Drumming

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For my knowledge of Mandinka drumming, I am indebted to Omar Jissay and Bakary Marong, both now deceased, and other members of their drum troupe. In the 1970s they were the leading drum troupe in the capital area. They may be seen in No. 1. The other performers in these scenes were not employed by me as such – they merely happened to be taking part in the events I was filming. Nevertheless, all of them deserve my thanks for the welcome atmosphere they created, and for their cooperation. As in Parts I and II, the original song text work was done with the aid of Aliu Dabo of Radio Gambia, and the job completed for this edition in with the invaluable assistance of Alhaji Papa Susso.

DRUMMING IN MANDE SOCIETY

Jaliyaa, as seen in Part II, with its celebration of heroes and notables, history and legend, was once the music of Mande royalty and leadership. Radio, television, and the recording industry have made *jaliyaa* familiar in all walks of Mande life, and it was the promotion of *jaliyaa* that first brought Mande music to the West. But drumming is part of Mande music as well. *Jaliyaa* can include certain drums: the *dundung* or *dundumba*, a large cylindrical drum, and the *tamaa*, a small hourglass drum, are often added to *jali* ensembles for the emphasis and color they give. But ensembles of drums, such as the now internationally famous *djembe* ensembles, exist outside the realm of *jaliyaa*.

As in virtually all of Africa, Mande drum music is for dancing. In distinction to *jaliyaa*, drumming has always been a community event, dedicated to the ordinary person who has no particular claim to fame, except perhaps as a local community leader of favorite. Drums play to lighten the mood of manual labor, to celebrate major events such as initiations and weddings, to energize participants and audience alike at wrestling matches, and to provide recreational dancing in rural villages or urban crossroads. The songs people sing at drumming events are topical, celebrating local heroes and friends, people who are usually present at the event. The songs are either well known or quickly learned by the participants.

Unlike *jaliyaa*, drumming in Mande is not a profession. Even though drum troupes keep a heavy performance schedule and the members devote years of their lives to drumming and earn their living by it, they do not inherit their role. A person may take up drumming whether it happens to be a family tradition for him or not. Drummers are not ascribed any particular social status by virtue of being drummers, although they may acquire some fame through their excellence or popularity. Anyone may choose to learn drumming (any man, that is, since Mande women typically do not play drums or melodic instruments).

Despite the lack of an ascribed status such as the *jali* has by virtue of inheriting a profession, drum troupe members are decidedly professionals in terms of accomplishment and dedication. Full participation in a drum troupe begins with a long apprenticeship, during which one might spend several years playing only the smallest drum before moving to the others. Drum troupes are kept busy, much like popular dance bands in the West, traveling to different parts of a city or to outlying villages to fulfill requests to perform at drumming events.

As a result of tours by national ensembles and individual performers, the Mande tradition of *djembe* drumming has become internationally familiar and popular today. The *djembe* ensemble, which includes the large goblet-shaped *djembe* and other cylindrical drums such as the *dundumba*, is the most common Mande dance drum ensemble in Guinea and Mali, and in the 21st century, it is overtaking the local drums of the Gambian Mandinka as well.

THE TANTANGO DRUMS

In 1970 the *djembe* had not arrived in The Gambia. The Gambian drum ensemble was the *tantango* ensemble, and it is this group that is exclusively featured in this video. The etymology of the word *tantango* is sometimes questioned, since it is remarkably close to "tomtom," or to "tamtam" (which, however, refers to a gong, not a drum). The supposition is that the term might be a loan word from English or French, but it is more likely an onomatopoeic Mandinka word for the sound of the drums (a similar Mandinka word, for example, *konkong* means "knock-knock" or "to knock"). In fact, it is quite likely that the word "tomtom" is derived from *tantango* rather than vice versa. In the 1944 edition of the Harvard Dictionary of Music (the older the better in this case), the tomtom is described as a pair of tunable drums, popular in the swing bands of the era, and used to represent an imitation of African drums [emphasis mine] (7th printing, 1973, p. 854).

