

AFRICAN PERCUSSION

SERGE BLANC

The Djembe



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INTRODUCTION

In 1985, after several years of amateur drum playing, I took my first djembe workshop with Adama Dramé. This encounter was decisive. I was immediately attracted to the instrument and the music, and have dedicated myself to them ever since. Given the growing interest in traditional African music, especially percussion, I wanted to make available a book that both places the instrument in its African context and enables the reader to start to learn to play.

It would be pretentious to try to produce an exhaustive work on so vast a subject. Since traditional music is usually passed on orally, the transcription of African rhythmic patterns might be open to criticism and using Western notation to write down a type of music which is radically different might seem arbitrary.

My goal is not to establish absolute or limiting rules, but rather to pass on in written form a synthesis of my personal research and experience to others interested in this extraordinary instrument.

This book is not just a simple method for learning an instrument. It is for a wider audience: percussionists from all backgrounds, percussion teachers, instrument makers and music lovers will all find it instructive.

The beginning percussionist cannot claim to “play like a pro” after reading this book. Regular practice is necessary, as well as a certain rigor and, above all, supervision by an experienced teacher who will help and guide him or her in this work.

Several trips to West Africa will bring him into direct contact with the djembe’s cultural milieu and give him the pleasure of playing with local musicians. Africa’s unique atmosphere is indispensable for learning to play really well. In the meantime, a compact disk has been included to enable the reader to better understand and interpret the written material.

The repertory given here is not simply “African inspired”. The rhythms presented are real traditional standard rhythms whose authenticity and accuracy have been confirmed by such eminent musicians as Aboubakar Bamba, Koumgbanan Condé, Lamine Soumah, Mamady Keïta, Noumoudy Keïta and Souleymane Dembelé. I sincerely thank them for their interest. In contributing to the making of this document, they have helped give a new dynamic to percussion and West African rhythmic patterns in the world.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Morton Potash, François Kokelaere, Jean-Pierre Journet, Julien André, Modibo Bah, Ravy Magnifique and Youssouf Tata Cissé for their help and advice.

The reader will find here a pedagogical aid, written with passion and all possible accuracy, allowing him or her to taste the pleasure of playing this instrument. I hope it will arouse a desire of one day attaining the musical excellence of the great masters.

And now the moment has come to turn to the djembe and its music...

Serge Blanc



CHAPTER 1

MANDINGO SOCIETY

- Soundjata Keita
- Main Ethnic Groups
- The Griot or Jali

"MOGO TE KORO KALAN MA; DONO DON TULO BE TE KALANSO..."

"At all ages, every day, the ear hears new things..."



Founding Hero of the Mali Empire

Soundjata, a thirteenth-century mythical and legendary hero, had a great destiny. A great among the greatest, he is attributed a very important role in traditional Mandingo history. The main events of his life are recounted in chronicles of the time and in numerous African history books. His story is told in "Janjon" and "Soundjata Fasa", the Saga of Soundjata, the most famous Mandingo epic chant⁽¹⁾.

The story goes that Sogolon Kédjougou, one of the wives of Fara-Koro Makan Kégni, gave birth to a sick boy, who was paralyzed for seventeen years. He was called Soundjata.

Soundjata had a stepmother, Tassouma Béréte, who helped her son, Dakaran Touma, Soundjata's half-brother, usurp the throne. Soundjata's astonishing strength and generosity had made Tassouma Béréte jealous and fearful; she plotted against him. She and her son exiled Soundjata, the sole heir to the throne, along with his whole family. They went to Nêma, where his mother died on the eve of his departure to reconquer his native country. Soundjata prospered on the way back, sealing alliances, sacking and submitting the different peoples, who then became his vassals. At the historic battle of Kirina, Soundjata and his Mandingo allies triumphed over Soumangourou Kanté, King of the Susu.

Soundjata was proclaimed Mansa, or Emperor, King of Kings. He then laid the foundations of the Mandingo Empire, the Empire of Mali.

He developed agriculture, which became the main basis of the economy, and oriented trans-Saharan commerce towards gold trading, ruining the Maninka slave trade, which he later abolished.

In the realm of social relations, there was real innovation. Caste differentiation became more systematic. Preexisting groups were divided into three impermeable strata: the horon (important people and nobles), the nyamakala⁽²⁾ (caste members) and the jon (slaves). Each stratum's role was well defined by rules of centuries-old customs. The essential duty of the nobles, placed at the top of the hierarchy, was to oversee the group's safety. Caste members were to entertain and satisfy the material needs of the group. The slaves did the hardest and most unpleasant work. Soundjata also codified the clan system. Trades and professions became hereditary: from that time on, the son had to follow in his father's footsteps. There are several versions of Soundjata's end. Like his life, his death is shrouded in mystery. The most widespread version says that he drowned in the Sankarannin river.

The Empire of Mali reached its height during the reign of Kankou Moussa, known as Mansa Moussa I (1342-1360). The empire stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the west of Gao on the Niger River.

Kankou Moussa won fame with his celebrated pilgrimage to Mecca, a pilgrimage that is still legendary.

During his journey, he distributed so much gold (12 tons, it is said), that he caused the Cairo precious metals market to crash, thereby earning an extraordinary reputation.

A pious sovereign, he had many mosques built in his colonies, contributing to the spread of Mali's renown beyond the borders of Sudan and attracting many Arab travellers to his country. The most famous of these was the Moroccan Ibn Battuta, who came in 1352. At that time, Mansa Moussa reigned over a vast and prosperous empire. After his death, internal quarrels weakened the government. Vassals everywhere rose up and threw off the Malian yoke, among them the Wolof and Séréri peoples. The Mandingo Empire disintegrated.

Many kings were born in the historical land of the Mandingo empire. They are the heroes and warriors whom the griots throughout West Africa continue to glorify as if they were still alive.

After several years of French colonization under the name of French Sudan, Mali became an independent and sovereign republic on September 22, 1960. During Modibo Keita's presidency, the first republic experienced severe economic difficulties, amplified by social crisis. Serious conflicts arose within the national direction of the single political party, the USRDA, creating a political crisis. This led to a military takeover on November 19, 1968, under the direction of Lieutenant Moussa Traoré, who ruled the country single-handedly for 23 years. He was overthrown by the tragic events of May 26, 1991, enabling the establishment of a multi-party, democratic system.

Colonization considerably modified the map of the Mandingo region and dispersed the Maninka peoples. Their zone of influence currently includes parts of Burkina Faso, the Ivory Coast, Gambia, Guinea-Conakry and Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone. The Maninka belong to a Mandingo family that includes many prestigious ethnic groups, including the Bamana, the Kaado, the Jula, the Soninké, the Susu and the Syenara.

Mandingo music today is conquering the world under the leadership of star musicians as well-known as they are talented, such as Ami Koïta, Salif Keïta, Mory Kanté...

1. This saga comprises several hundred verses that are played, sung, danced and discussed during important ceremonies.

2. The term nyamakala designates groups within different clans composed of the

- Jali: griots,

- Numu: smiths, specialists in iron and other metals,

- Garanke: cobblers or dyers,

- Fune: a kind of holy beggar.

MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS IN AREAS OF MANDINGO INFLUENCE

• Burkina Faso

Birifu	Bwa or Bobo	Fulbé	Jula	Samogo
Boron	Dafin	Gurumance	Lobi	Syenara
Busa	Dagari	Gurusi	Mosi	or Sénufo

• Ivory Coast

Aboron	Bété	Fulbé	Koyaga	Wobé
Ani	Birifu	Gagu	Maninka	Yakuba
Atiyé	Bolé	Géré	Syenara	
Bamana	Dan	Guro or Kweni	Turuka	
Bawulé	Ebiriye	Jula		

• Guinea

Baga	Jalunké	Landuman	Téminé
Basari	Jula	Maninka or Malinké	Toma or Loma
Fulani or Peul	Kisi	Nalo	Tuculeri
Gereze	Koniagi	Susu or Soso	

• Mali

Bamana or Bambara	Kaado or Dogon	Samogo	Tamasheq or Touareg
Bela	Kakolo	Somono	Tuculeri
Bozo	Kasonké	Songoï or Sonraï	Wasulunke
Bwa	Mamara or Miyanka	Soninké, Sarakolé or Maraka	Wolof
Fulbé or Peul	Maninka	Suraka or Moor	
Jula	Mosi	Syenara	

• Senegal and Gambia

Basari	Maninka	Tuculeri
Fulbé	Séreri	Wolof
Jula	Soninké	
Lébu	Suraka	

• Main ethnic class groups

Fune	Jali	Numu
Garanke	Maabo	

The spelling used for the names of ethnic groups, instruments and rythms is that of the mandingo alphabet. The letter "j" is pronounced like the "dy" in "Goodyear". The letter "u" is pronounced like the "oo" in "boot". The unaccented "e" is pronounced like the "a" in "cape". The original spelling, derived from the French, is used for all proper names.



THE GRIOT OR JALI

In West Africa, in the great feudal societies like the Mali Empire, where many, codified castes defined the social hierarchy, the griots, or bards, became an object of the highest esteem. As the society's heralds, they were respected, courted and feared.

Within the highly structured and hierarchical Mandingo society, the griots or jaliw were a caste apart, engaged in oratorical art and music.

According to the renowned specialist Kélé Monson Diabaté, their origin goes back to the times of the prophet Mohammed. Legend has it that the Prophet gave his slave Bilali three coffers intended for his three grandsons who afterward went to Mandan and founded the village of Kikoronin. According to oral tradition, the Maninka came from Mecca.

Griots may be men or women; they are surrounded by an aura of mystery. Called "belen tiguï"⁽¹⁾ they are the keepers of the oral tradition. One is a griot by hereditary filiation. It is therefore possible to enjoy this status without practising any of its extremely difficult tasks and activities. Great griots are rare.

In Manden, the oldest griots travel very little, remaining attached to tradition and the land where they were born. They are settled there, serving a king or a power on whom they in turn depend.

Lower caste, they are both loved and despised. They do no manual labor and do not work the land, but are supported by the nobles. While still very young, their children learn the art of public speaking and develop their memory, which becomes their working tool.

These genealogists, story-tellers and musicians generally have very common names, like Kouyaté, Diabaté or Cissoko. Some of them are also healers, for they are initiated in the secrets of nature and plants.

The griot was therefore the depository of a dynasty's history, of a genealogy, the people's living memory, indispensable for perpetuating institutions. His skill was revealed during large public events glorifying his superiors, in the presence of other nobles accompanied by their own griots who knew the content of what would be said and chanted. He proved his competence by being clever enough not to cause the nobleman whose praises he sung to lower his head in shame.

The griot was also bellicose. He was the one who goaded the kings to fight to the death in combats that were motivated by glory, power, acquisition of land and also of beautiful women (the kings in general had thirty wives). Some griots started wars, like the one who one day obstinately refused to sing for King Biton of Ségou.

"What's wrong?" the King finally asked. "It's in your

kingdom, sire, that nothing is right," replied the griot. "The prettiest girl of the Empire lives in the village of the neighboring kingdom and you haven't married her yet! How can I sing your praises?"

Upon hearing these words, the king prepared his army and launched a war to abduct the girl, whom he then married. One does not say "no" to a griot. It is a matter of honor.

Before the written word was used, the griots taught and exchanged knowledge orally. To learn from the source, the young griots left the family home and went to study with a great master. They did domestic work for him until they earned his trust. When he judged them capable of learning, he began teaching them "buruju"⁽²⁾ which enabled them, among other things, to realize that they were of good stock: there was always a hero among their ancestors who served as a reference point.

After their minds had been opened, learning as much as they could absorb, they left the master and became in their turn keepers of the "tarik".

Today, living mainly in cities, unable to claim to belong to a particular master due to changes in social and geopolitical structures (the royal courts have disappeared), the griots have become independent. True professionals of speech, show and music, they are masters of ceremony for local festivities in their communities. It is difficult to imagine weddings, baptisms and funerals without them; the sowing season is punctuated with their chants and music. Praising equally nobles and important people, they no longer need to tell the truth; instead, they say what pleases and prompts generous donations, rewards and gifts.

It is therefore unusual today to find young people who know the "tarik", now a rarefied lore. They prefer the lure of quick money to volunteer work which no longer attracts anyone. All griots believe that the day they start working will unquestionably be the beginning of fame and fortune. They readily submit to the power of money. But their function remains important when they act as mediators, intervening in inter-family problems and disputes. And it is still the griot who arranges certain traditional marriages.

In the Mandingo world there are many villages or training centers where young people interested in learning oral traditions go. The novices learn the art of public speaking or exchange their experience with other griots, especially in Kéla (Kangaba society), in Kita and Boudofo (a suburb of Kita) and in Krina (Bamako society), cities where the traditions are well kept in Mali; and at Hamada or Famada (Kouroussa society) in Guinea.

1. This expression is formed from "belen", meaning "rod" and "tiguï", meaning "master of".

2. "Buruju": the origins of institutions and family genealogies, also called "tarik", from the Arab word for "chronicle".

CHAPTER 2

PRINCIPAL TRADITIONAL MANDINGO INSTRUMENTS

"FOLI DE YE DIQNE KOGO YE..."

"Music makes the world a pleasant place..."

Black Africa has an infinite number of musical instruments. It is difficult to itemize them all, given the size of the regions and the great variety of populations and ethnic groups, as well as the multiple and variable terminologies.

Here are the instruments most representative of Mandingo music, ones that have a more or less direct relation with the djembe and its music. They are played during initiation ceremonies, games, songs and dances and popular festivities. They are also used by the national dance companies.

As an integral part of African social life, evidence of the liveliness of traditional music, they are played to this day at each stage of agricultural work (tilling, sowing, harvesting), hunting and fishing. They accompany birth, childhood, puberty, funerals and inheritances, expressing refinement, solemnity and piety in the rituals. They let "joie de vivre" and gaiety burst out and give expression to ardor in work.

There are sacred instruments, whose resonance chambers and orifices sometimes have a shape that lend themselves to symbolic or mythological interpretations; and there are popular instruments. The latter, while keeping their fundamental elements, are more or less victims of the general technical evolution of wood and metals.

Their construction can be very careful, but also slipshod and even rudimentary. But they all have one thing in common: they are never mass-produced. Using all sorts of resonant matter, made essentially from natural or found materials (wood, bamboo, horns, animal skins, gourds, iron, etc.), their quality resides above all in the richness of the timbre; the instrument must be able to produce unusual tones, more or less strange and often complex.

There are no real instrument makers, except for the djembe and certain instruments like the kirin or the nkoni. The musician designs them himself, communicating to them the language of his ethnic group and endowing them, using various artifices, with a personality of their own.

Instruments are thus invented that produce nasal, vibrating, strident or soft sounds which reproduce as closely as possible the sounds and music of nature.

Each drum, then, is unique, with its own beauty, its own assets and flaws.

The Gambian kora, for example, which "speaks Mandingo"⁽¹⁾ is not tuned the same way as the Malian kora, which "speaks Mandenka"⁽²⁾. Likewise, the Guinea bala does not have the same "scale" as the Burkina Faso bala, and the Maninka flute resembles the flute from Fouta only in tone, not in language.

Modern materials are used more and more and often produce instruments with a wide rhythmic and melodic range. When played outside their traditional framework they enable musicians to integrate quite naturally into instrumental groups and modern combos throughout the world.

The instruments listed here are classified according to the four large categories of traditional organology established by C. Sachs and E. von Hornbostel.

* Membranophones:

These are instruments with a membrane stretched over a hollow support. The sound is obtained by striking the membrane with the hands or a stick:

djembe, dunun, bara, ntama, siko.

* Idiophones:

In this category, the sound is produced by the vibration of the material itself, using no strings or membranes:

kirin, kele, kesekese, yabara, filendunun, gita, kariyan, wasamba, bala.

* Chordophones:

Their sound is made by causing the string or strings, stretched between two fixed points on a support, to vibrate:

bolon, nkoni, kora.

* Aerophones:

This category includes all instruments whose sound is produced by vibrating the air contained in a tube. They are also called air or wind instruments. The human voice must be added to this category. In Africa, it is a very substantial source of music. Hand clapping is the only accompaniment.

file.



1. A spoken language of Gambia.

2. A spoken language of Mali and Guinea.

THE MEMBRANOPHONES

CYLINDRICAL DRUMS

THE DUNUN



In Mali, generally a single dunun⁽¹⁾, called **konkoni**, is used. Sometimes, a second dunun of the same name is added. In Guinea, there are three dunun, called **dununba**, **sangba** and **kenkeni**⁽²⁾.

These do not have to be played together. If there is only one player, the dunun used will be the **sangba**, the most important of this group. For more melody, another drummer plays the **kenkeni**. This group is most often supplemented by a **dununba** in the Kouroussa region of **Upper Guinea**.

