



Survey of various musical manifestations observed in French Upper Guinea¹

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The region of French West Africa, where I had the opportunity to observe various musical manifestations, consists of the neighboring districts of Kankan and Kouroussa [Kurussa]; both have successively been part of Sudan and Guinea. The inhabitants belong to the Malinké [Mandinka] people. The advent of the railway and commercial development has favored the arrival of indigenes belonging to other peoples. Strictly speaking this is therefore not a new region, and even if positive ramifications can be seen from the economic boom, it has to be acknowledged that civilization brings about serious obstacles to ethnological studies: new habits replace former local traditions, the fetish cult disappears against the backdrop of Islamization throughout the country, and indigenous music mixes with European tunes. Hence, it would be necessary to investigate the manifestations of this primitive art before complete disappearance. As far as my professional occupations permitted, I have exerted myself in noting down what seemed most interesting to me with the means I had available. A recent voyage to South Africa (Angola, Transvaal, Mozambique) has permitted me to observe in an unfortunately too quick manner various indigenous festivities, and compare them with what I have seen in our West Africa.

If this little study has some merit it is due to Mrs. Béclard d'Harcourt who has been so kind as to accept the invidious task of noting down oftentimes mediocre phonograms and providing them with interesting remarks,² even when these phonograms could not be transcribed due to their extreme imperfection. Mr. M. Delafosse, teacher at the Ecole Coloniale, has provided me with his great competence in Sudanese ethnology, wherefore I express my sincere thanks to him.

¹ Papers read at the Institut français d'Anthropologie (December 19, 1923) and the Société de Géographie de Paris (March 14, 1924).

² These observations by Mrs. Béclard d'Harcourt are fused with my text but printed in italics [They are set as block quotations followed by the initials B.d'H. here. Eds.].

In Upper Guinea musical manifestations are generally accompanied by dances: this is what Europeans habitually designate with the term tam-tam. This tam-tam may be reduced to its most simple expression and be only composed of some friends meeting to amuse themselves. If they are wealthy they invite professional musicians – about whom we are going to talk later – to animate the festivity so that it broadens and sometimes attracts numerous invitees. In the communicative warmth of [the atmosphere created by] the tam-tam, quarrels that have existed for generations amongst various families have been observed to be reconciled. These are manifestations of what I would call banal music: music heard in the villages, in the evening by moonlight, at the occasion of various festivities, and during the reception of officials. The songs executed here contain hyperbolic praises of the individual who organized the tam-tam accompanied by clear allusions to his generosity. Each indigenous chant of this category can be schematized as follows: a compliment followed by a request for donations.

In a second category we place music composed for certain circumstances: marriage, death, circumcision, war, fetishist cult – such music is by far the most interesting for the ethnographer. But for the reasons given above, these forms tend to disappear, and in some years any attempts to study them will face enormous difficulty.

Festivities are events where the people dance and repeat the refrains as a chorus. But in addition, there are veritable, professional musicians, i.e., the griots, who play an important role in this primitive civilization. They form special castes – themselves being hierarchized – and are reminiscent of our troubadours of the Middle Ages. They sing praises of those who pay for such words, and are at the service of the chiefs whom they flatter with their obsequious language and most exaggerated compliments. Of course, such praises are always accepted by the chiefs with pleasure – so great is the Negroes' naïve vanity. I do not have to point out that ethnographers have long studied these castes of griots. They are called *diéli* in Upper Guinea, which literally signifies griot in Malinke, but is not a *diamou* [family name]. Generally, according to Arcin (1907), *diamous*, which can comprise griot members, are as follows in this region:

- Gueïta or Koïta.
- Dongounoro; a branch of the preceding ones, would rather be sorcerers;
- Kouyate. According to P. Humblot (1918) legend has it that this name has been given to a *bala* musician of great ability who is said to have touched the instrument of Soumahourou, King of Sosso, against his ban and who was pardoned and recompensed because of his talent;
- Dioubaghate;
- Konde, but partially;
- Kourouma or Doumbouya;
- Fina, inferior caste, not even worthy of being griot. Fina is a caste name but not a *diamou*;
- N'gaoulo, even more inferior, representing the lowest degree of social hierarchy; this again is a caste name and not a *diamou*.