The *tantango* drum ensemble is made up of three drums: two called *kutiro* or *jonkurango*, and one called *sabaro*, which is the leader of the ensemble. The *kutiro* drums are short, single-head drums with a conical body that flares out at the base. The drummers sit with the drums between their knees, and play them with a stick-and-hand technique. The composite rhythm of the two *kutiro* drums forms the basic ground that identifies each dance rhythm. The smaller drum, called *kutirindingo*, or "little kutiro" is the drum one learns first. The rhythms are usually played with little or no variation. The larger drum is called *kutiribaa*, or "big kutiro." It provides the deep resonant tones of the ensemble, and the player, being more experienced, can engage in some spontaneous variation or improvisation.

The *sabaro* is a long slender drum, also conical with a slight flare at the base, and also played with a stick-and-hand technique. It is slung from the shoulder and hangs horizontally at

the waist of the standing player. By virtue of its length, it too has a deep resonance, but this deep tone is more subtle than that of the *kutiro*. The predominant sound of the *sabaro* is the high tone of the head, in the same range as the *kutirindingo*. The *sabaro* rhythms are discontinuous and episodic, adding speech-like commentary and improvisational variety to the sound of the ensemble, while also signalling all starts, stops, and changes in the rhythms. Some of the patterns played on the *sabaro* are in fact speech, such as the "Greeting to the *Bantabaa*" or town square, played solo by the *sabaro* player, announcing that a performance is about to begin.

The *sabaro* player also typically blows a police whistle as he plays, adding another level of improvised commentary. The whistle was introduced during colonial times, but it is not merely an addition. It is an adaptation of a "growling" that lead drummers in many African ensembles perform as they play.

A final detail in the sound of the *tantango* ensemble is a light jingling sound produced by iron pellet bells in the shape of pea-pods tied on the drummers' left wrists. They are rarely visibly in the video, but may be glimpsed for a moment in No. 5, "Kankurango," when the *sabaro* player beats on them at one point with his right hand.

The drums are hewn from logs of mahogany, known as *kembo*. The sticks are whittled from mangrove wood. The single head is made from domestic goat skin. It is stretched over pegs in the drum shell and additionally tensioned with goatskin laces woven in slits in the side of the head and tied under the pegs. When a new drum head is fitted (which can be every few weeks if a drum troupe is performing daily), a small dab of chewed-up kola nut is pressed on the head for good luck. It soon dries and falls off, leaving an oxidized spot at the center.

DRUM TECHNIQUE

The stick-and-hand technique of *tantango* drumming is essentially the same for all three drums, although the *sabaro* player has a somewhat larger repertory of strokes than the *kutiro* drummers have. There are four basic strokes: an open and a damped stroke with the hand, spoken with the mnemonics *kung* and *ba*, and an open and a damped stroke with the stick, verbalized as *din - da*. For the open strokes, the hand or stick is allowed to bounce off the head; for the damped strokes, it is pressed to the head (the damped strokes *ba* and *da* are pronounced with a glottal stop to indicate the damped sound). The left and right hands always play in alternation, not together. A simple example of these four strokes is in the *kutirindingo* part for "Lenjengo," in which they are played in the order given above, in a long-short, long-short rhythm: *kum-ba din-da* (the spellings here reflect the actual pronunciation in this particular sequence). For some rhythms, such as those that accompany "Seruba" (See No. 1), the *kutiro* drummers put away their sticks and play with hands only.

The variegated tone color of the *kutiro* rhythms is produced by a rapid string of sounds from the two drums each playing their separate rhythms. There are twenty-four theoretically possible sounds: the four strokes separately on each drum ($4+4=8$), plus each stroke played simultaneously with any other stroke on the other drum ($4 \times 4=16$), for a total of twenty-four. A typical composite rhythm produced by the two *kutiro* players has far fewer than twenty-four sounds, since the typical dance beats are six, eight, twelve, or sixteen pulses in length, but the variegated effect is achieved nonetheless.

Technical Notes: All of the films in Part III, with one exception noted in No. 1, were made on location at actual drumming events. The tape recorder was always running, but only a generalized synchronization has been attempted, rather than extensively cutting the in-camera-edited scenes. Only in the demo performance of “Seruba” noted below, has one solo line by Bakary Marong been put in sync.