The **dununba** and the **sangba** produce a low sound. They are played in relation to the **djembefola**⁽³⁾ soloist and the variations of the dance. The **kenkeni**, the smallest drum of this group, has a higher sound. In the orchestra, it provides a constant rhythmic accompaniment, maintaining a base without variations.

These cylindrical drums are made from wood or recuperated metal barrels. They range between 25 and 60 centimeters in diameter. Their ends are covered with hides of different thickness: cowhide or calfskin in Guinea, goatskins in Mali. They are either sewn or held with iron hoops and are stretched by weaving cords, which link the hoops together (cf: Assembling a dunun).

Dunun are played either placed horizontally on the ground or held with a shoulder strap. The musician uses a curved wooden baton or a straight stick to strike the center of the skin on one end. In modern dance companies, they can be played up-ended, several drums fastened together.

A clapperless metal bell is often played by the same musician, complementing the drum rhythms or independent of them. In Guinea, this bell is called **kenken**. In the Kouroussa region, it is oblong-shaped, about 30 to 40 centimeters in length. Placed in the hollow of the player's shoulder, it is struck on top with a heavy iron ring worn on the thumb.

In current practice, the bell is fixed on the top of the dunun. It is smaller and flatter and is struck with a small iron rod or a heavy ring.

In Mali, this bell, called **ntala**, is conical and smaller. The drummer holds it in his free hand by a handle, arm raised, and strikes it with a ring worn on his thumb.

In Guinea and in Mali, these drums relate directly to the **djembe** and the dance.

Key instruments, they keep the beat and are vital for the dancers.



1. These instruments are commonly pronounced "DOOMDOOM".

2. The original name of this instrument is **KESERENI**, but it is more commonly called **KENKENI**. This name is a deformation of the name of the bell, **kenken**, and the **konkoni** played in Mali.

3. **Fola** = player; **dununfola** = dunun player.

HEMISPHERE DRUMS

THE BARA

The bara⁽¹⁾ is from the Ségou region of Mali. It is used in the Bamana milieu.

This kettledrum, around 60 cm in diameter, sometimes larger, is made of wood and covered with a skin, generally calfskin, which is sewn and held in place by a system of hide strip laces.

It either hangs horizontally by a belt from the musician's waist or is placed on the ground. It is struck with both palms.

The bara is used in all popular festive events, especially in the Bondialan region.

In the Bamana milieu, the bara is accompanied by another skin-covered drum, the **bongolo**. Its shape and the way it is assembled make this drum a close relative of the djembe. However, its resonance chamber is higher and it is played differently: one hand strikes directly while the other hand plays with a stick.



HOURGLASS DRUMS

THE NTAMA

In Mali, both the Bwa and the Kaado are said to have invented this instrument.

The ntama is a double-skin drum with variable tension made of a hollowed-out hourglass-shaped wooden barrel.

The ends are covered by two goatskins stretched over a stiff circle and tied together by flexible leather laces.

With its narrow center placed under his arm-hence the designation "**armpit drum**"- the drummer varies the pressure on the lacing, thereby modifying the pitch and creating sliding and altered tones.

The skin is struck with a thin curved stick. For the **ntamani**⁽²⁾, this technique is supplemented by playing with the fingers on the same skin.

All social classes are familiar with this age-old instrument, used by criers to announce meetings on the public gathering area to hear urgent information. The ntama can also beat dance rhythms when played with the djembe.

This drum is also called the "**talking drum**". Indeed, its sliding tones recall some spoken African languages.



1. Also called CU or KUNANFAN.

2. The NTAMANI is smaller.

FRAME DRUMS

THE SIKO

The siko comes from the border region between Guinea and Sierra Leone, where the Téméné ethnic group lives. This instrument is now played by the Susu as well.

The siko is a flat, square drum made of pieces of wood fixed in a frame, with lengths of goatskin nailed to the frame. The musician plays it sitting down, holding it between his knees, or standing, holding it in one hand. He strikes it with the whole hand or with two thin sticks. The orchestra is composed of four or five siko of different dimensions, and animates various neighborhood festivities. These different siko are the **rolling**, the **wamban**, the **toublok**, the **baba** and the **solo**.



IDIOPHONES

SLIT DRUMS

THE KIRIN - THE KELE



The kirin, a Susu instrument, is from the lower coast region of Guinea. The kele⁽¹⁾ is from Guinea's forest region.

Two wooden sticks are used to strike the slits and the upper surface of the cylinder on the sides.

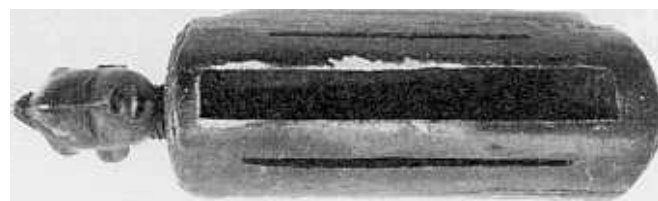
They vary in length, but are at least 30 cm long and between 20 and 40 cm in diameter. After the length of the kirin is determined, the trunk is entirely hollowed out and the two ends of the cylinder remain open. The kele's wide slits are hollowed out the length of the trunk; the ends are left intact and are sometimes sculpted.

Several lengthwise, parallel openings are slit in the upper part of these drums. Their unequal lengths produce different sounds. The kirin's slits are very thin and continue to a hole at the drum's ends. In the kele, the width varies (bottom photo).



These instruments rest either horizontally on the ground, or between the musician's stretched out legs, wedged by his feet, or on a tripod.

These drums have a very specific language; they are played in secret ceremonies in which only initiated musicians may participate. They are also used for communication and are said to be the ancestors of the telegraph. They can send messages from one village to another, faithfully reproducing the pitch and rhythm of speech. Recently, they began to be used in orchestra, where they give a melodic color to the percussion.



1. Also called KOLOKOLO (Bamana ethnic group)

RATTLES

THE KESEKES



Originating in the Faranah region of Upper Guinea, the kesekese is the favorite instrument of the Mamara ethnic group in the Sikasso area of Mali. These internal percussion rattles are closed containers containing small pebbles or seeds and come in a variety of shapes.

Generally cone-shaped, made of woven plant fibers, they are always played in pairs, using alternating movements. The player holds one in each hand by a small handle. The kesekese accompany chanting and certain very rapid dances.

They are often accompanied by another instrument, the **koro**, a small piece of hollowed wood held in the palm of one hand and struck by a small stick held in the other.

THE YABARA

The yabara is from the Guinea forest region inhabited by the Kisi, Toma and Gereze ethnic groups. It is an external percussion rattle made from a whole, jug-shaped gourd, whose stem serves as a handle. The gourd is emptied and wrapped in a fairly loose string bag studded with real snake vertebrae, cowries⁽¹⁾ or rounds of wood (and sometimes “gombele” beans).

The gourd is held by its “handle” and swung back and forth while the other hand pulls the end of the string bag downwards. This produces a clear, dry sound. The musician creates a rhythmic accompaniment for singing and other percussion instruments.

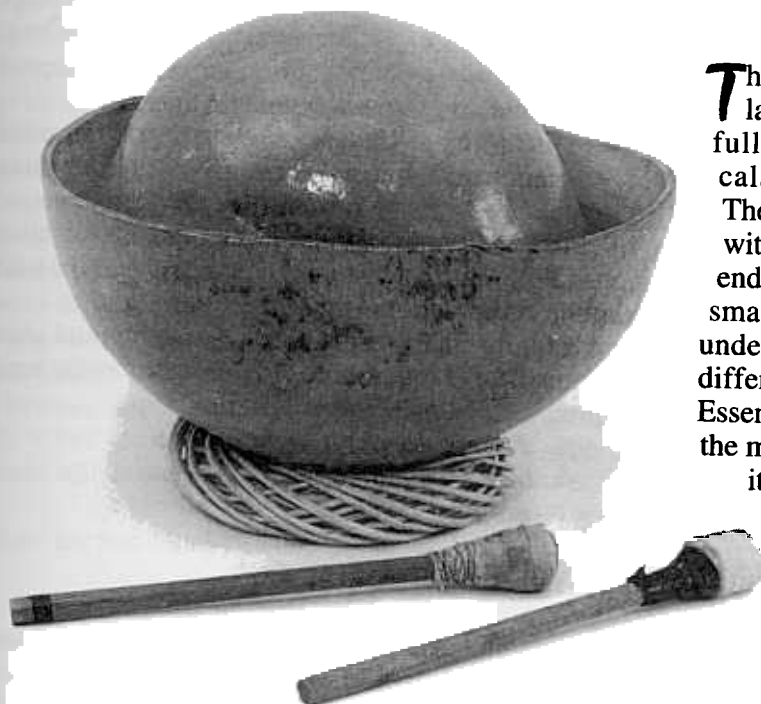
In Mali, the yabara used to be played to accompany the **bolon** during great ritual ceremonies honoring titular genii or the manes, village ancestors. In the Sikasso region, the Bamana use the yabara (also called **tchitchakara**) by itself for their festivities.



1. Cowries are small shells that were used as money throughout the Mandingo world from earliest times. Today they are only used as ornaments and in magic.

GOURDS

THE FILENDUNUN



The filendunun⁽¹⁾ or “water drum” is made from a large, empty, half calabash. It is filled three-quarters full of water, and another, smaller, inverted half calabash floats in it.

The rhythms are played on the upper calabash either with the bare hands, or with two wooden sticks whose ends are reinforced with cloth or rubber, or with two small spoon-shaped gourds⁽²⁾. The amount of water under the small calabash determines the pitch of the different sounds.

Essentially played by women, the filendunun is used in the most varied ways, according to the region. In Mali, it is mainly used in marriage or initiation ceremonies and by young girls who go singing from door to door during Ramadan.

In Guinea, it can be played to summon rain or for New Year’s festivities.

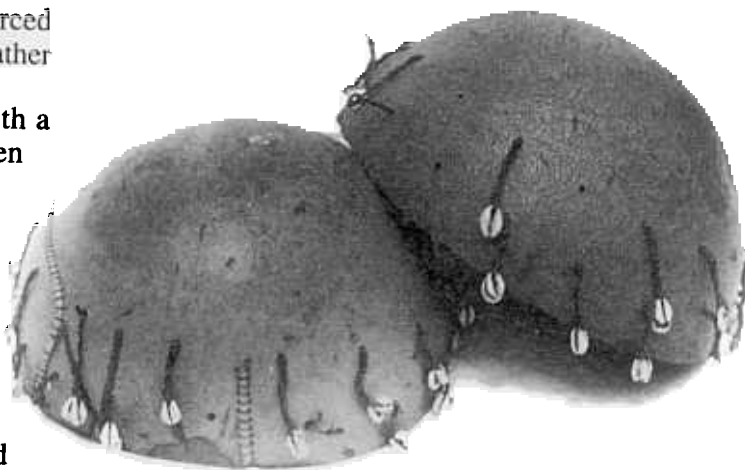
THE GITA

The gita is an instrument of the Bamana in the Ségou region of Mali. A real membrane-less percussion instrument, it is made with a half calabash about 40 cm in diameter with two or three rows of little holes pierced in the circumference. In each of these holes a thin leather strip with cowries or beads at the end is threaded.

The gourd thus decorated is thrown in the air with a circular movement and caught; the rhythm is given by chanting and hand clapping.

This instrument is only played by young pubescent girls for wedding ceremonies. They entertain the future bride every night during the week of marriage celebrations.

This instrument is especially used by the Songoï ethnic group to accompany the *takanba* (popular dance of the Timbuktu region). The gourd is inverted on loincloths or boubous and struck with the palms or a pair of *babouches* (slippers).



1. Also called JIDUNUN (Susu and Bamana ethnic groups): ji = water, liquid ; filen - gourd.

2. Also called GALAMA.

SCRAPED INSTRUMENTS

THE KARIYAN



The kariyan is a hollow iron tube open along its entire length. About 4 cm in diameter, and 20 to 30 cm long, it is held in the palm of the hand, a finger slipped through a ring attached to the tube.

Grooves on each side of a lengthwise slit canal are scraped with a small metal rod. A rocking wrist movement marks the rhythm.

This instrument is played primarily by initiation society musicians and minstrels affiliated with hunting brotherhoods.

It is also played by women griots during and after singing, and accompanies the rhythms set by the hand clapping of groups of other women.

SISTRUMS

THE WASAMBA



Wasamba⁽¹⁾, used in initiation rites, are made with angled sticks, each segment being 20 to 30 cm long (hence the name “**arching sistrums**”), on which several disks of diminishing diameter, cut out of gourd and pierced in the middle, are threaded. The number of discs, between 15 and 20, corresponds to the age of each initiate.

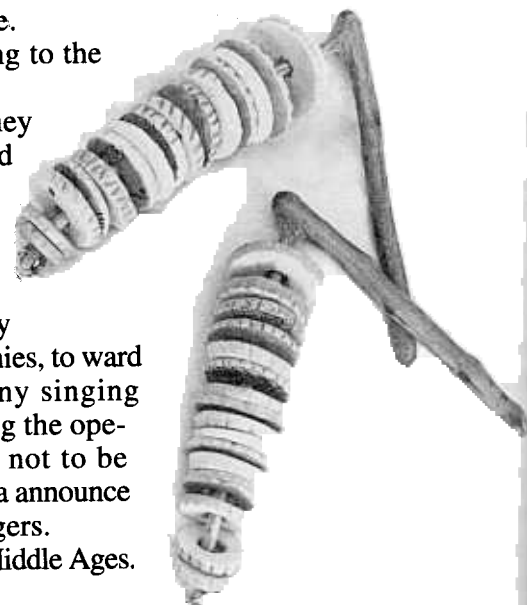
The playing technique varies according to the instrument’s ethnic origin.

When they are played in pairs, they are shaken up and down and rubbed against each other.

The sliding disks hit one another and make a crisp, clacking sound.

Wasamba are used mainly during circumcision ceremonies, to ward off evil spirits and accompany singing during the retreat period following the operation. Newly circumcised boys are not to be approached by just anyone; the wasamba announce their presence to passers-by and strangers.

This instrument is said to date from the Middle Ages.



¹ Also called WASAKUMBA (Susu ethnic group) and LALA (Fulbe ethnic group) (photo on the right).

XYLOPHONES

THE BALA

The bala⁽¹⁾ is a xylophone on a frame, a precursor of the modern xylophone. It consists of a low chassis on which thirteen, fifteen, eighteen or twenty-one strips of wood of decreasing length are placed parallel to each other. Their under surface is jagged, and each strip has its own resonator

Made of spherical gourds of increasing size, the bala's resonators each have one or two small reed pipes. Membranes cover holes pierced in the gourds; they vibrate when the strips are struck, coloring the sound. They are made with webs woven by a certain spider species, or less traditionally, with cigarette paper.

The musician often wears bracelets with iron bells on his wrists. He plays squatting behind the bala with two sticks whose ends are wrapped in rubber.

There are two kinds of bala

- the **jalibalani**, the griots' small bala, also called **maninka balani**, small bala of the Maninka. It is found mainly in Guinea. The chassis is low and flat and the resonance chambers are spherical.

- the **syenara bala**, also called **sénufo bala**. It was introduced throughout the Bamana kingdom of Ségou and Wasoulou by the Syenara and the Mamara. Its chassis is higher and curved. The strips are larger and the resonance chambers are oblong. In the Korogo region in the Ivory Coast it is called **turuka bala**, for the ethnic group of the same name.

The musical range of the bala is around three octaves. Since the ethnic groups that created it and those that use it do not speak the same language, these instruments are not all tuned in the same way.

Both have the same two main scales: the pentatonic (5-tone) scale for the Syenara bala and the heptatonic (7-tone) scale for the Maninka bala.

In Maninka country, the bala is generally played by griots to make purely instrumental music or to accompany women's singing.

Legend has it that Soumangourou Kanté, King of the Susu used the bala for magic purposes. His instrument dictated to him what happened in his territory.

Bala Fasséké Kouyaté, Soundjata's appointed griot, took advantage of Soumangourou's absence one day to let multiple divinities into his hut, then started to play the great bala of the Susu with extraordinary energy. Soumangourou, who was hunting, came home suddenly, as if he had been alerted by his genii. Realizing that here was a true virtuoso of the instrument, Soumangourou cut both Fasséké Kouyaté's Achilles tendons, so that he would stay forever near his bala.

From that time, this historic instrument has been the most sacred vestige of the Mandingo Empire.