The griots generally are rather ill-reputed by their fellow citizens; they are blamed for their baseness, their toadyism. I could not compare this mentality better than to the contempt held for the comedians of yore.

Sometimes the griots form associations, veritable artistic troupes of singers, musicians, and dancers. At the top they have a head who enjoys real authority.

According to Arcin, "the primitive tribes do not seem to know griots. It is like that among the Baga and the Mendeyné. But they can be found everywhere among the Yoloff [Wolof] and the Foula [Fula] mixed-bloods". They do not seem to exist in Mozambique; no study mentions them and all the information I have received concurs with this point of view: the musicians are all amateurs; fellow citizens elect the soloists or major dancers.

In order to obtain an exact idea of the music of these primitives, one must beware of judging it by our European mentality: the harmony, the way of accompanying, and the chords with which we are familiar do not exist. Music notation is not known, nor is ordinary script. In Europe all instruments are constructed corresponding to the tempered scale, which permits them to join and form a symphonic orchestra; thereabouts, each has its own scale and special repertoire, which it alone is capable of executing. The music of the ensemble is therefore inevitably impossible apart from very popular tunes, which are played and sung with all resources at one's disposal, and with disagreeable dissonances, of course.

In contrast, the instruments of one sort usually produce the same notes: while being built they are tuned one according to the other, and the musician makes an instrument for his pupil which resembles his own.

The indigenous orchestra thus consists only of instruments of a single type – without counting the voices which mix in – to which a set of drums of various kinds is added. The latter seems to fulfill two clearly distinct roles: either it accompanies the instruments or the voices and assumes, so to speak, its part in the piece, like in European music – which is especially the case with popular and well-known tunes – or, in contrast, it is completely independent. It marks the rhythm that the dancers follow. But during the dance various chants or pieces are performed that have nothing in common with what the drums are playing. This not only exists in West Africa but in Mozambique as well. I have attended several indigenous festivities (*batuque*) staged by indigenes of a tribe called Landim, which clearly demonstrated this dissociation of the chants and the drum rhythm marking the [dance] steps.

With each musician or group of musicians performing their special repertoire, a cacophony easily understood ensues when a large number of them are assembled on the occasion of a grand ceremony. This somewhat brings to mind our European fairs, where each stall plays at its own expense; the shouts and noise of the crowd even more augment this illusion.

We are going to investigate the sound material first: vocal and instrumental; afterwards we will talk about various customs related to the music, and finally about various associations of musicians.

I. Sound material utilized by the indigenes

Voice. – The indigenes' voice is difficult to classify, especially that of the men. Particularly for men the aphorism "yelling is not singing" needs to be applied. They indeed scream themselves hoarse by yelling as loud as they can, especially the professionals. Furthermore they quickly acquire a raspy and unpleasant timbre. If they are not yet tired, the women emit some fitting notes from the middle register of the soprano. The children are easier to observe: their voices have the same range as that of European children. This is the effect that the phonographic audition likewise produces:

The voices shout rather than sing. The intervals are not constant, as one can become aware of listening to numerous repetitions of the same motif, and they seem to be indifferent in many cases. Moreover, the notations of the chants are often tricky and sometimes impossible. However, under the reserve of accuracy, I am convinced that the chants or instrumental melodies employ intervals to which we are accustomed, and none is smaller than a semitone [B.d'H.].

(cf. ex. 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, voices of adults; 23, voices of children).

Bala. – The Europeans inappropriately call this instrument *balafon*. *Fô* or *fon* depending on the dialect means to speak, to make an object which has a voice speak, i.e. to play something. *Bala fon* thus means to play the *bala*.