1. “Lenjengo/Seruba” for a Wedding

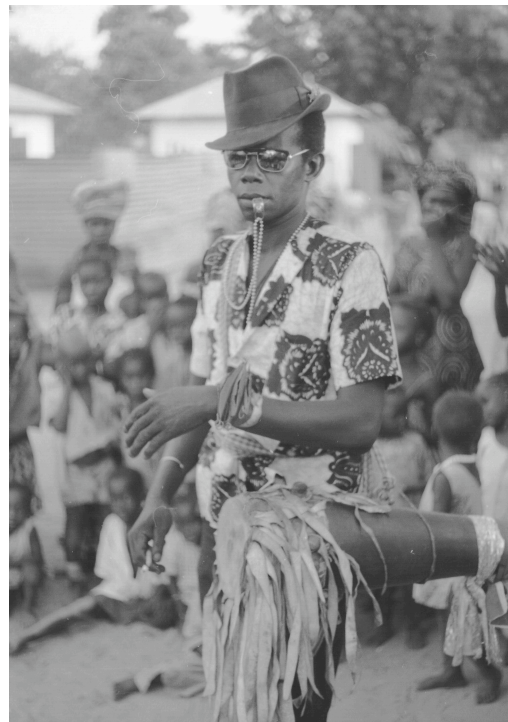
Tujering, August 28, 1970

Seku Jaite, *sabaro*
Serifu Kujabi, *kutiriba* (later)
Serifu Sisay, *kutirindingo*

Omar Jissay, *sabaro*
Ibu Njai, *kutiriba*
Serifu Kujabi, *kutirindingo*

“Lenjengo” is a recreational dance, and the most frequently performed piece in the *tantango* repertory. Young women’s clubs and various village organizations hire drummers to play “Lenjengo” at virtually any time of year, simply for entertainment, for a political rally, or for specific celebrations such as the event seen here, which is a *manyo bito*, or “bride-covering.” The event is described below.

“Lenjengo” typically begins in the late afternoon, as shadows lengthen towards sunset. The drummers set up at the edge of the town square, known as the *bantabaa*, or in a family’s compound, and the *sabaro* player plays the “Greetings to the *Bantabaa*” (not seen in the video). As people gather, the drummers play a simple beat to accompany singing and various women initiate one-line songs that are picked up by the others and accompanied by simple handclapping. There is very little of this portion of the performance in the video, but below are some examples of lines sung at the opening of a typical “Lenjengo” performance:



Omar Jissay

Jinani Jata goes everywhere with the singer, doesn't she?

Kitimu Jissay calls with a sweet voice
Let's powder her face so passersby will notice her.

Tambasansang in Saba
Yes I'm used to singing in your town.

Once a good-sized dance circle has formed and several songs have been sung, the dancing begins. Both men and women may dance “Lenjengo,” but it is dominated by women. The drummers begin what could be described as a “standing beat,” played when no one is dancing.

Whoever wishes to begin steps across the circle towards the drummers and begins to dance. The drummers comply by switching to the “dancing beat,” which is faster and more energetic. Even though it has not been possible to synchronize this scene, the alternation of these two beats may be heard in the audio track. The women in the circle also intensify their handclapping as noted in earlier scenes (Part I, Nos. 4 & 5), tripling the speed by splitting spontaneously into three: some people continue to clap on 1, while others mark 2, and others 3, of a triplet figure.

If a second dancer follows on the heels of the first, the dancing beat continues. If there is a moment when no one is in the circle, the standing beat returns. There is no choreography as such. Two women can join the circle as a duo, but most of the time one simply follows another, sometimes with a friendly push. In the video, some women and girls have come in their everyday work clothes, while others have put on their finery for the occasion.

The dance, consisting of hard foot-stamping and flailing arms, has several variations. The drummers oblige the dancers, providing the proper rhythm for whichever variant a dancer does. At times the *kutiro* drummers may stand and move about the circle, their drums held in place with a sash around the waist.