Since 1975, the genuine Soso bala of the

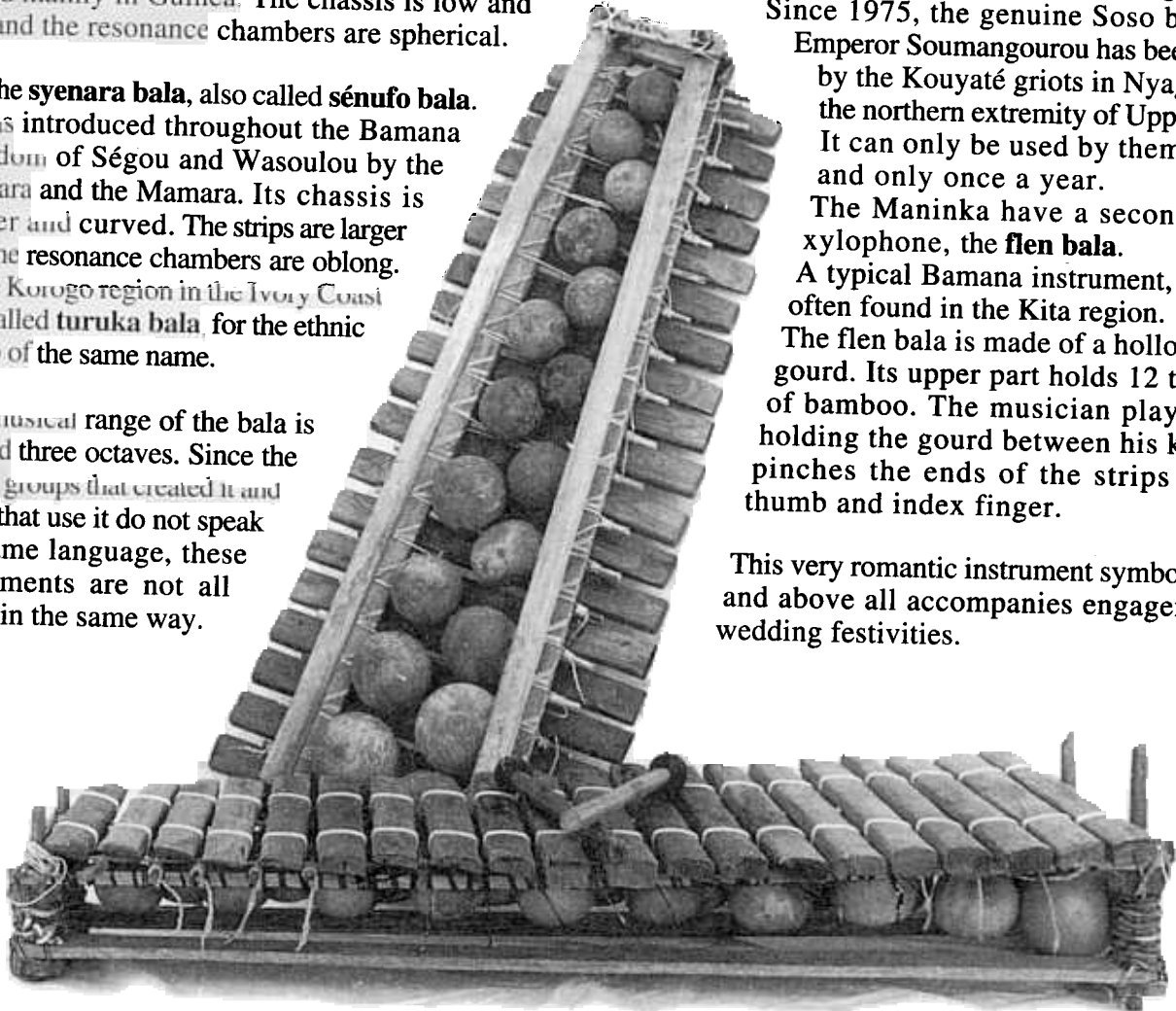
Emperor Soumangourou has been guarded by the Kouyaté griots in Nyagassola, at the northern extremity of Upper Guinea. It can only be used by them at night, and only once a year.

The Maninka have a second kind of xylophone, the **flen bala**.

A typical Bamana instrument, it is most often found in the Kita region.

The flen bala is made of a hollowed half-gourd. Its upper part holds 12 thin strips of bamboo. The musician plays seated, holding the gourd between his knees. He pinches the ends of the strips with his thumb and index finger.

This very romantic instrument symbolizes love and above all accompanies engagement and wedding festivities.



1. The popular term "BALAFON" comes from "bala fo", a Maninka expression asking the musician to play the bala, to "make the bala talk".

CHORDOPHONES

CURVED HARPS



THE BOLON



The bolon is a curved harp comprised of a large calabash, a curved wooden pole and three strings. At the end of the pole is a resonator⁽¹⁾.

The musician most often plays seated, with the instrument placed facing him between his legs. He holds it by the pole, his wrists resting on the calabash, and pinches the strings with his thumbs.

The bolon is the double bass in Mandingo music. It is mainly played for hunting ceremonies.

Originally called **soron**, this instrument was man-sized and was played standing. It exalted courage, exhorting warriors to endurance and valor. When a city was taken, the soron player always preceded the military leader into the conquered village.

The Bamana have another curved harp with two rows of three strings, called **dozonkoni**⁽²⁾.

The dozonkoni is mainly found in Mali's Wasoulou and Belidougou regions, where young people play it during evening gatherings.

LUTES

THE NKONI

The nkoni is a Sahelian lute found among the Fulbe, Soninké and Moors, a sort of small guitar with a boat-shaped box and three strings. It is also now found among the Bamana, who have added a fourth string.

A sheepskin is stretched and nailed over a wooden resonance chamber.

Once made of horsehair, the strings are now nylon. They are stretched on the round wooden, notched neck and held by sliding leather rings (like on the kora).

The nkoni is above all the griot's instrument, a perfect support for the kora.

The Mandingo Empire's history can be discovered through the nkoni's music. It accompanies the historian or the chronicler and is used to illustrate narratives of brave deeds.

It is also found in traditional Maninka orchestras.

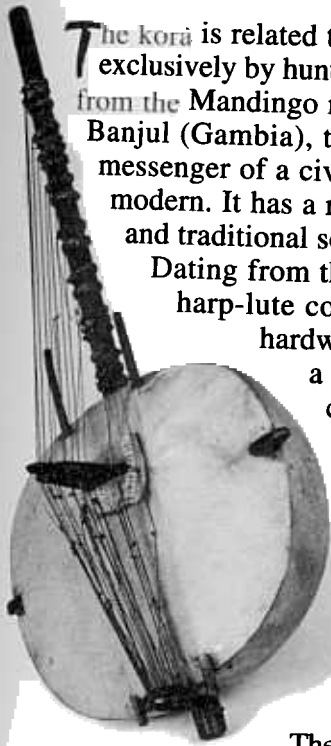


1. A thin metal sheet, decorated with rings, acts as a resonator.

2. Dozo = hunter; nkoni = string instrument.

HARP-LUTES

THE KORÄ



The korä is related to the **simbi**, a harp played exclusively by hunters. An ancient instrument from the Mandingo royal courts, originating in Banjul (Gambia), the kora remains the loyal messenger of a civilization both ancient and modern. It has a rich repertoire of melodies and traditional songs.

Dating from the thirteenth century, this harp-lute consists of a long, rounded hardwood neck passing through a hemispheric resonance chamber. The body is made from a large half calabash about 50 cm in diameter.

The open part is covered with a parchment finished calf-skin or sheep-skin, tightly stretched and nailed to the gourd.

The kora has 21 strings, in two rows: 11 for the left hand and 10 for

the right. Sliding leather rings hold them to the notched neck and regulate their tension. The strings were once made of braided hide; today they are nylon. The instrument is held with two bits of wood on either side of the neck and parallel to it.

The sound opening is usually round, and cut into the side of the gourd.

The musician plays seated, with the kora facing him on his knees, or standing with the kora strapped around his shoulders.

He plays with his thumbs and index fingers, and holds the instrument by the wood bits with his other fingers.

The kora is frequently played alone and is used to accompany the player's or a jali's singing.

The kora is said to be the most beautiful instrument of West Africa.

According to tradition, its 21 strings represent the life of a child:

7 to bring the past to life,

7 to sound the moments of the present,

7 to call forth the future.

According to another tradition, seven strings stand for the mother, seven for the father, and seven for the child.

AEROPHONES

FLUTES

THE FILE



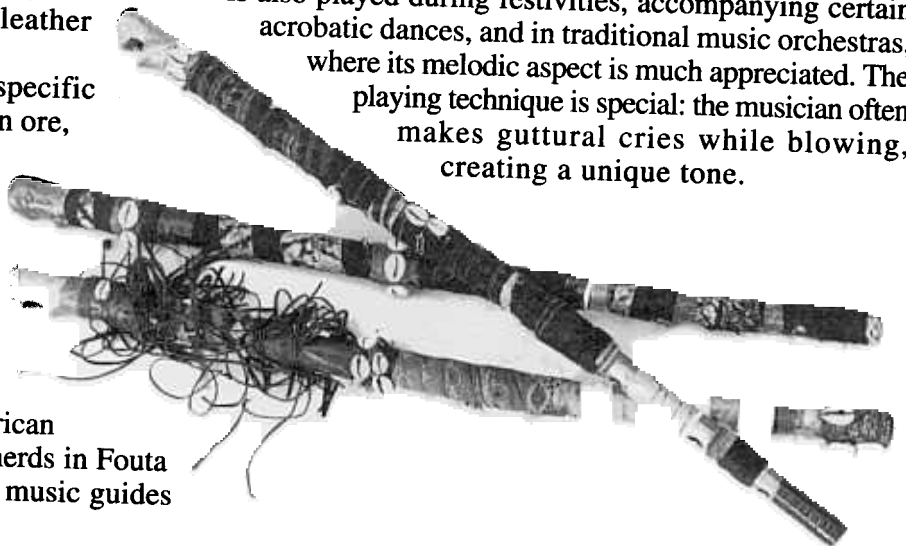
The file⁽¹⁾ is a transversal flute with three or four holes. Made of wood or bamboo, it is often wrapped in fabric or pieces of leather and decorated with cowries.

It used to be played by the smiths for specific activities like digging and smelting iron ore, or for the opening of gold mines. It was also intended to fight against evil influences.

It had two names: **numu-file**, "the smiths' flute", or **kon-file** "parade flute" (for hunting). The smiths still play this flute during important ceremonies, as well as for circumcisions.

The file is found among several West African ethnic groups, including the Fulbe shepherds in Fouta Djallon (Guinea) and Macina (Mali). Its music guides

the flocks to pasture or accompanies their migrations. It is also played during festivities, accompanying certain acrobatic dances, and in traditional music orchestras, where its melodic aspect is much appreciated. The playing technique is special: the musician often makes guttural cries while blowing, creating a unique tone.



1. Also called SEREDU (in the Fulbe ethnic group) and BURU (Maninka ethnic group)



CHAPTER 3

THE DJEMBE

.....

- Its Origins
- The Djembefola's Apprenticeship
- Function
- Construction
- Attributes and Decoration
- Magic
- Playing Positions
- Sounds and Basic Techniques

"MOGO KA KAN K'I TAAMAGNOGON WOLOMA..."

"One should always choose one's travelling companion..."



THE DJEMBE

The djembe belongs to the membranophone family. Its goblet shape resembles the mortar used for pounding millet. Made of a single hollowed out and sculpted piece of tree trunk, it comprises a flattened cone “foot” whose cavity opens into a larger resonance chamber or “body”. The connecting part in the middle of the djembe is the “collar”.

The size generally varies from 55 to 60 cm high and 30 to 38 cm in diameter (some djembe from the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso are wider). The woods used are chosen for their density, tone and toughness. The worojiri⁽¹⁾,

lenke, dogora, guéni and caïcedrat are the woods most frequently used.

The drumhead of the djembe is made from goatskin. The tension system is of braided nylon cords. The skin is held with three metal hoops (cf: Assembling a djembe). Originally, the djembe skin was sewn and assembled with thin strips of braided leather or cow gut. If the tension slackened during playing, the musician restretched the skin by heating it over a small wood or cardboard fire (this technique is still used by some drummers in Africa).



1. Jiri = tree; woro = kola. The edible kola nut is red or white in color. Traditionally, it also plays an important role on certain occasions, and is given as a sign of agreement, respect or to obtain the promise of a betrothal.

ITS ORIGINS

The djembe is a secular Mandingo drum. It is the smiths' oldest instrument⁽¹⁾, originally played only during the smelting of iron ore. It is found in all of West Africa, where it is one of the most common instruments. There are many myths, often quite different, recounting its origin.

Hugo Zemp tells the following one, the best known, which attributes its origin to the chimpanzees:

"Long ago, men did not know the drum; the chimpanzees owned it. At that time, before guns, there was a trapper named So Dyeu. He was the leader of all the trappers. The chimpanzees often came near his camp. One day he went hunting and noticed the chimpanzees eating fruit in the trees. They were entertaining themselves with a drum. The hunter said, 'This thing they are beating is beautiful. I will set a trap.'

He dug a hole and laid a trap. The next day, he heard the chimpanzees crying. The baby chimpanzees cried, the young chimpanzees cried and the old chimpanzees cried. The trap had caught the chimpanzee drummer.

The hunter called his dog and went into the forest. The chimpanzees fled as he approached, leaving behind them the drummer, caught in the trap with his drum. The hunter took the drum and brought it to the village. That is why the chimpanzees don't have drums anymore and why they beat their chests with their fists. That's why they say "gugu". It isn't a real drum that we hear today, it is the chimpanzee who has stopped breathing and is beating his chest.

When the hunter arrived at the village, he gave the drum to the chief, who said, 'We have heard the voice of this thing for a long time, but no one had seen it until now. You have brought it to us; you have done well. Take my first daughter for your first wife.'

From that day on the person who played the drum was called "tambourine player". That is how we got the drum. The chimpanzees of the bush were men who went astray. They had done wrong, so God cursed them and they became chimpanzees. Today, they no longer have drums and they have to beat their chests."

THE DJEMBEFOLA'S APPRENTICESHIP

Traditionally, the future djembefola's apprenticeship begins very early. A naturally gifted child is given over to a master and becomes his student. The apprentice is respectful and loyal toward the master, who in turn has the responsibility of training him. According to a popular saying, "the apprentice is made in the master's image". Traditionally, learning happens only during public events, "on the job", without rehearsing, often just through imitation.

The first step is listening to the djembe's "voice" and observing.

Next, the apprentice musician plays the first simple rhythms on the dunun or djembe, and masters the numerous accompaniments and rhythms. Some students never get beyond this stage, but remain good accompanists.

Once this stage is completed, the apprentice can gradually begin to imitate the master's first "classic" variations, and have responsibility working with a troupe of accompanists and dancers. At this point, the young people organize their own neighborhood festivities where the apprentices put their learning into practice while the girls dance. Only after having perfected the different phases does the musician polish his own technique, proposing more personal variations.

Today some troupes or djembefola modify the traditional repertory or create new rhythms. The musicians test new melodies, improvisations, tones and develop in a more modern structure.

It must be stressed that one is not born a djembefola, one becomes one!

Unlike the balafola, kora players, nkoni or singers, who mostly belong to castes like the Kouyaté, the Diabaté and the Cissoko, there are no families of drummers.

The djembefola are not necessarily griots. They make up a unique profession called on to animate popular festivities.

Thus, members of noble families like the Keïta, the Kanté, the Camara and Condé today may be musicians. Their families do not always appreciate this, feeling that this status is not compatible with their noble birth. Even a specialized musician is not considered a member of the elite, and being a virtuoso is not a source of prestige. Indeed, mastering a musical instrument is seen as just another manual specialization.

The djembefola are intriguing. Their musculature is disconcerting. They are called "strong men", meaning virile. The djembefola "leads the dance"; a very particular charisma is demanded of him.

1. Smiths were the first to make drums and wood-strip instruments.

FUNCTION

In West Africa, instrumental music is generally the domain of men, vocal music that of women. The djembe is therefore essentially played by men. With its bright rhythms, it is above all the instrument of dance. Traditional dances handed down from generation to generation make up the greatest part of each ethnic group's surviving artistic and cultural heritage. The dances reflect aspects of a past epoch and life, as well as mores and activities. The dances can be classified in three very distinct categories:

* Ritual dances

The main characteristic of these dances is their religious or magic element. They determine the synthesis of knowledge to be assimilated by those seeking to be initiated, thereby acquiring the highest social and spiritual values. They also include mask and puppet dances. These dances are reserved for the initiated.

* Caste dances

During popular festivities, these dances help identify the dancer's caste: ie, griots, smiths or cobblers.