The occasion for this “Lenjengo” dance, as noted above, was a *manyo bito*, or “bride-covering.” This event takes place the day after a bride and groom are united at the groom’s house, and is for the entertainment of the bride by her kinswomen and friends, both new and old. She attends the event and sits at the edge of the dance circle (she is off-camera behind the drummers), but does not take part. Her head is covered and face veiled, symbolizing a period of ritual seclusion that follows her arrival at her husband’s house. Matt Schaffer and Christine Cooper, in their book, *Mandinko: The Ethnography of a West African Holy Land* (1980), based on research in southern Senegal, describe a seclusion of three days, during which time the bride does not leave the house during the day (p. 82). The Gambian practice allows for more outward celebration, with dancing continuing the next day as well, before the bride’s family and friends return to their village.

Generally “Lenjengo” spends itself fairly quickly, since it requires considerable effort and a large crowd of dancers. As darkness falls, the crowd breaks up for dinner. But the dance typically starts up again later in the evening. The drum troupe comes prepared with their own gas lantern in case there is no electricity in the village.

The second half of the evening begins with “Lenjengo” once again, but this time as the dancers tire, the drummers switch to “Seruba.” This dance, also known as “Fere,” usually continues long into the night.

“Seruba”

Bakary Marong, singer
Omar Jissay, *sabaro*
Serifu Kujabi, *kutiriba*
Manlafi Baji, *kutirindingo*

“Seruba” is primarily a song session. To lead it, a fourth member of the dance troupe takes the circle. Every singer has a repertory of verses that he sings to a fairly standardized “Seruba”

melody, but as the event progresses, he personalizes the content by extemporizing new verses in response to requests from women in the dance circle.

Without a movie light, filming an actual “Seruba” performance was impossible. Thus, this scene was staged for the camera at the drummers’ compound in Bakoteh, without the usual circle of dancers. As the scene opens, the drummers are playing the lively dance beat that dominates the “Seruba” event. The words that Bakary sings in this opening scene are indistinct, but below are some typical verses from his repertoire:

Eh, for me the people of Gunjur are Gambia’s greatest
I have slept at the door of the money-house
The people of Gunjur have no equal.

Ah, everyone should give Bojang beautiful gifts
Oh, Manyima from Jambanjele
Give her beautiful gifts.

Eh, at Bakary Marong’s place
Beat the drum for me, Omar
The girls are dancing at Bakary’s.

This scene is followed by a short demonstration of a more sedate “Seruba” melody that is used to start the performance. This scene has been put in sync.

O, jaliyaa le kole le; nte be n donna.
Oh, *jaliyaa* is hard; I am dancing.
Aiye, ye Serifo Konte kunda la.
Aiye, it’s about Serifo Konte’s place. [sung twice]

The last scene is footage from a wedding on a rainy day where Bakary, surrounded by his drummers and a crowd of people, is singing to the more lively dance beat. In typical fashion, the crowd forms a chorus for the song, joining in on the second half of each verse.

A ko, Nyonko Manneh, n ga silo dan ne.
He said, Nyonko Manneh, I am road entering
He said: Nyonko Manneh, I will tell you my way.
Ali ya mansa kunda le; bari Nyonko Manneh n ga silo dan te
We are at the king’s place; but Nyonko Manneh,
I will tell you my way. [sung three times]

O, mansolu benta, m be mansaring su
Oh, the kings have met, here I am at the palace.

Aiye, m be tala su da la
Aiye, I am going to the door.

(For additional examples of both “Lenjengo” and “Seruba” song texts and further explanations and notations, see Knight, 1974.)

2. "Nyaka Julo," played for rice planting

Sotuma, September 3, 1970

Karamo Manneh, *sabaro*

Jakanko Cham, *kutiriba*

Demba Sabali, *kutiriba*

Momodu Jao, *kutirindingo*

There are several rhythms to accompany farm work. One is called "Daba Tantango," or "Hoe Drums." This is for men's farm work, in the peanut and millet fields.

Rice planting and harvesting are women's farm work, and for this, an appropriate drum beat is "Nyaka Julo" or "Girl Initiates' Tune." The actual event for which "Nyaka Julo" is intended is the coming-out dance following girls' initiation into adulthood, but as something of interest to women, it is equally appropriate for their farm work parties.