* Secular dances

These dances illustrate all the events of community life. They can be performed by all members of the society, each sex having its own dance steps. They convey different moods, like joy and sadness, and express popular communal delight and the ardor of group work.

The djembe is used at the various social events that make up traditional festivities: baptisms, circumcisions, betrothals, weddings and some funerals, as well as ceremonies such as assemblies and mask festivals.

It is also used by all West African dance companies and national troupes.

The djembe is played in a group of several percussionists comprised of a soloist, djembe accompaniment players and dunun players. The rhythm is generally

composed by superimposing different intertwining rhythmic units. The interweaving produces a rich and varied polyrhythm. In the Maninka tradition, songs introduce the drum music. The songs vary according to the ethnic group and the event. They can be divided into three categories:

- songs of praise, with instrumental accompaniment (strings or percussion);
- dancing songs, with drums setting the rhythm;
- narrative or epic songs, accompanied above all by strings.

Family members are responsible for the organisation of celebrations and women griots are generally in charge of the festivities. They lead the different songs, whose words relate directly to the event: ie, honoring the grooms, their families, or the parents of a child being baptized. The other women participate either by forming a synchronized dance circle, or by clapping their hands, creating a rhythmic link between the singing and the instruments.

When the singing starts the djembefola soloist gives his group of accompanists the rhythmic support and the speed for the intoned chant (the same rhythm can be found in different chants). The soloist beats the various rhythmic formulas corresponding to the dancers' different movements. His coherent, coded instructions enable them to express themselves, to move with the group and the assembly, they produce a perfect simultaneity between the music and the dance. This generally concludes with a fast finale. The drummers follow the dance, not vice versa.

The soloist can give starting signals to change the dancers' steps, and stopping signals to end or temporarily stop the dance. This technique was elaborated by dance company drummers, and is also used for teaching in dance classes.

CONSTRUCTION

The djembe is not mass produced. Each djembe is handmade and therefore unique. The craftsman is frequently a sculptor, specializing in woodwork⁽¹⁾ and in fabricating everyday objects such as mortars, chairs etc. Very occasionally, the musician is also the sculptor. His assorted tools, including gouges, crowbars, machetes and adzes, allow him to achieve a construction

and finish that are of major importance in making a good instrument.

The djembe's pitch (cf: Assembling a djembe -The skin) depends on the balance and harmony of its forms. The nature and thickness of the wood determine its weight. Certain proportions, which the craftsman knows, must be respected between the "body" and the "foot".

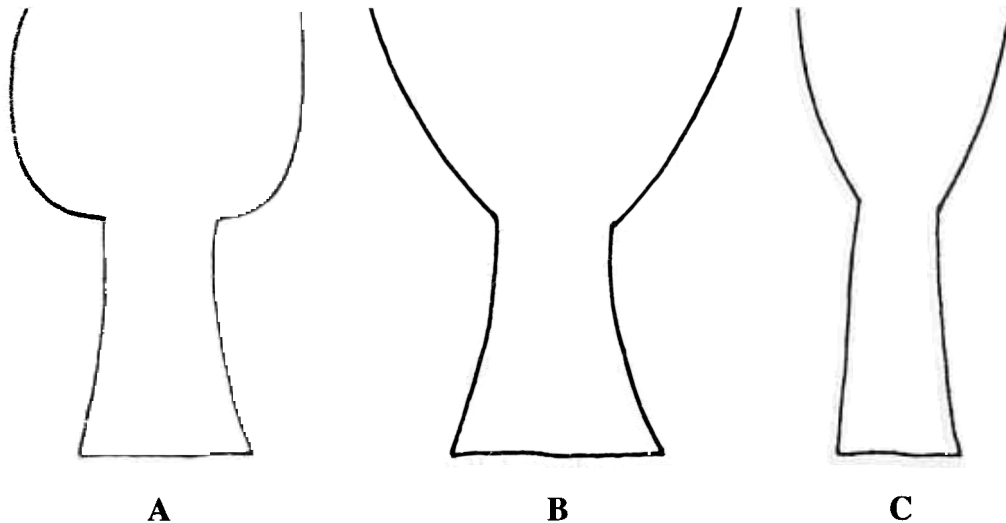
1. Called "smiths".

There are three main djembe shapes, depending on where they are made and who sculpts them:

A - a very round body with vertical sides

B - a flared body wider in diameter than A

C - the smallest body, whose shape is a compromise between A and B



ATTRIBUTES AND DECORATION

The drummer fits two or three metal plates on the upper edge of his djembe. These are called resonators⁽¹⁾. Usually they are made of sheets of tin or flattened food cans. They are cut into different shapes and sizes. Small holes are pierced along their edges and threaded with thin iron rings about 2 cm in diameter. They are part of the drum's decoration.

The resonators vibrate when the instrument is beaten, and are sometimes struck directly with the hand during playing. The clear metallic jingling of the rings colors

the timbre, embellishing the "voice of the drum". The djembe's foot is often decorated, ornamented, sculpted with "friezes" or studded with nails in geometric patterns. The stringing also adds to the decoration thanks to the different colors used. The side laces let more or less of the natural-toned or stained wood show, depending on the complexity of the weaving.

Each musician thus personalizes his instrument according to his own taste.

MAGIC

Originally, musicians had to be initiated in occult sciences to protect themselves against illness, injuries and ill fortune. In order to enjoy a long artistic career and taste the pleasures of glory, they had to obtain the necessary "protection" (in the form of "gri-gri" or charms) from various evils, including envy and the "evil eye". These charms are also used in appealing for social or professional luck, in competitions, etc. Certain families of musicians "prepared" their children in early childhood by bathing them in decoctions of specific plants or by giving them beverages supposed to make them invulnerable their whole lives.

Made by medicine men or marabouts from the most varied substances - cowries, pieces of leather, palm nuts,

charcoal, extracts of leaves of certain plants whose secret was known only to a single initiate - the preparations were used in different ways. Most often they were carefully hidden inside the instrument or knotted around the musician's arm. Without these "gri-gri", competitions among several drummers, masters of different troupes or of villages, were almost impossible. They were believed to protect the person wearing them, enabling him to outdo his rival, or even to harm him. In most cases, the result was nil, as everyone had an antidote to his rival's charm. Magic procedures are still used today, despite increasing modernization. However, musicians in city centers tend more and more to turn their backs on such practices, while those in the rural areas use them very discretely.

. Called SESE, SEKESEKE or EARS.

PLAYING POSITIONS

Usually the djembe is played standing.

This position, more suitable when playing for dancers, gives greater freedom of movement and allows one to move about while playing.

It also amplifies the volume of the djembe and facilitates better collaboration and a more harmonious dynamic between the drummers and dancers.

When moving around, it is better to shift the djembe's foot to the side of your leg.

The djembe may be carried in two different ways:

The most common method is using a long shoulder strap (4 meters long maximum). To prevent the drum from sliding, the strap is crossed in back. The djembe rests between the drummer's legs.

It is important to choose a sturdy strap wide enough not to dig into the shoulders. A judo belt works well.

For a good position, the strap should be precisely adjusted. If it is too short, the djembe will be too high. If it is too long, you will stoop. The djembe's collar should be mid-thigh level.



The second method, most currently used in Mali, is strapping the djembe around the waist. This position provides greater ease of movement in the upper body but can cause lower back problems: beating the drum has direct repercussions on the spine.

The djembe can also be played seated.



- It is set on the ground and held almost vertically between the feet and knees. It is indispensable to lean it slightly forward so that the sound isn't stifled.

The drummer's posture should be correct to facilitate the functioning of the diaphragm and other muscles. When standing, it is important not to stoop, not to be "pulled down" by the weight of the instrument. Shoulders should be high and the back as straight as possible but not stiff. Hunching over closes the rib cage. The solar plexus should stay "open". To acquire stamina and maintain a good tempo, you must eliminate unnecessary tension and tightness, mainly in the neck and shoulders, while maintaining



- Or, with the instrument between your legs, let the "body" rest on your calves and heels, tipped almost horizontally under you.

a certain firmness. The hands should be a natural extension of the forearms, staying parallel to the drum skin. For better freedom of movement, the elbows should not be pressed against the torso. The legs can be slightly bent to ensure a more stable position. Don't tip the pelvis. Breathing is also of major importance. It should not be spasmodic or interrupted. The rhythm's "flow" depends on the drummer's breathing.

SOUNDS AND BASIC TECHNIQUES

The beginning percussionist's most frequent technical difficulty is mastering the instrument's different tones. This crucial step is often mistakenly skipped in favor of learning rhythms; the possibilities of expression are thus seriously limited.

The djembe is always played with bare hands.

The right touch is obtained by keeping a perfect balance between strength and flexibility.

You need to find the right place to play the skin. You don't have to hit it hard, which would inevitably injure a beginning player's hands.

If these few guidelines are not observed, it is impossible to play in a continuous, balanced fashion and the beginner may lose motivation.

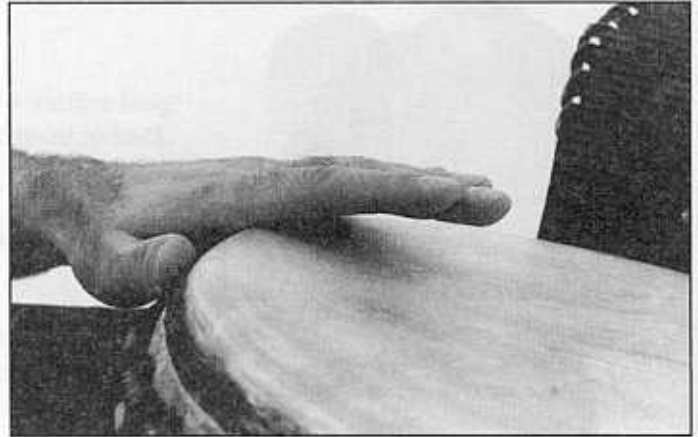
The three basic sounds

For these sounds, the hands bounce off the drum and stay perpendicular to the skin.

- **the open tone**, pronounced "peh".

It is played on the edge of the skin with the fingers together.

The thumb is "open", away from the fingers.



- **the slap**, pronounced "pah".

It produces a higher sound.
The skin is whipped with the fingertips.

The hand can be slightly more forward than for the open tone⁽¹⁾.

The thumb is "open", away from the fingers.

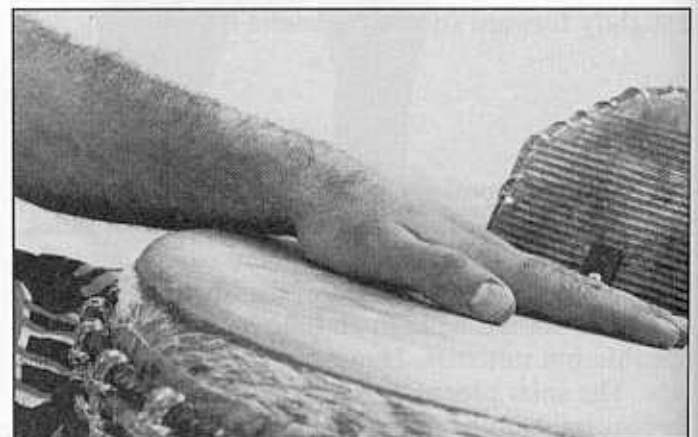
Do not cup the hand.



- **the bass tone**, pronounced "pooh".

It is played in the center of the drum with the entire, open, flat hand in contact with the skin.

The sound is low.



1. Although this technique is very common, it is not universal and can vary according to the djembefola. Most of the great masters do not move the hand to produce the slap and open tones.

N.B.: The onomatopoeias suggested for these three sounds are not definitive. They can vary according to each person's inspiration and choice.

Additional sounds

• **The muffled tones**

The hands or fingers are not bounced, but stop, keeping in contact with the skin.

The skin's resonance is stifled, creating a dull sound.

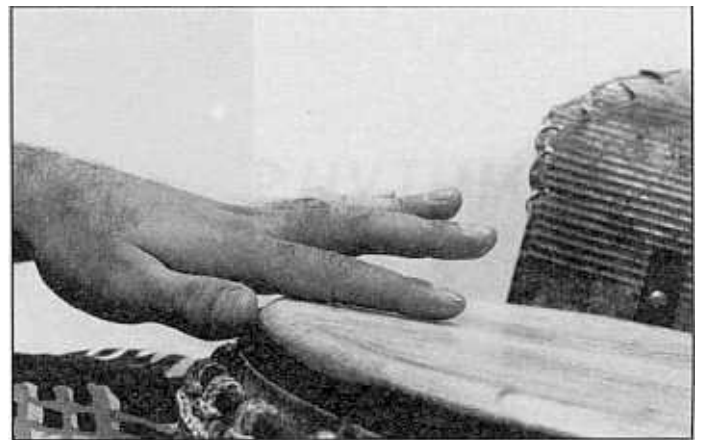
The sounds are produced in two ways:

- by stopping a slap or open tone;
- by pressing the other hand on the center of the skin while striking.

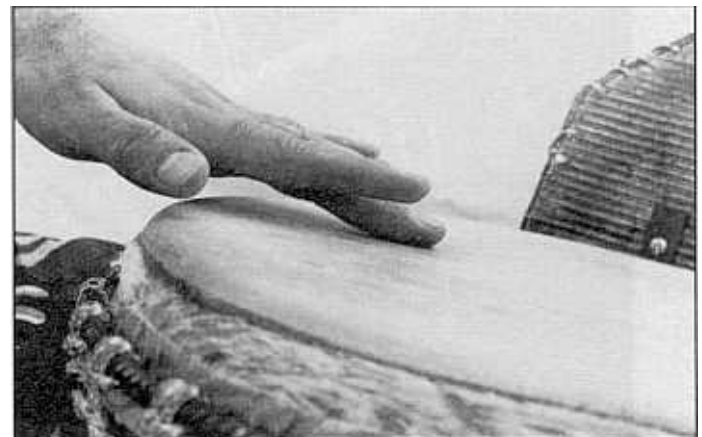
The latter sound is much "drier".

• **sounds produced by "touching" with the index or middle finger⁽¹⁾**

Played with the index finger while playing the rhythm or improvising, these are finer and lighter sounds



The middle finger "dresses up" the rhythms and avoids breaks between the notes. It can help keep the rhythm and enable the player to change hands regularly and maintain an even beat between hits.



⁽¹⁾Very few djembefola use this technique (cf Recordings: Adama Dramé)

Dunun are struck with a wooden stick.

They have two basic sounds, both produced by striking the center of the skin:



- an “open” tone, pronounced “pooh”.



- a “muffled” tone, pronounced “pah”.

NB: Only the open tone is used on the dununba.

CHAPTER 4

PREPARATION FOR THE RHYTHMS

- Special Symbols and Signs
- The Djembe's Different Sounds
- Fourteen Exercises for Three Percussion Instruments

"NININKALIKELA TE FILL..."

"He who asks avoids making mistakes..."

ORAL SOURCES

Western musicians have inherited a long written musical tradition, an important memory aid. It enables them to separate the music from its context. In Africa the reverse is true: oral tradition remains the most important and most frequently used source. African drummers traditionally use the "drumming language", a literal translation of the spoken language. The drum's music is therefore always based on spoken phrases, on meaningful series of words. The drummer plays them, varies and ornaments them, or combines them as he chooses and according to precise dance phrases. Songs in onomatopoeic form are reworked on the drum. Precise ways of beating the drum are used, corresponding to distinct sounds. The phonetic method undeniably facilitates singing

in rhythm and simplifies the task of "keeping the tune in one's head".

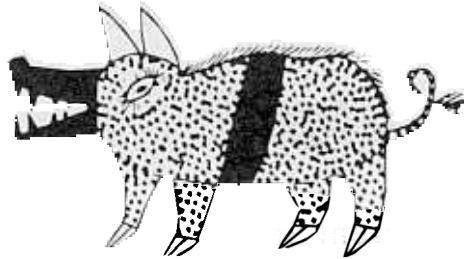
For this reason, each sound corresponds to a syllable. It is advisable to keep this in mind as a complement to Western notation when singing all of the parts played.

It is also very important to develop your ear

- by listening to recordings (cf: Selected Recordings).

- by listening to yourself and the musicians you play with, in order to respect what happens in a group, ie, the harmony.

The ear, hands, feet, the voice - the whole body is called upon and stimulated by this comprehensive instrument.



PULSATION

Contrary to Western musicians, the traditional African musician feels no need for an externalized temporal guide.

The beat designates evenly spaced reference points in time. Learning or "having" the beat is indispensable for learning and mastering the following exercises and rhythms, in which several instruments play.

Marking time with the foot requires the upper and lower limbs to be independent of each other. This is difficult to master at first, but it is indispensable.

This action allows you to keep a steady rhythm. The musician relies on it during a piece and it creates

better cohesion among the players.

A metronome or a drum machine (less intimidating) might be helpful to ensure evenness in the drumming exercises that follow.

Tempo has a major role in djembe music. Once the exercises are mastered and assimilated, it should be possible to play them at different tempos.

Do not try to accelerate too quickly at first, as you will lose precision and maybe the sound altogether. Going beyond a certain speed implies additional difficulties, such as: keeping this rhythm while striking with precision, overcoming fatigue, bad posture, or lack of stamina, breath and energy.

SYMBOLS

The note is a symbol indicating a sound. Notes are distributed on the 5 lines of the staff and define the sound's length and pitch.

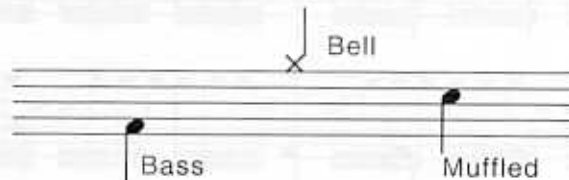
• FOR THE DJEMBE



The horizontal line placed above a note means that it is muffled. For example:



• FOR THE DUNUN



SPECIAL SIGNS

- o A white circle under a note means that it is played with the right hand.
- A black circle under a note means that it is played with the left hand.

The following annotation is used and advised for some signals or accompaniment rhythms. It is preferable when playing very fast rhythms to alternate the movements of the hands (one after the other, neither the right nor the left hand striking twice in a row).



Flam right

The left hand plays more softly and almost simultaneously.



Flam left



Measure bar



Double measure bar



One repeated measure



Two repeated measures



Repeat from the beginning.

THE DJEMBE'S DIFFERENT SOUNDS

Before you start to learn the rhythms, here are some simple exercises to loosen up the hands and practice the different strikes described above.

To really feel the length of the notes and the different sounds produced on the drum, begin by practising slowly with the voice. Use the onomatopoeiae given or make up your own.

Holding both hands in the correct position helps you find the skin's optimal tones with flexibility and ease. Be careful to balance the two hands perfectly (neither should strike harder than the other). Next try playing the exercises, first with the right hand, then with the left.

A good percussionist is not content to play the same rhythmic formulas repeatedly but knows how to vary them. He also tries to get the richest and most varied sounds from his instrument. By playing with the different pitches, you can also give the rhythm a melody.

After you have executed and assimilated the following exercises perfectly, invent your own. Change the sound, use muffled and "touched" strikes...

And discover the pleasure of sharing with other musicians clear, airy playing and rhythms composed of distinct and precise notes.

1

Musical exercise 1: A three-staff exercise in 4/4 time. The first staff has a treble clef and a common time signature. The second and third staves have bass clefs. The exercise consists of two measures. The first measure has quarter notes on the first line of the treble staff and the first space of the bass staff. The second measure has quarter notes on the second line of the treble staff and the second space of the bass staff.

2

Musical exercise 2: A three-staff exercise in 4/4 time. The first staff has a treble clef and a common time signature. The second and third staves have bass clefs. The exercise consists of two measures. The first measure has eighth notes on the first line of the treble staff and the first space of the bass staff. The second measure has eighth notes on the second line of the treble staff and the second space of the bass staff.

3

Musical exercise 3: A three-staff exercise in 4/4 time. The first staff has a treble clef and a common time signature. The second and third staves have bass clefs. The exercise consists of two measures. The first measure has eighth notes on the first line of the treble staff and the first space of the bass staff. The second measure has eighth notes on the second line of the treble staff and the second space of the bass staff.

4

Musical notation for exercise 4, measures 1-4. The first staff is in 4/4 time and contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with eighth-note chords.

5

Musical notation for exercise 5, measures 1-4. The first staff is in 4/4 time and contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with eighth-note chords.

6

Musical notation for exercise 6, measures 1-4. The first staff is in 4/4 time and contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with eighth-note chords.

7

Musical notation for exercise 7, measures 1-4. The first staff is in 12/8 time and contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The second and third staves provide accompaniment with eighth-note chords.

4

Musical score for exercise 4, 4/4 time signature. It consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a double bar line, and the time signature 4/4. The music features a sequence of eighth notes in the right hand and a corresponding bass line in the left hand, with some notes beamed together in groups of four.

5

Musical score for exercise 5, 4/4 time signature. It consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a double bar line, and the time signature 4/4. The music features a sequence of eighth notes in the right hand and a corresponding bass line in the left hand, with some notes beamed together in groups of four.

6

Musical score for exercise 6, 4/4 time signature. It consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a double bar line, and the time signature 4/4. The music features a sequence of eighth notes in the right hand and a corresponding bass line in the left hand, with some notes beamed together in groups of four.

7

Musical score for exercise 7, 12/8 time signature. It consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a double bar line, and the time signature 12/8. The music features a sequence of eighth notes in the right hand and a corresponding bass line in the left hand, with some notes beamed together in groups of four.

8

Exercise 8 consists of two measures of music. The first measure is marked with a repeat sign and a double bar line, followed by a 12/8 time signature. The music is written on three staves. The first staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second and third staves contain a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second measure continues the sequence of eighth notes on the first staff: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second and third staves continue the sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

9

Exercise 9 consists of two measures of music. The first measure is marked with a repeat sign and a double bar line, followed by a 12/8 time signature. The music is written on three staves. The first staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second and third staves contain a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second measure continues the sequence of eighth notes on the first staff: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second and third staves continue the sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

10

Exercise 10 consists of two measures of music. The first measure is marked with a repeat sign and a double bar line, followed by a 12/8 time signature. The music is written on three staves. The first staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second and third staves contain a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second measure continues the sequence of eighth notes on the first staff: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second and third staves continue the sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

11

Exercise 11 consists of two measures of music. The first measure is marked with a repeat sign and a double bar line, followed by a 12/8 time signature. The music is written on three staves. The first staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second and third staves contain a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second measure continues the sequence of eighth notes on the first staff: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second and third staves continue the sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

8

Musical score for exercise 8, measures 1-4. The score is written on three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a repeat sign, and a 12/8 time signature. The music consists of eighth-note patterns. The first two measures of the first staff are: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4. The next two measures are: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4. The second and third staves continue the pattern with similar eighth-note groupings.

9

Musical score for exercise 9, measures 1-4. The score is written on three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a repeat sign, and a 12/8 time signature. The music consists of eighth-note patterns. The first two measures of the first staff are: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4. The next two measures are: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4. The second and third staves continue the pattern with similar eighth-note groupings.

Musical score for exercise 9, measures 5-8. The score is written on three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a repeat sign, and a 12/8 time signature. The music consists of eighth-note patterns. The first two measures of the first staff are: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4. The next two measures are: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4. The second and third staves continue the pattern with similar eighth-note groupings.

Musical score for exercise 9, measures 9-12. The score is written on three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a repeat sign, and a 12/8 time signature. The music consists of eighth-note patterns. The first two measures of the first staff are: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4. The next two measures are: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4. The second and third staves continue the pattern with similar eighth-note groupings.

RHYTHMIC EXERCISES

These exercises are inspired by the many rhythmic introductions played to accompany singing or before dancing, and may be arranged as an introduction to certain rhythms.

They will enable you to acquire the following skills:

- rhythmic reading,
- using and applying all the djembe's and dunun's sounds,
- ensemble work,
- learning polyrhythms by playing with others.

The fourteen exercises are played by three percussionists in the following order:

- 1st staff: a player keeps the rhythm of the djembe,
- 2nd staff: a player keeps the rhythm of the first dunun,
- 3rd staff: a player keeps the rhythm of the second dunun.

1

CD Track 2

2

CD Track 3

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2nd staff: a player keeps the rhythm of the first dunun.

3rd staff: a player keeps the rhythm of the second dunun.

1

CD Track 2

2

CD Track 3

3

CD Track 4

4

CD Track 5

5

CD Track 6

6

CD Track 7

7

Musical score for CD Track 8, measures 7-8. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three staves. The top staff contains a melody with eighth notes and rests. The middle staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The bottom staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CD Track 8

8

Musical score for CD Track 9, measures 8-9. The score is in 12/8 time and consists of three staves. The top staff contains a melody with eighth notes and rests. The middle staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The bottom staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CD Track 9

9

Musical score for CD Track 10, measures 9-10. The score is in 12/8 time and consists of three staves. The top staff contains a melody with eighth notes and rests. The middle staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The bottom staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CD Track 10

10

Musical score for CD Track 11, measures 10-11. The score is in 12/8 time and consists of three staves. The top staff contains a melody with eighth notes and rests. The middle staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The bottom staff contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CD Track 11

11

Musical score for CD Track 12, measures 11-12. The score is in 12/8 time and consists of three staves. The first staff contains a melody with notes and rests. The second and third staves contain accompaniment with notes and rests. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CD Track 12

12

Musical score for CD Track 13, measures 12-13. The score is in 12/8 time and consists of three staves. The first staff contains a melody with notes and rests. The second and third staves contain accompaniment with notes and rests. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CD Track 13

13

Musical score for CD Track 14, measures 13-14. The score is in 12/8 time and consists of three staves. The first staff contains a melody with notes and rests. The second and third staves contain accompaniment with notes and rests. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CD Track 14

14

Musical score for CD Track 15, measures 14-15. The score is in 12/8 time and consists of three staves. The first staff contains a melody with notes and rests. The second and third staves contain accompaniment with notes and rests. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CD Track 15

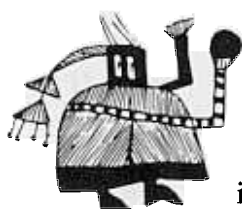
CHAPTER 5

RHYTHMS

.....

- Twenty-two Standard Traditional Rhythms
- Other Mandingo Rhythms
- A Unison Drum Signal
- Two Breaks from the Zawuli Mask Dance

"GNOSUSUMUSO NANA DE BE JENBEFOLABA WOLO..."
"She who uses the pestle well will give birth to a great percussionist..."



The following rhythms have been chosen from among those most frequently used. The versions presented are neither rigid nor immutable. They are interpreted differently according to the country or region of origin, the soloist and the event: wedding feast, recording, dance performance, dance class, etc.

In Guinea, the keserani and sangba can be supplemented with the dununba, and in Mali there can be a second dunun. It is not necessary to limit the djembe accompaniments to two per rhythm. The ones below are the most representative, the most common.

A soloist with a particular way of playing might prefer a single accompaniment, or he might add three or four instruments.

A soloist will have as many different accompaniments as there are accompanists.

To interpret and understand the repertory well, it is indispensable to master each of the rhythms and all of the djembe and different dunun motifs alone, before playing with a group.

The Diembe

- Keeping a steady tempo, repeat the starting signal slowly several times.

- Do the same thing for the first djembe accompaniment.

- Then play the second djembe accompaniment.

- After the starting signal, go back to the first accompaniment, then do a stopping signal.

- Repeat this with the second accompaniment.

- After the starting signal, play the first djembe accompaniment, then, without stopping or repeating the starting signal, play the second

djembe accompaniment. Repeat, alternating these accompaniments several times, in 8-measure cycles, for example, adding signal to stop.

The Dunun

- Work gradually in the same way as for the djembe, but this time one instrument plays after the other, starting with the first dunun, then the second alone, then with the bell, and finally the dununba alone and then with its bell.

To start each combination correctly, sing the djembe starting signal.

Only when these stages are accomplished and when each percussionist is perfectly at ease with all of the rhythmic formulas can the group work start. Each motif may appear easy to drum by itself, but combining the different rhythms is difficult, because of the interweaving.

- At first, begin with one other musician and practice the two djembe accompaniments. The two can switch parts during playing, working together without a starting or stopping signal.

- Next you can practice the different dunun accompaniments with one or two other musicians, one after the other, being careful to respect the cycle: 8-measures, for example.

Once these different stages are accomplished, the group can play the whole rhythm together.

In order to keep perfect stability and rhythmic harmony, it is essential to use the different dunun as reference points: they are the "heart of the rhythm".

The starting signal sets the tempo and rhythm that follow. It is given by the first djembe player.

To stop the rhythm, the same signal is transformed into a "signal to stop". To do this, one extra beat is added, which can be played as a slap and "flammed"

For "Jansa", for example:

Starting Signal



Signal to stop



In some cases - "Dununba", for example - the stop signal is different from the start signal:

Starting Signal



Signal to stop



Polyrhythms are played by four or five percussionists and are always presented here in the following order:

1st staff : A djembe player gives the group the starting signal and continues with the first accompaniment rhythm.

2nd staff : A djembe player enters with the second accompaniment,

3rd staff : A player starts the rhythm of the 1st dunun (1st konkoni or kesereni).

4th staff : The next player adds the rhythm of the 2nd dunun (2nd konkoni or sangba as well as the bell),

5th staff : For certain rhythms from Guinea, a fifth player plays the dununba part.

The speed varies from 90 to 150 beats per minute and may reach faster tempos, depending on circumstances.

The repertory - excluding solos - can be divided into three levels of difficulty:

1 - Easy

Jansa
Kurubi
Madan
Sofa
Sunu
Soli
Tiriba
Wasulunke

2 - Difficult

Didadi
Kasa
Koreduga
Marakadon
Sabar
Sogolon
Soko
Yabara

3 - Very Difficult

Kuku
Sanja
Dununba 1 and 2
Kawa
Menjani



"NI SAMA BE MOGO MIN GNE, NOMI T'I BUGO..."

"He who rides an elephant is not dampened by the dew..."



JANSA

From the Kasonké ethnic group, originating in the Kayes and Kita region of Mali. The jansa is undoubtedly the most popular entertainment dance in Khasso. It takes place in the evening or at night, in the public square. It is for all people and all occasions: the full moon, the end of

winter and good harvests. It starts slowly, picking up speed when a talented dancer goes into the middle of the circle. Great dancers sometimes manipulate a rifle or pestle while dancing. The following version is the most popular in the cities.

CD Track 16

Starting signal and 1st djembe

2nd djembe

1st dunun

2nd dunun



KURUBI

From the Jula ethnic group, originating in Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso (Bobo Dioulasso). This rhythm is played during festivities towards the end of Ramadan, the 27th night. It is the last big fling for the young girls who will be married the following year.

CD Track 17

MADAN



From the Maninka ethnic group, originating in the Kankaba region of Mali (Bamaka circle). The madan is played at the end of the harvest to celebrate plenty and prosperity. It is also played as a welcome during popular festivities. The madan

can be interpreted in several ways, the version below is the most representative. In the Sigui and Mandiana region of Guinea, the madan is also called jagbe. It is played for the feasts at the end of Ramadan (the 30th day), as well as for the Sheep Festival.

CD Track 18

SOFA



KOUMGBANAN CONDE

From the Maninka ethnic group, originating in the Kouroussa, Kankan and Faranah regions of Upper Guinea. This rhythm goes back to the time of King Samory. At that time, sofa was played only for war parades to glorify kings and their victories.

The djembe was accompanied by the bolon and dunun.

CD Track 19



From the Soninké ethnic group, originating in the Kayes region of Mali.

This very popular rhythm is believed to date back to the precolonial era. At that time, in the village of Sagabari, there was a pretty young girl named Sunu Mamady (her father had the same name).

Everyone loved her, and her qualities as a dancer were greatly appreciated. No festivity could take

place without her participation. This rhythm was created in her honor by a djembefola troupe from her village.

The dance is played to celebrate good harvests. It is a moment for young girls to demonstrate their grace and beauty, sometimes even their provocativeness, and for young boys, especially in the Kaarta circle, to demonstrate their strength and vigor and show their acrobatic prowess.

CD Track 20



SOLI



From the Maninka ethnic group, played throughout the Maninka country.

The soli is specifically for all circumcision or excision events. Circumcision is a ritual operation performed when boys are about 7 years old. When the family councils in a given village have posted the list of candidates to be promoted that year and set the date of the ceremonies, the preparations can begin. The mothers prepare the traditional dress.

The fathers proceed with consultations to elect the wise man who will watch over the circumcised boys throughout their initiation and also determine the place of their seclusion.

The festivities connected to circumcision always give rise to great rejoicing. They begin seven days before the initiation, which lasts four weeks.

In the public gathering area, singing and drums call people to dance the very popular solisi or furasi. In Mali, this rhythm is also called **suku** or **fura**.

CD Track 21



TIRIBA



MAMADY "KARGUS" KEÏTA

From the Susu ethnic group, originating in the Boké region of Lower Guinea. Traditionally, the tiriba is not played on the djembe but on smaller drums made of stretched deerskin with wooden corners. It is played for circumcisions and also during the medicine men's important festivities and ceremonies.