In Mandinka villages, everyone has their own farm plot, but at planting and harvesting time, rather than each person toiling alone at their plot, villagers organize a *bara kio*, or communal work party, in which everyone helps out with first one plot, then another, until the work is done. On this occasion, rice shoots are being transplanted to the rice plot belonging to Daranko Sakiliba. She has called on her friends to help, and hired a drum troupe to entertain them. Women break up the paddy with their long-bladed, hand-made hoes. One man can be seen assisting the women planting the shoots.

The drummers, in this case including an extra *kutiriba* player, stand ankle-deep in the mud in the midday sun along with the workers and transform the laborious task into a light-hearted party, with the women singing and dancing as they work.

Technical note: The camera was running below normal speed during this film session, resulting in slightly accelerated action. It has been left as is. The audio is at correct speed.

Diabo nya le, Domba, diabo nya le.

Sweet is always sweet, Domba

Ali denkilo! [spoken]

Everyone sing!

3. *Kanyelango* or *Dimba Tulungo* (“Young Mothers’ Play”)

Sabiji (near Serekunda), June 17, 1970

Sute Sonko, *sabaro*

Fa Buraima Sanyang, Bun Sambo, and Omar Jissay at different times on *kutiriba* and *kutirindingo*.



Sute Sonko and *kutiro* players



Women of the *kanyelang kafo*

Kanyelango is an event, not the name of a dance. It is performed by a group called the *kanyelang kafo* or “Kanyelang Club.” It takes its name from a fertility ritual of the Jola people, but has its roots in a traditional Mandinka event that was more widespread in the past called the *dimba tulungo*, or “young mothers’ play.” The purpose of the *dimba* (or *demba*) *tulungo* was to draw attention to women’s health concerns, such as fertility, infant mortality, or the spread of a disease, and to attempt to magically drive off evil spirits that might be causing them. Schaffer and Cooper note that every Mandinka village in the district of southern Senegal where they worked in the 1970s had such an association. A woman who joined became a *dembajasa*, or “clowning mother.” She joined in hopes that “this change in her status [would] magically cause future offspring to be spared by evil spirits” (1980:60).

Women face the same concerns today, and a woman who is barren after several years of marriage or has lost children might seek the assistance of the *dembajasa* organization – the *kanyelang kafo*. To initiate her as a member, the *kafo* organizes a dance such as the one seen here. On this occasion, Nyorta Manneh, wife of Seruba singer Bakary Marong was being initiated as a *dembajasa*. The actual steps of initiation, one of which is the sampling (by both husband and wife) of a porridge with traditional medicines made by the *kafo*, are not included in the footage. The focus is on the dancing and fun-making for which the “clowning mothers” are famous.

The dance costume of a *dembajasa* is purposely funny, consisting of a skirt festooned with beads or trinkets or in some cases, pants and shirt (i.e., men’s clothing, otherwise unheard of in daily village life). The costume may also include a cap or hat likewise festooned with beads,

buttons, bottlecaps, and other lightweight tidbits. The trademark *kanyelango* or *dembajasa* hat is a skull cap made from a half calabash with these items hanging in a fringe at the edge. The hand-me-down women's slips are not part of the costume; rather, they were fashionable as casual outerwear in the 1970s.

There is no separate drum beat for *kanyelango*. "Lenjengo" and "Nyaka Julo" are the rhythms used. In this performance, additional variants to the "Lenjengo" dance movements (beyond those seen in No. 1) may be seen, done especially by more elderly women. Isolated verses of songs are interspersed by the dancers. These are usually bawdy, although it is not readily apparent from the verses that can be heard in the video:

Danjamba, wulolu nata, wulo le?

Big Danjang, the dogs have arrived, where are they?

[spoken]

A jube, i be meng kela.

Look at him, what he is doing.

I be molu tala; i be ta i ye; tala duniya la.

He is taking [photos of] people. He will take them to his country, to the world.

Ali bulo!

Everyone clap!

Kino, i na kino

Rice, bring the rice!

Jarilango jibo, jarilango te je.

The paddle for the boat, the paddle is not there.

[Without a paddle, the boat can't go.]

[Without food, we won't continue.]

As the scene ends, a group of women start across the dance circle imitating musicians of the neighboring Fula people. One of them is playing a mock-up of the *nyenyedu*, a one-string fiddle.

For further information on the *kanyelango*, see Peter Weil, 1976: "The staff of life: food and female fertility in a West African society," *Africa* 46/2, 182-95, and Didier Fassin and Ibrahima Badh, 1986: "Ritual buffoonery: a social preventive measure against childhood mortality in Senegal," *The Lancet*, January 18, 1986, 142-43.

Technical note: This event and the following, *Nyoboringo*, were filmed with poor film stock. They have been color-corrected in the digitization process.

4. *Nyoboringo*, the wrestling match

Match between the Fulas and Jolas

Brufut, December 13, 1970



Wrestlers begin a match



One wrestler topples another

Virtually every tourist visiting The Gambia today sees a wrestling match. They are held in large arenas with a PA system, admission is charged, and camcorders are very much in evidence in the audience. The commercial wrestling match is not purely a tourist event, however; large crowds of Gambians attend as well. The wrestling itself is the same as in traditional matches, but the context has changed. Traditional wrestling was a major form of village entertainment and inter-village exchange. The season began at the end of the harvest season (*sanjano*) when farm labor was complete for the year. It was the beginning of the dry season, and the onset of winter in Europe (conveniently today, the tourist season). Wrestling could lend considerable prestige to villages and to individual participants. In a study entitled "Wrestling in The Gambia" (Gambia Cultural Archives, 1976), B. K. Sidibe and Winifred Galloway attribute the present decline to several factors, such as the growth of other forms of entertainment and the loss of local patronage by chiefs, but primarily to oversight by the Board of Education in not recognizing wrestling as something that could have been an excellent school sport.

Although commercialization has stepped in, traditional matches are still held. In 1970, when the tourist industry was in its infancy, they were perhaps more common than the commercial variety. The match filmed here took place in the town of Brufut, about twenty miles outside the capital of Banjul. The two teams were identified as Fula and Jola, ethnic neighbors of the Mandinka. Sidibe and Galloway observe that by the 1970s Mandinka villages were no longer avidly fielding wrestling teams (p. 17). But the strength of Mandinka tradition in the event is still evident in the use of Mandinka *tantango* drums and drum rhythms by all teams, regardless of their ethnicity. For wrestling, the drummers play "Nyoboring Julo," or "Wrestling Tune."

Commercial or traditional, the conduct of a match is much the same. A team of wrestlers from one town or ethnic group, usually men in their late teens to mid-twenties, takes on another team. They station themselves at opposite ends of the *bantabaa*, each with their drum troupe. Spectators sit or stand around the edges. With both drum troupes playing simultaneously but independently, a few members of each team stride into the arena seeking a partner. Those of like size pair off, and the wrestling begins. There is no organized sequence of matches – as many as find partners begin wrestling. When a victory is scored, both winner and loser leave the ring, to be replaced by others in a continuous round. Although not orchestrated as such, there is a natural

progression of events. The least experienced contestants take to the ring first, followed by more seasoned wrestlers, and culminating with the match between the champions.

The object is simple – to topple your opponent. There are no elaborate holds and no requirement that once a man is thrown he must be held down for a number of counts. The standard hold, maintained throughout in most cases, is to bend at the waist and grab the opponent's wrestling trunks with one hand, and his neck, leg, or torso with the other.

As the video shows, *nyoboringo* is not only a sports event. It is also a dance. Contestants dance/walk around the arena, “strutting their stuff” (sometimes still in their street clothes), before entering to challenge an opponent, and if victorious, they dance jubilantly back to join their teammates. The *sabaro* drummers move about the ring with one contestant or another, ready to punctuate any victory. There are no standardized steps for a victory dance – every wrestler has his individual style. The constant drumming keeps excitement at a high pitch and lends encouragement to the contestants.