CD Track 22

WASULUNKE



From the Wasulunke ethnic group, originating in the Sikasso region of Mali. In this region, it is called **jakewara**, after the masks that are used for this dance. It is played to celebrate the end of the harvest. Very popular in the Bamako district, it is now played at numerous celebrations.

CD Track 23



DIDADI

From the Bamana ethnic group, originating in the Bougouni circle, of Mali's Sikasso region.

The didadi is organized during the end-of-the-year holidays or to celebrate the arrival of an important person. It is an easy rhythm to dance to, and everyone can interpret it as they like. In the Sikasso region, the dunun called **didadidunun** is the instrument played for the didadi. The hand plays the drum on the skin opposite the one hit by the wooden drumstick, complementing the stick's playing.

CD Track 24

HAND HAND



KASA

From the Maninka ethnic group, originating in the Kouroussa region of Upper Guinea. The kasa is played at all events linked to the harvest. This rhythm is played to encourage farmers during sowing and harvesting. There are several kasa. **Konkoba**, **soro** and **dubon** are other rhythms played along with the kasa.

CD Track 25

KOREDUGA



From the Bamana ethnic group, in the Ségou region of Mali.
 The koreduga caste are part of a separate group within the Bamana tradition. They are easily recognized by their distinctive, slovenly dress. Their role during the celebrations is to make the assembly laugh with their mimicry and acrobatics. Above all else, the koreduga rhythm accompanies the dance of clowns and buffoons. It is danced by both boys and girls.

CD Track 26

MARAKADON



SOULEYMANE FRANÇOIS DEMBELE

From the Soninké ethnic group, originating in the Kayes region of Mali. This rhythm is played mostly by women during popular celebrations. It is wrongly called denbadon⁽¹⁾. In fact, the denbadon brings together several rhythms and dances played for popular festivities honoring mothers; it is therefore not the name of a rhythm. This rhythm is accompanied by only one djembe and a single konkoni. It is also called **také**.

CD Track 27

1. Den = child; Ba = mother; Don = dance.



SABAR

From the Wolof ethnic group, in the Dakar region of Senegal.

In this country, the most common instrument is the sabar, a skin drum played with one hand and a thin wooden stick. It is set on the ground or strapped to the side of the body. The rhythm and dance steps were named for this drum. There are several styles of

sabar dancing. The best known are the “air conditioner”, consisting of unveiling the pentelu⁽¹⁾ to the musicians and the audience, and the “fan”, where hip rolls provoke a circular movement of the buttocks. This rhythm is very popular in Senegal and in the rest of West Africa, where several variations have been transposed for the djembe.

CD Track 28



SOGOLON

From the Bozo ethnic group, in the Mopti region of Mali.

Traditionally, this rhythm is played with three bongolo and a bara. It celebrates plenty at the end of the fishing season. Currently, the sogolon is played with the djembe in the Bamako district, during popular celebrations and festivities.

CD Track 29

1. Pentelu are underskirts worn only by married women. They are of different colors and can be embroidered with provocative phrases.

SOKO



From the **Maninka ethnic** group, originating in the Faranah region of Upper Guinea. Another soko is played by the **Jalunké**.

This rhythm is played in the evening for young boys during the three months preceding the **circumcision period**.

For this occasion, the **saa, kala, kankanba** and **konjan** are also played.

CD Track 30

YABARA

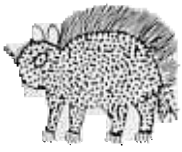


From the **Fulani ethnic** group, originating in the Wasoulou region of Upper Guinea.

This rhythm is played as a welcome during popular festivities.

Various horns and several yabara accompany the djembe and dunun playing - hence the rhythm's name: yabara.

CD Track 31



KUKU

From the Koniagi ethnic group of the Beyla and Kérouané regions in the Guinea forest area. This rhythm is played for the end of the harvest festivities and during celebration festivities. It is played only on the djembe, as the dunun does not

exist in this region. Two small drums are added to the sides of the soloist's djembe. The whole is called a three-headed drum. Another drummer keeps up an accompaniment on a small djembe. The kuku has been modified and adapted with dunun and djembe solos for the National Ballet Company.

CD Track 32

The musical score for 'Kuku' consists of five staves, all in 4/4 time. The first staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second and third staves are mostly rests, with some rhythmic notation in the second measure. The fourth and fifth staves contain complex rhythmic patterns using 'x' marks to represent drum hits, with some melodic elements interspersed.



SANJA

From the Maninka ethnic group, in the Kayes region of Mali. This piece traditionally opened the ceremonies for the death of a king or a very important man. Recounting the Mandingo epic, this predominantly vocal rhythm was interwoven with "Fasa"⁽¹⁾. Traditionally, the real sanja is not played on the djembe, which is not a griot instrument like the bala, the ntama and the jalidunun⁽²⁾. Only these

instruments accompany the sanja, played to honor men and women griots. On these occasions, the griots sing each other's praises and execute this very graceful dance with circular movements, their arms spread out. Today, some associations organizing "Ambianci Foli"⁽³⁾ ask the djembefola to play the sanja. He can only do so in these kinds of modern circumstances. This rhythm is also called jalidon⁽⁴⁾. In Guinea, it is called **lamban**.

CD Track 33

The musical score for 'Sanja' consists of five staves, all in 4/4 time. The first staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second and third staves are mostly rests, with some rhythmic notation in the second measure. The fourth and fifth staves contain complex rhythmic patterns using 'x' marks to represent drum hits, with some melodic elements interspersed.

1. Songs of praise.
2. Griot dunun.
3. Neighborhood festivities.
4. Dance of the griots.



From the Maninka ethnic group, originating in the Hamana, in the Kouroussa region of Upper Guinea.

The dununba is also called “the dance of the Strong Men”. Key instruments, the dunun follow the dance while the djembe accompanies it. That is why the rhythm is named after the dunun.

It is a very acrobatic dance. The dancers, called Barati⁽¹⁾, use it to show the betrothed and the important

people of the village their vitality and bravery. Turning in front of the assembly, they strike their bodies with riding crops made from animal muscle while performing risky somersaults and jumps. In some regions this dance is practised more “peaceably”. Women participate with their own specific movements.

There are many variants of the dununba rhythm. Here are two of them.

CD Track 34 and 35

1. Barati = master of Bara. The bara is the public place where the dununba is danced.



From the Maninka ethnic group, originating in the Faranah region of Upper Guinea. Kawa is above all the rhythm of the medicine man. It is played during circumcision periods to contain evil spirits and protect the young initiates from them. For this rhythm, the djembe is accompanied by the bala, the ntama and the file.

CD Track 36

MENJANI



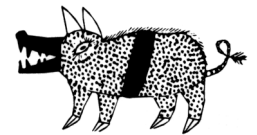
From the Maninka ethnic group, played throughout the Maninka country. This rhythm is mainly played by young pubescent girls to celebrate good harvests. In Guinea, this rhythm is also called **denadon**.

CD Track 37



NOUMOUDY KEÏTA

OTHER TRADITIONAL MANDINGO RHYTHMS



Below are the main known rhythms compiled in Mali and Guinea, grouped by regions of origin. It is of course possible to find some of these rhythms in different regions and under different names.

MALI

KAYES		KULIKORO	SIKASSO
Bire	Sangaboroké	Gomba	Didadi
Jansa	Kofili	Nama	Korokodon
Garangédon	Bara	Madan 2	Warafoli
Madan	Jura	Numudon	Wasulunké
Makakadon	Sambali	Sogolon 1	Sogoniku
Sanja	Bombo	Koté	Niokon
Sunu	Sidiyasa		Niyangaran
Také	Kaye		Fura
Wulungu			
Walo			

SEGOU

Bara
Bonjalari
Konon
Koreduga
Kaku
Tekerekulo
Dama

MOPTI

Fladon
Kadodon
Sogolon 2
So
Kaju
Sanjoli
Kadaga
Hiro
Gambari

TIMBUKTU

Takamba
Gao
Chalo
Tendé

GAO

Sakal

BAMAHO DISTRICT

Here we find all the rhythms of the 7 regions, as well as the main rhythms from Guinea.

UPPER GUINEA

KANKAN

Ja
Kasa
Koma
Lamban
Mamaya
Menjani
Sofa
Soli
Soliwulé
Weïma

MANDIANA

Yabara
Soboninku

KOUROUSSA

Dununba family:

Bada	Donaba
Balasondé	Kondé
Bolokonondo	Bukondo
Dununbé	
Kurabadon	
Kononwulé	
Takosaba	
Bandon	

KOUROUSSA

Balakulania	Soli
Ja	Soliwulé
Jaba	Soro
Dubon	Tama
Gbéledu	Weïma
Guidamba	Konkoba
Kadan	
Kasa	
Koma	
Lamban	
Mamaya	
Menjani	
Sofa	

UPPER GUINEA (continued)

SIGUIRI

Denadon
Ja
Jagbé
Fankani
Kasa
Koma
Kondé
Lamban

Mamaya
Menjani
Soboninku
Sofa
Soli
Soliwulé
Weïma

FARANAH

Kala
Kankamba
Kawa
Konjan
Konkoba
Saa
Soko
Soli
Toro

GUINEA FOREST REGION

NZEREKORE

Kuku
5 headed drums

MIDDLE GUINEA

LABE

Fulani Rhythms

LOWER GUINEA

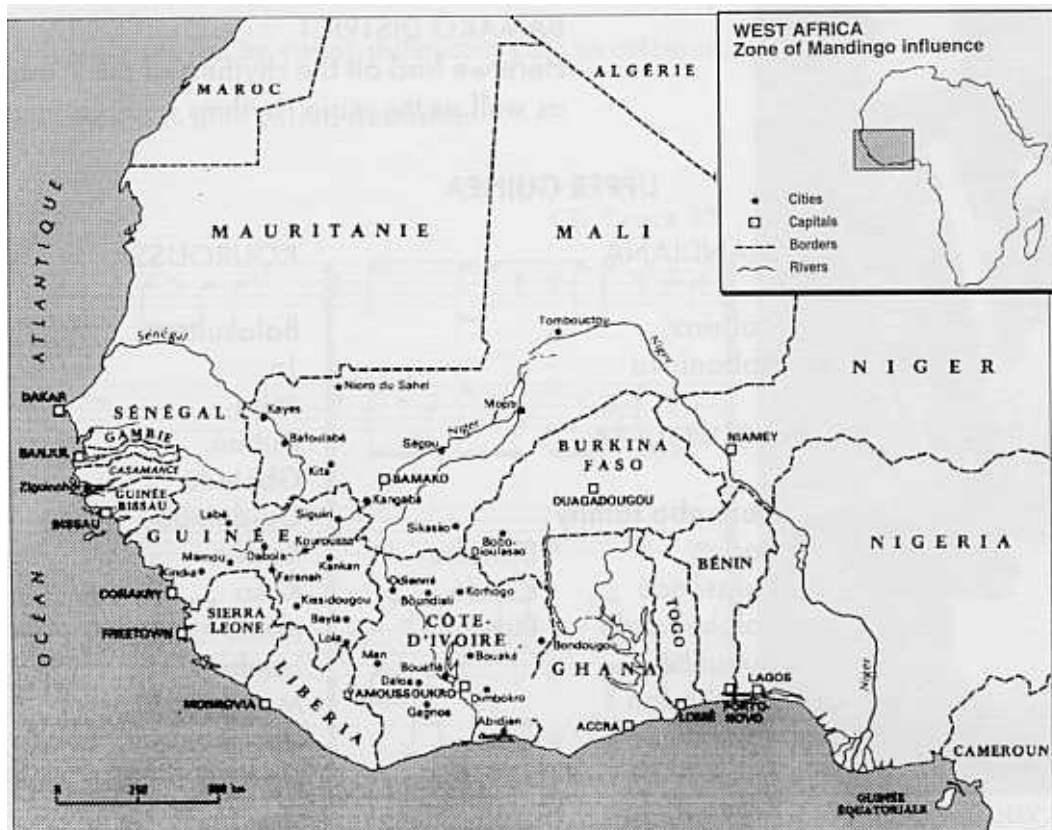
CONAKRY, KINDIA, BOKE

In this region, we find mostly Susu rhythms such as:

Kakilembé
Sorsoné
Tiriba
Yolé

Yencadi
Guinefaré
Mané
Sintié

Makuru
Yokui





For the Guro, living in the Zuénoula region of Ivory Coast, the Zawuli with its striking mask represents evil. Usually it is danced only during funeral rites.

This mask dance is generally performed in the midst of a large audience. It requires a mixed percussion orchestra playing varying tones and qualities originally consisted of one small and one large single-skinned, pegged drum; two single-skinned, laced drums; one slit drum; three whistles.

This remarkably precise, spectacular dance is totally synchronized with the rhythmic units. Shaking two braids of ox-tail bristles, the dancer marks time with the first part of the starting signal: this is called "zawuli hands". He continues with the second part of the starting signal, "zawuli feet", producing the sound with thick straps of raffia

and bells around his ankles. He performs staccato series of very fast leaps; his feet hammer the ground, activating the resonators, whose sound corresponds perfectly to the drumming.

Today this rhythm is no longer an accompaniment to the Zawuli mask dance; it has become a dance of the people. Women also dance it, traditionally dressed but without masks. It can be inserted into rhythms played on the djembe, such as kuku or jansa, thereby creating really beautiful "breaks". Here is the most representative adaptation of this piece, composed of one double-time part and one triple-time part. The soloist gives the signal written in the first measure; the troupe then joins in immediately in unison. The dunun essentially mark the downbeat, mainly played on the low notes of the djembe.



ZAWULI MASK

PICTURE: X

ZAWULI HANDS

CD Track 38

Djembe

The musical score for 'Zawuli Hands' on Djembe is written in 4/4 time. It consists of 21 measures. Measure 1 is the starting signal. Measures 2-3 are a double-time section. Measures 4-6 are a triple-time section. Measures 7-9 are a double-time section. Measures 10-12 are a triple-time section. Measures 13-15 are a double-time section. Measures 16-18 are a triple-time section. Measures 19-21 are a double-time section. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, rests, and triplets.

Musical notation for vocal melody, measures 25-32. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef and a 7/8 time signature. It features eighth and sixteenth notes, with many notes beamed in groups of three, indicating triplets. Measure numbers 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32 are indicated above the staff.

ZAWULI FEET

CD Track 39

Musical notation for Djembe and Dunun, measures 1-2. The notation is on two staves with a treble clef and a 12/8 time signature. The top staff is labeled 'Djembe' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Dunun'. Measure numbers 1 and 2 are indicated above the staves.

Musical notation for Djembe and Dunun, measures 3-12. The notation is on two staves with a treble clef and a 12/8 time signature. The top staff is labeled 'Djembe' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Dunun'. Measure numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 are indicated above the staves.

13 14 15

16 17 18

19 20 21

22 23 24

25 26 27

28



UNISON DRUM SIGNAL

Here is one of many “drum signals” composed by the “Ballets Koteba de Côte-d’Ivoire”⁽¹⁾, a company created and directed by Souleymane Koly. Many great drummers, including Fofana Georges Kémoko, Mamady “Kargus” Keïta and Mamady “N’Toman” Keïta, have belonged to the troupe. This starting signal is presented mainly because it is played in unison by a troupe of djembe and dunun

drums. To interpret it well, it is necessary to work on the group’s orchestration and homogeneity. Memory also is important, as are the song and the different sounds.

- The first drummer plays the first starting signal measure, and the troupe immediately joins in.
- The djembe group plays the first staff; the dunun group plays the second staff.

CD Track 40

Djembe

Dunun

1. This version is by Fofana Georges Kémoko and Mamady “N’Toman” Keïta.

17 18 19 20

21 22 23 24

25 26 27

28 29 30

31 32 33 34

35 36 37 38

39 40 41 42

43 44 45

Resonators

46 47 48

Resonators

49 50 51

52 53 54

55 56 57

58

61 62 63

1st djembe 2nd 3rd 4th

64 65 66

67 68 69 70

71 72 73 74

75 76 77

77 80

81 82 83

84 85 86

87 88 89

CHAPTER 6

PRACTICAL ADVICE

- Assembling a Djembe
- Assembling a Dunun

"BAARA GNUMAN SARA YE GNUMAN YE..

"The effort of good work is always repaid.. "



ASSEMBLING A DJEMBE

In Africa, it is customary for a percussionist to change the skin of his drum himself, just as a guitarist changes the strings of his or her guitar. The operation is in fact long and difficult. The procedure advised here, which I learned through repeated experience, will facilitate your work, and you will learn other little tricks as you go along. It will take three or four tries to get a good

result. You don't get a good sound the first time you play your drum. Likewise, the first djembe you redo won't be your best.