When a victory is scored, spectators rush in from the sidelines to give their champion a coin, and then hurry out again. Formerly, the girls of Mandinka villages organized themselves into a singing group called the “Bantabaa Girls.” They sang songs, such as the following, to encourage their team (Sidibe & Galloway, p. 9):

<i>Ning i ye i boring</i>	If they throw you
<i>Ning i ye i boring</i>	If they throw you
<i>Wuli! I ye i jo.</i>	Get up and pay them back!

Scoring and refereeing are done in an informal way by wrestling club leaders or other respected figures such as a *jali*, and any signs of ill will among contestants are defused immediately. The purpose is to have a good time.

The following are miscellaneous comments by the spectators as the event progresses:

A jibe, Jereba.

Look, there's Jereba.

A jibe, a muta nya meng, mba!

Look at that, how he holds him, my friend!

Eh, ali ye meng ke, a mang beteya

Hey, what you did, that was not good.

A fele! A b'a fa la.

Look at that! He would kill him.

I y'a long, a man ke a fulante.

You know, he's not his equal.

A ko le, a be hamering a k'a ma le.

He said he's filled with resentment and just waiting to do this.

5. *Kankurango*, the masked dance

Bakau, February 20, 1970

Landing Kasama, *sabaro*

(other performers' names not recorded)

The *kankurango* (*kankurang*, *kangkurao*) is a bark- and leaf-clad masked figure. He moves about and dances with agitation, brandishing a machete. His face, smeared with ashes, is masked by red bark streamers rather than a wooden mask. His torso is wrapped in red bark, and bundles of leaves adorn his arms and waist. He represents a demon-spirit, and is the central figure in a cult that exercises various forms of social control in Mandinka villages. Schaffer and Cooper discuss the cult of the *kangkurao* in depth and give some examples of his roles: the *kangkurao* might be brought out to enforce the digging of wells or the clearing of brush for fire prevention; he imposes a prohibition on picking mangos and oranges before they are ripe, and enforces it. In a more magical sense (equally important to the Mandinka), the *kangkurao* is the demon-spirit with the strongest power against evil spirits such as the cannibal-witch (1980:102-3).

In most people's minds, the primary association of the *kangkurao* is with boys' initiation. This ceremony, held roughly every five years for boys ranging from about age six to thirteen, is sometimes scaled down today, but still includes circumcision and some group activities such as singing songs. In the past, it included six to eight weeks of instruction, singing, foot races, and other activities in a secluded lodge built especially for the purpose. At the end of this "bush school" the initiates returned to the village amidst a festival of dancing and celebration.

During the period of seclusion, the *kangkurao* exercised both its temporal and magical powers, shielding the vulnerable initiates from cannibal-witches, but also enforcing group discipline, largely through fear. A lodge chief in the Senegalese village where Schaffer & Cooper worked gives an example: ". . . when a novice will not stop crying, [the lodge chief] calls in a *kangkurao*. The *kangkurao* enters the lodge and sometimes beats the novice with the flat edge of his machete" (p.98).

Today *kankurang* dancers, although still feared by little children who flee their approach, have become a popular attraction. Youth clubs hire them along with a drum troupe for various celebrations or fund-raising events, and in the larger cities, such as Banjul and Serrekunda, troupes come out in force on Boxing Day (December 26), along with various other masked figures and performers, for a free-for-all informal carnival.

On the occasion filmed, a youth club in Bakau has hired some *kankurang* dancers to go around town and raise money for the club. As they move down the street, the dancers go into shops and hold out their machetes, blade horizontal, asking for a coin. In the compounds of the big givers and friends of the club, they stop for a longer display of dancing.

The threatening behavior associated with the initiation lodge is transformed into mischievous menacing in the street. Encountering the *kankurang* for the first time, the author approached to ask permission to film and was greeted with a machete held to his neck (but with the dull edge forward). Months later, driving slowly through crowds of revelers in Banjul on Boxing Day, the car was stopped by a *kankurang* who jumped into the street and whacked the hood with his machete (but without causing any damage). These actions are all in good fun. The

next gesture in each case was to hold out the machete for a coin. (Boys' and girls' initiation and the *kankurang* are discussed further in Schaffer and Cooper, pp. 94-107.)

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