Get help the first time from someone who already has some experience to avoid getting discouraged. The task will seem easier.

And it is so satisfying to play an instrument assembled with your own hands!

The instrument

Once the skin is off, verify that there are no cracks in the wood. If there are, round them down completely, and fill them in using a dense mixture of wood glue and fine sawdust (more efficient than readymade wood putty.) Check that the wood is not pock-marked with little holes. If you see a fine wooddust in the drum, an anti-termite treatment is imperative. If necessary, even out the upper edge of

the djembe. To do this use a wood rasp; then sand it down to get a perfect finish. It is important to eliminate all irregularities on the perimeter: they can cause cuts in the skin when you shave it. Also, a rounded edge will hurt your hands less. To protect, preserve and nourish the wood, grease the entire drum inside and out with shea butter (or linseed oil, which is easier to find.)

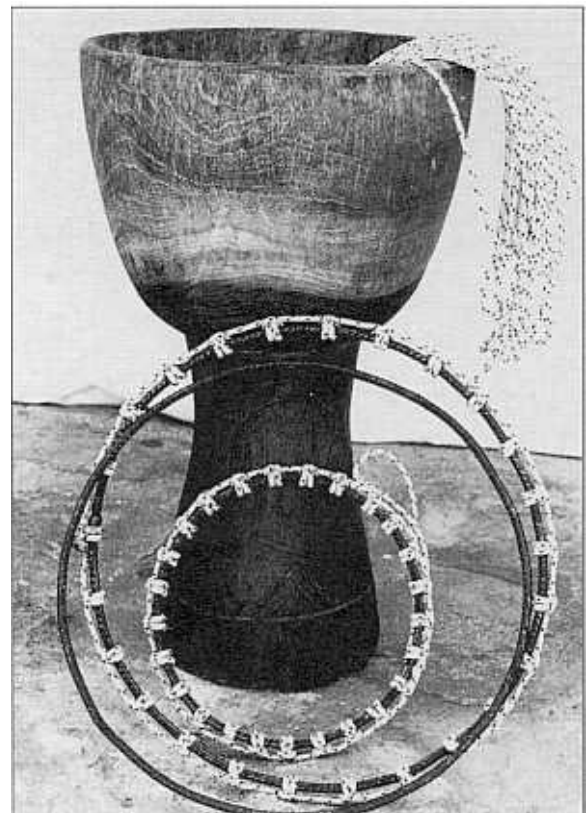
The hoops

The djembe has three iron hoops (generally made of cement rods), 6 or 8 mm in diameter (depending on the djembe's diameter). They are wrapped around the drum barrel and then soldered. Two are tension hoops, a larger and a smaller one. It is on these two tension hoops that the knots are tied to hold the lacing which tightens the skin.

The third hoop is the support hoop. It goes inside the skin, which will be pulled up over it during the assembly. This support hoop is the largest of the three, being slightly larger than the tension hoop which it supports.

The two larger hoops are placed on the upper perimeter of the drum body.

The small hoop goes on the collar.



The skin

The quality of the skin is of utmost importance for producing good tone. You will learn to make judicious choices through practice. The best skins do not automatically give good sound on any and all drums. There is a subtle relationship between the skin's thickness and that of the future djembe.

Fineness and sturdiness are important. If the skin is too thick, the sound might be stifled; if too thin, there can be interference vibrations.

Skins from Africa are highly recommended, as they are much thinner and less greasy. Be sure the skin is treated for parasites before being shipped.

Examine it closely by looking through it towards a strong source of light to be sure that there are no holes, thick warts or whip marks. If the bristles come off when you pull them, the skin is of poor quality. Before setting it on the drum barrel, you must soften the skin entirely by soaking it in a basin of cold water for a few hours. It is not advisable to soak a skin that has already been used (except when constructing a dunun, where tension is less important).

If hides are to be stored, they should be protected from humidity.

. PREPARATION

Materials

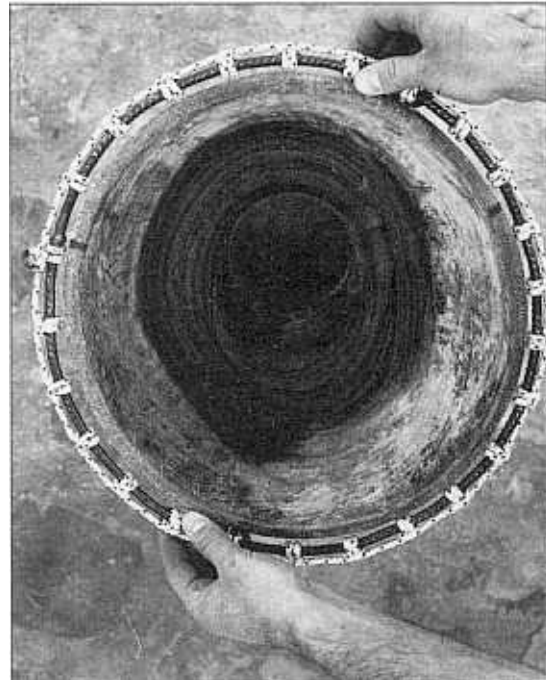
- bare djembe with three hoops
- a goatskin
- prestretched, 5 mm diameter nylon cord:
 - approximately 16 meters for lacing
 - approximately 8 meters for knotting the two tension hoops
- 3 meters of string
- linseed oil or shea butter
- a sheet of medium-grain sandpaper
- wood glue and a handful of fine sawdust, if necessary

Tools

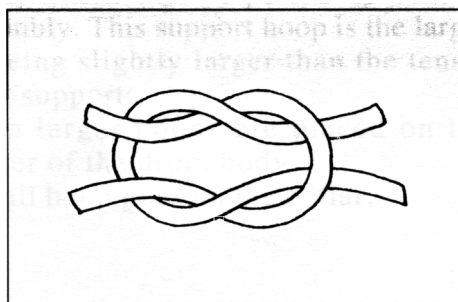
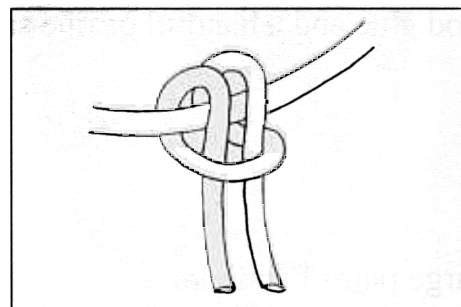
- a large pair of scissors
- two rectangular, double-edged razor blades
- a screwdriver
- a hammer
- a thick wooden stick
- a lighter
- a wood rasp
- a spatula (for the wood glue)
- a felt-tip pen

1/ To take off the old skin, undo the lacing. Start with the horizontal lacing and then undo the vertical lacing. If the skin does not come free easily, tap the upper hoops with a hammer. To remove the inner hoop, you can let the skin soak in water for an hour. This avoids tearing. It will then be possible to use the skin to make a dunun.

2/ Determine the best placement for the upper hoops (neither djembe nor hoops are perfectly round!). Mark the drum body with the felt-tip pen at the place where the hoops are soldered so that you can find this placement easily once the skin is in place.



3/ Tie an identical number of "lark's head knots" (as shown below) on the two tension hoops. Space the knots evenly, about two fingers apart on the larger hoop (closer together on the smaller hoop.) For example, a hoop 35 cm in diameter should have no more than 30 knots.



Finish this step by tying a square knot to join the ends of the cord (on each of the two tension hoops).

II. FITTING

Assembly takes about an hour.

4/ After soaking the skin, rinse it thoroughly and brush both sides. This eliminates any impurities (soil, grass, blood, etc.) If there are any fatty parts left on the inside, pull them out. Remove excess water by hitting the skin on the ground or against a wall (outside!).

5/ Before beginning to assemble the drum, it is very important to restore the skin's elasticity. To do this, stretch it hard, holding one end with your heel, as shown.

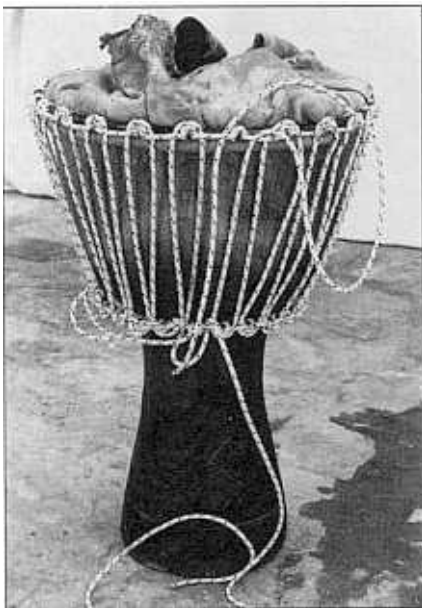


6/ Lay the skin on the djembe, bristle side up. Carefully center the spine, easily recognized by its darker color and denser bristles.

7/ To put the support hoop in place, line up its joint with the mark made earlier (cf. 2). Gently lay the skin back over it. Slip on the large tension hoop. Slip the small tension hoop over the foot end up to its place around the collar.

8/ To hold the hoops and skin in place during the lacing in the next step, use the three meters of string as shown.





III. ASSEMBLY

9/ Prepare the 16 meter long vertical tension cord by burning its ends so they won't unravel.

Begin lacing by locating the middle of the cord, thereby ensuring that it will have the same length at both ends. Lace to either side by weaving the ends of the cord around each of the knots successively.

Be careful not to miss any knots or you will have to start over!

10/ Once you have laced and knotted all around the djembe, grasp the ends of the skin. Holding the lower part of the instrument with your feet, pull the skin upward strongly to stretch it.

This part is essential. It keeps the skin from being too low on the drum body when you finish assembling and tautens the skin.

11/ Now check one last time that the skin has no holes in it. Look through it towards a bright light from the foot side. If you see a flaw, you may be able to shift the skin, placing the flaw on the edge. Otherwise, you will need to use another skin.

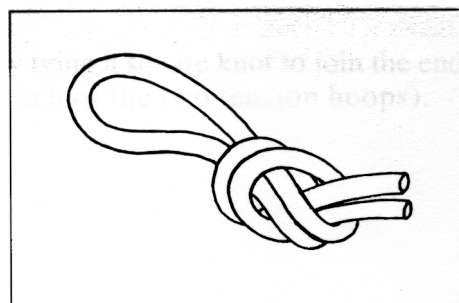


IV. TENSION

12/ Remove the three meters of string used to hold the hoops in place (cf. 8).

13/ Do a preliminary tightening of the cord. Place it correctly on the knots, bringing the skin down 1 cm all around the djembe. At the same time, be sure that the two hoops stay parallel to each other. Eliminate any wrinkles that might form in the skin between the two top hoops. Pull gradually, without forcing at first, or the skin will drop too quickly and too low on one side.

14/ Once the cord's slack has been taken up, attach the two ends with a knot as shown below.



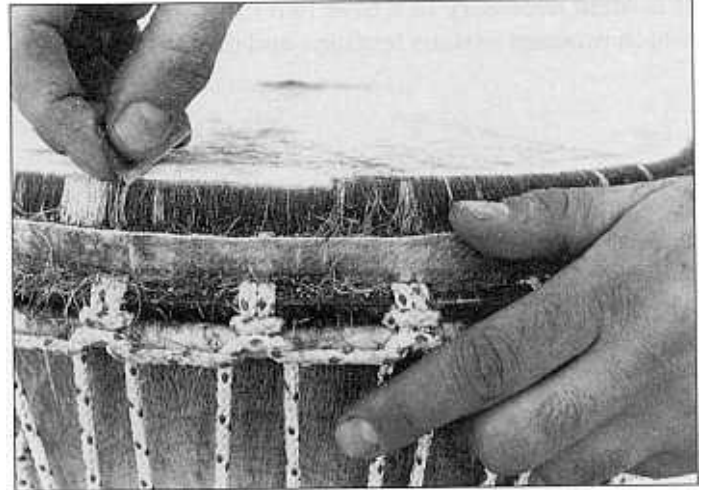
15/ Now tighten the cord as tight as possible. Keep an even spacing all around the djembe (maximum 2 cm) between the top hoops and the upper edge of the body and make sure that the small tension hoop stays parallel.

16/ Lay the djembe on the ground. Cut the excess skin with a large pair of scissors. Use the upper edge as a guide. Don't cut too close or the skin will come out from between the two hoops during the final stretching.

V. SHAVING

17/ This is a very tricky operation, difficult to master at first. Always shave in the direction of the bristles. A rectangular razor blade is the best tool, as it gives an efficient and close shave.

Hold the blade flat between the thumb and fingers, keeping a 45° angle with the skin. The flat of your nails should slide along the goatskin as you use the blade. Work smoothly or you will nick the skin. Be especially careful along the perimeter, where the skin touches the wood.



18/ After shaving the skin, there are two ways to finish off its edges:



Method I:

Flatten the rest of the skin up against the top of the drum body by wrapping it with 2 or 3 meters of cord. When the skin is dry, remove the cord. The skin will stay flat and in place and won't hurt your hands when playing. With this method it is easy to stick the resonators between the knots.

Method II:

This method is used for skins which have been shaved and treated before their assembly.

After cutting the excess skin (cf. 16), pull the rest down over and against the tension hoop. Flatten it with cord as in Method I.

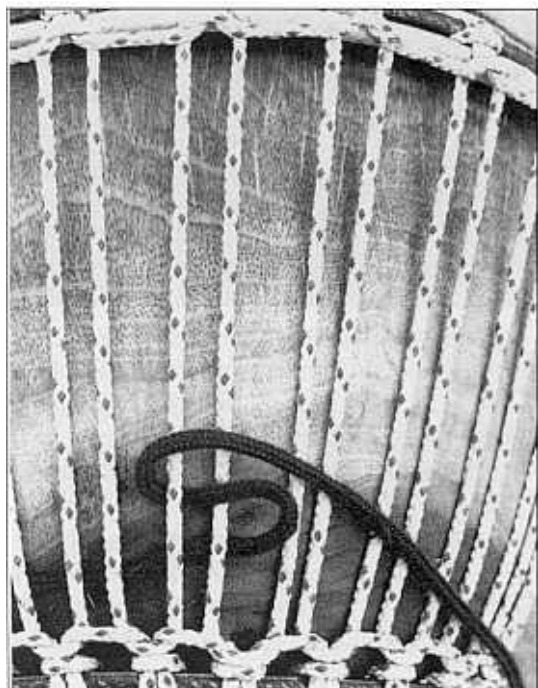
This method covers and protects the knots on the tension hoop, but makes it necessary to cut slits in order to attach the resonators.

VI. DRYING AND FINISHING

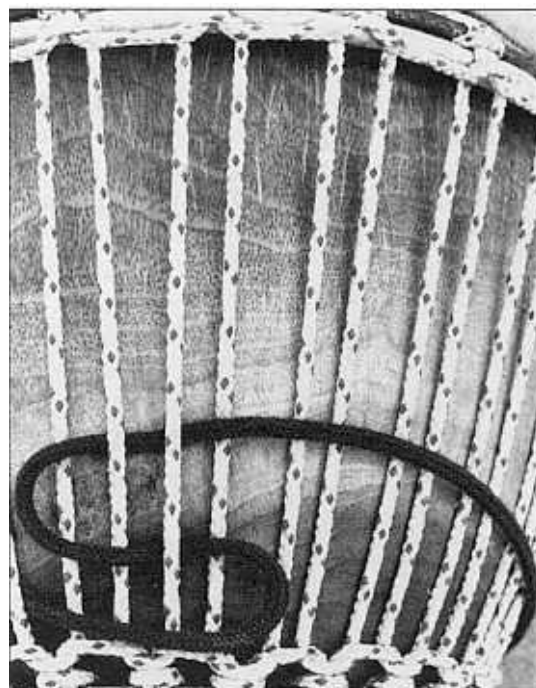
19/ Lay the djembe on its side to keep the wood from splitting during drying. Let the skin dry for at least three days in the sun or in a dry, well-aired place.

20/ Verify that the skin is perfectly dry. To get rid of any slack in the vertical tension cord caused by drying, pull it firmly one last time and redo the overhand loop.

21/ Now do the crosswise weaving which does the final stretching. Pulling this cord is very hard on the hands (and also on the back), so wrap it around a thick wooden stick which gives you leverage to make the pulling easier. It is often necessary to weave two turns to get the most out of the skin. Shown below are a few ways of weaving which produce various tensions and designs.



1



2



3



4

22/ Tap the hoop lightly with a hammer between each knot. Be careful! It is better to use a wooden wedge between the hoop and the hammer to protect your work. This "seats" the skin in its proper place.

23/ Shave the skin a last time to eliminate any rough patches.

24/ With the scissors, cut the edge of the skin closer to the hoop (or the knots).

VII. MAINTENANCE

Between skin-changes, the djembe needs no particular care.

Be careful not to damage the instrument, especially when transporting it. A case or bag is indispensable. Placing a thin piece of wood or carpet over the skin will help protect it from shocks.

Wood and skin are sensitive to changes of temperature and humidity.

Don't use electric or other heat sources to restretch the skin. It will lose quality and its life-span will be shortened.

Don't grease the djembe skin.





ASSEMBLING A DUNUN

A dunun can be assembled with metal hoops, like the djembe, but it can also be sewn. The djembe was originally made this way as well. The reader can practice either the hoop or cord method on either instrument. The second method, trickier and less common, is more traditional.

In the sewing method described below, the metal hoops are replaced with nylon cord. The skins are attached to the cord by means of nylon thread rather than by knots. Then more cord weaves the skins to each other.

You can employ two used djembe skins to make a dunun. This saves money and also makes sewing easier, as the skins are already shaven and therefore thinner.

I. PREPARATION

Materials

- a 30 or 56 litre oil barrel
- two goatskins
- solvent, rags
- two sheets of sand paper
- 1/2 litre of oil paint
- 20 meters of nylon cord, 4 mm in diameter
- 4 meters nylon thread, 3 mm in diameter, for sewing
- 3 meters of string

Tools

- a pair of metal shears or a jigsaw
- a long, sturdy needle for leather
- a large pair of scissors
- two rectangular, double-edged razor blades
- a screwdriver
- a hammer
- a lighter
- pliers and leather stitching palm
- a flat paintbrush

25/ Drill a hole in the top and bottom of the barrel. Then, using the jigsaw or the pliers, cut out the two ends. Be sure not to use a barrel that has held toxic or inflammable products.

Using the hammer, flatten the cut edge against the inside. Carefully remove any metal shavings.

With abundant amounts of solvent, wash the inside to eliminate any grease. Sand the outside, removing old paint or advertising. Make it look like new with two coats of oil paint, decorating it as you like.

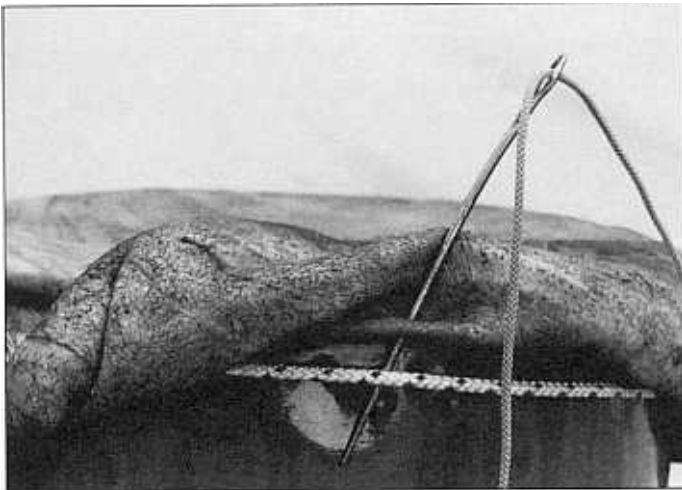
II. FITTING

Assembly takes about an hour and a quarter.

26/ Wrap tension cords around both ends of the barrel at about 4 cm from the edge. Tighten them with square knots.

27/ After soaking the skins as for the djembe, place one on one of the ends. Wrap a second cord, the support cord, around the skin and tie it tightly with a square knot.

28/ Draw back the ends of the skin over this cord and the barrel.

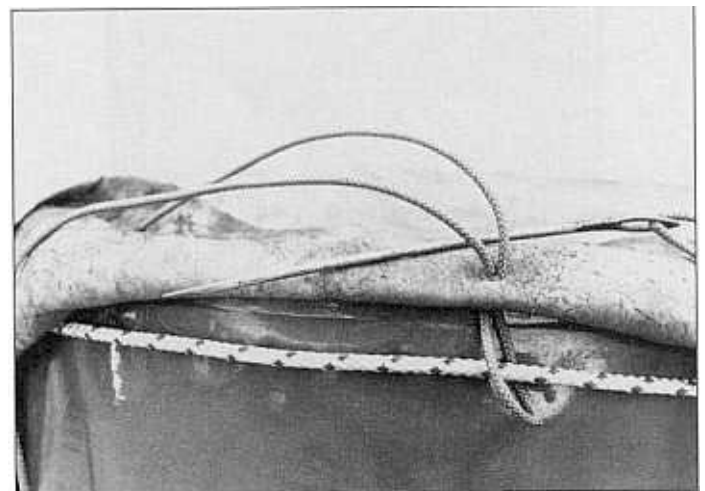


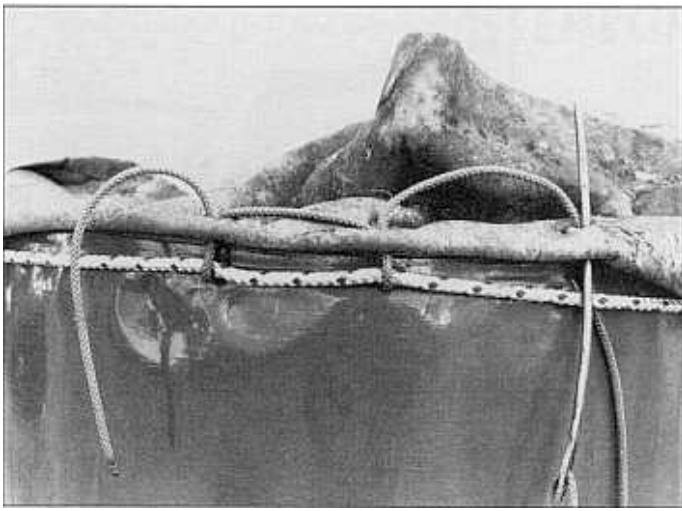
III. SEWING

29/ Thread the needle with 2 meters of nylon thread. Sitting on the ground and holding the barrel between your legs, start sewing the first skin.

30/ With the needle, pierce the skin from top to bottom, wedging the support cord into the fold of skin with the thread. The needle then passes between the tension cord and the barrel. You may use a leather stitching palm and a pliers to pull the needle through.

31/ Go back through the same hole from bottom to top, passing outside the tension cord. The nylon thread forms a loop around the tension cord. Be very careful not to sew into either the support cord (now inside the skin) or the sewing thread itself when sewing back through the skin. The first stitch is now finished. Leave about 10 cm of thread above the skin which you will use to tie off the thread when you have sewn all the way around the barrel.





32/ Sew the next stitch at a distance of three fingers from the first. (Use your hand as a measure to make the spacing even). What's difficult is to keep the skin from slipping off the barrel before having sewn all the way around. When you have finished, tighten the thread and tie a square knot with the 10 cm part you left at the first stitch.

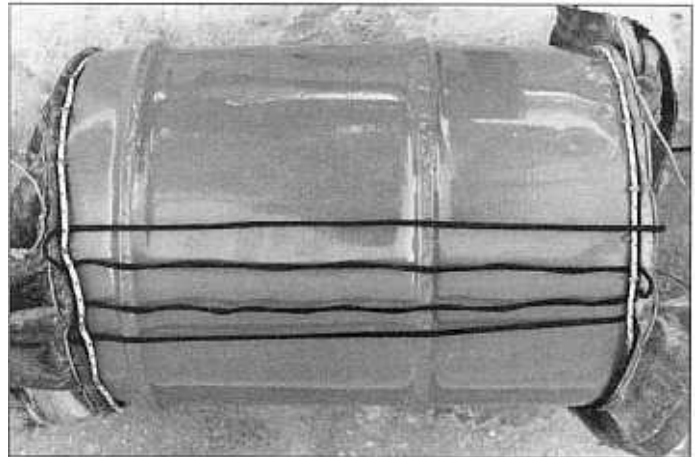
33/ When the first skin has been fitted, turn the barrel over, setting the skin on the ground. This skin can also be pulled off gently, and then repositioned after the second skin is sewn.

34/ Fit the other skin on the other end, following the same procedure. Be sure to make the same number of stitches on both skins.

IV. LACING

35/ When the second skin is sewn, place the barrel on its side. To hold the two skins in place and prepare for the cord lacing, cross the 3 meters of string tightly between the two skins (cf. 8).

36/ Weave the 15 meter vertical tension cord between the two skins by passing back and forth under each of the stitches from one skin to the other (cf. 9).



V. TENSION

37/ Pull the skins gently, eliminating the cord's slack. This will move them down to about 2 cm below the edge.

Pull them evenly, turning the drum two or three times to get the desired result.

38/ When you have finished tightening the cord, attach the two ends with an overhand loop. The tension is much looser than for the djembe.

VI. FINISHING

39/ Turn up the ends of the skin and cut the excess with the scissors (cf. 16).

40/ Shave the skins if necessary (cf. 17).

41/ Finish the edges of the skins by folding them upward, using the first method (cf. 18).

42/ The drying and finishing are the same as for the djembe (cf. 19 & 20).

43/ Weave the horizontal tension cord (cf. 21).



CHAPTER 7

APPENDIX



- Musicians
- Selected Recordings

"KONO CAMAN DE BE BU FO..."

"A great noise is produced by birds in groups..."



MUSICIANS

Here is a list of West Africa's major musicians. Some are listed with their nicknames. They are eminent musicians, whose work truly embodies traditional Mandingo percussion.

Aboubakar "Abou Batteur" Keïta **Guinean**

Former soloist, "Grands Ballets d'Afrique Noire de Paris"; lives in France.

Adama Dramé **Burkinabi**

Lives in Ivory Coast, founded the "Ensemble Instrumental Foliba" in 1990.

Alhousseini "Solo" Chérid **Guinean**

Lead soloist of "Wassa"; lives in Guinea.

Amara Kanté **Malian**

Former 1st soloist, "Sabougniouman" Troupe of Bamako, founded in 1972; lives in Mali.

Arafan Touré **Guinean**

Former lead drummer, "Ensemble National des Ballets Africains de Guinée"; lives in Holland.

"Ex Ensemble National des Percussions de Guinée"

Koumgbanan Condé **Guinean**

Former lead drummer, "Ballet National Djoliba de Guinée", sangba specialist; lives in Guinea.

Noumoudy Keïta **Guinean**

Former lead drummer, "Ensemble National des Ballets Africains de Guinée"; deceased.

1st soloists:

Aboubakar "Fatou Abou" Camara **Guinean**

Former 1st soloist, "Ballet National Djoliba de Guinée"; lives in Guinea.

Lamine "Lopez" Soumah **Guinean**

Former soloist, "Ensemble National des Ballets Africains de Guinée"; lives in Guinea.

Lanceï Kanté **Guinean**

Dunun specialist; lives in Guinea.

2nd soloists:

Aly "Kanya" Sylla **Guinean**

Mamadou "Mohamed" Camara **Guinean**

Also 1st soloist of "Wassa"; lives in Guinea.

Fadouba Oularé **Guinean**

Former 1st lead drummer, "Ensemble National des Ballets Africains de Guinée", founded in 1958; lives in Guinea.

Famoudou Konaté **Guinean**

Former lead drummer, "Ensemble National des Ballets Africains de Guinée"; lives in Guinea, where he founded his own group in 1988.

Fodé "Fodé Marseille" Youla **Guinean**

Former soloist, "Grands Ballets d'Afrique Noire de Paris", lives in Guinea.



ADAMA DRAMÉ



FAMOUDOU KONATÉ

PICTURE: B. RALLÉ

Fofana Georges Kémoko

Guinean

Former soloist, "Ballet Kotéba de Côte-d'Ivoire"; lives in Ivory Coast.

Gbangworo Keïta

Guinean

Former 1st soloist, "Ballet National Djoliba de Guinée", founded in 1954, and the "Ensemble National des Percussions de Guinée"; currently lead drummer with the "Ensemble National des Ballets Africains de Guinée"; lives in Guinea.

Laurent Camara

Guinean

Former soloist with the "Ensemble National des Percussions de Guinée", currently 1st soloist of the "Ensemble National des Ballets Africains de Guinée"; lives in Guinea.

Mamadou "Faraba" Sylla

Malian

Former 1st soloist, "Ensemble Folklorique National du Mali", founded in 1960; lives in Mali.

Mamady "Kargus" Keïta,

Guinean

Gold medalist at the 1st Pan African Festival, Algiers, 1969; former 1st soloist, "Ballet National Djoliba de Guinée" and "Ballet Kotéba de Côte-d'Ivoire"; lives in Belgium, where he founded the group "Sewakan" in 1987.

Mamady "N'Toman" Keïta

Guinean

Former soloist, "Ballet Kotéba de Côte-d'Ivoire"; deceased.

Maré Sanogo

Malian

Former 1st soloist with the group "L.C. Éwandé"; former second soloist, "Ensemble Folklorique National du Mali"; lives in France.

Salif Sylla

Guinean

Former soloist, "Ensemble National des Ballets Africains de Guinée"; lives in Holland.

Seydou "Sidiki" Condé

Guinean

Former soloist, "Ballet Forêt Sacrée du Sénégal" and the "Grands Ballets d'Afrique Noire de Paris"; lives in France.

Soungalo Coulibaly

Malian

Lives in Ivory Coast, where he founded the group "Yancadi" in 1989.

Souleymane François "Docteur" Dembélé

Malian

Former 1st soloist "Ballets Maliens"; lives in Mali, where he founded the group "Percussions 2000" in 1988.

Ibrama Saar

Malian

Former soloist, "Ballet National du Mali" and the group "Djoliba Percussions"; lives in Mali.



ABOUBAKAR BAMBA and SOUNGALO COULIBALY



MAMADY "N'TOMAN" KEÏTA

PICTURE: J.C. NOURBAULT



SELECTED RECORDINGS

*This selection of Mandingo music is not exhaustive.
The recordings listed here are among the most representative.*

Adama Dramé	Rythms of the Manding Tambour djembé Foliba Percussions mandingues Djeli Great Masters of Percussions 30 ans de Djembé	(LP) Philips 6586042 (LP) Auvidis 4510 (CD) Playa Sounds 65122 (CD) Playa Sounds 65085 (LP) Auvidis 4519 (CD) Auvidis 6126 (CD) Playa Sounds 65177
Africa Soli	Sali	(CD) Sango Music 007 (Netherlands)
Bamba Dembélé et le groupe Djoliba Percussions	Vol 1 Vol 2	(K7) Syliphone 8350 (K7) Syliphone 8351
Dissé	Simo Farev	(LP) Nubia SA 300021
Famoudou Konaté	Rythmen der Malinké Guinée	(CD) Museum collection 18 Staatliche Museen. Preubische Kulturbesitz. Stauffenbergstrabe 41 1000 Berlin 30 (Germany)
Fodé Youla	Percussions Music from Africa Kaloum Basikolo Ne Ne Yancadi	(LP) SAJ 19 (LP) SAJ 26 (LP) SAJ 48 (LP) SAJ 50 (LP) SAJ 54 Free Music Behaimstrasse 4 1000 Berlin (Germany)
Kassoum Diarra	Kassama percussions	(CD) Playa Sounds 65170
• Ladjji Camara	Africa, New-York	(LP) Lyrichord LLST 7345
Les Ballets Africains de la République de Guinée	Vol 1 Silo	(CD) Buda Records 82513 (CD) Buda Records 92579
Louis César Ewandé	Cano	(CD) Bleu Citron OMD 545

• Mamadou Kanté	Drums from Mali	(CD) Playa Sound 65132
• Mamady "Kargus" Keïta	Wassolon Nankama Mögöbalu Hamanah	(CD) Fonti Musicali 581159 (CD) Fonti Musicali 195 (CD) Fonti Musicali 205 (CD) Fonti Musicali 211
• Mamady "N'Toman" Keïta	Sakadougou	(K7) Swing Man SPRL 00.32.27.333.917 (Belgium)
• Les Frères Coulibaly	An kadia	(CD) Auvidis B6775
• Ensemble National des Percussions de Guinée	Vol 1 Vol 2	(CD) Buda Records 82501 (CD) Buda Records 92586
• Soungalo Coulibaly	Laïla ilala Dengo	(CD) Arion 6419 (CD) Espace 2 Djinn Djow Productions (Switzerland)
• Wassa	Guinée: Chants et Percussions de la Basse Côte	(CD) Buda Records 92518
• Wofa	Guinée: Chants et Percussions de la Basse Côte	(CD) Buda Records 92624-2



*The author is at the reader's disposal
for any additional information about this book.*



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