The *bala* is well known in the tropical countries and is often found in ethnographic studies. Essentially it is a xylophone. It bears various names depending on the country: *marimba* (Equatorial Africa), *timbila* (Mozambique), etc. According to C. Sachs (1915), the prototype of the xylophone occurred on the Sunda Islands and the peninsula of Malacca. The simplest one is the *konkon*. It essentially consists of four convex wooden parts cut at the ends. Two musicians hold these ends between their legs and beat. The author quotes various varieties, especially the Javanese *tjalun* [*calung*]: eleven to fourteen wooden keys are placed one below the other and kept by lines; the whole somewhat resembles a rope ladder. One end is attached to a stand; the other is kept by the musician's knee (Montandon, 1919).

In Africa the xylophone is brought to more perfection. Here are the types known to me:

In the case of a first type of which I have only seen a photograph that was taken in the French Congo, the keys are arranged obliquely: the musician is seated on the floor in front of the keys as in front of a console. There are ten keys, which are poorly regulated and do not seem to have a resonator. The details of the frame can hardly be perceived. The musician holds two mallets with ball-shaped heads in each hand. In all other types I have observed, there is only one mallet for each hand.

In the case of the other models, the keys are horizontal. Sometimes they rest on two bamboo logs forming a resonator. R. Avelot (1905) listed this type of xylophone among the Pahouin [Fang]. It has, says the author, seven notes that would produce the C major scale. The mallets, which are used to strike the keys, are simple. In a more advanced stage one observes the form of use current in West Africa.



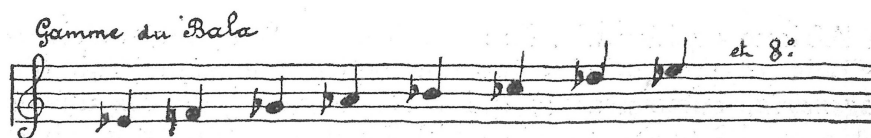
Fig. 1. Construction of a *bala*, tuning of the instrument.

The keys rest on a wooden rack and each has a small calabash (fruit of *Lagenaria*, cucurbit family) that serves as resonator. This calabash is artificially pierced with a hole, which is then closed by a membrane; the membrane is nothing more than the wall of a spider's nest. Thus, each key has its resonator here while for the preceding type only two bamboo logs exist for the whole keyboard. The two mallets used to strike the wooden keys have a caoutchouc ball at their ends made by coagulating the latex of lianes (*Landolphia*, Apocynaceae). A story whose authenticity I can in no way guarantee says that while examining these mallets a researcher discovered the caoutchouc of Guinea, which later became a source of wealth for this colony. In order to build a *bala* one takes another as a model, and begins by procuring the wood necessary to make the keys. I have seen M'Gouin (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*, Leguminosae papilionaceae) being used. Keys are cut from them with the dimensions of the model instrument; afterwards they are left to dry as much as possible over a charcoal hearth. This operation lasts two weeks. During this time the rack and the calabashes are prepared. When the keys are well dried they are put onto the rack without fixing them and the *bala* is tuned. For this purpose the builder places himself between the two instruments: the model and that which he is constructing (fig. 1). He holds a mallet in each hand and gently strikes the one and the other alternately. With hatchet strokes he thins the key until it sounds in unison with that of the model instrument. If in doubt he aids himself by simultaneously testing the note in unison and an octave above on the model instrument. He never uses the chord of the fifth. During this operation he proves an experienced ear and arrives at accuracy equivalent to that of a European musician. However, it is

impossible for him to tune several notes if he only knows one of them. He can only grasp the unison and the octave.

When tuning is finished, one fixes the keys firmly on the rack with lines. The instrument is now ready for use. It can be disassembled for traveling. A cord allows for carrying of the instruments like a shoulder bag or in front of oneself if playing standing up. Generally the instrument is placed on the floor and the musician sits behind it.

The *bala* produces the following scale (ex. 1):



This is a scale with just intonation on A transposed to E^b , be it a Hypodorian or Aeolian mode. Such tuning exists in all *balas* I had the chance to investigate except for one which produced our chromatic scale. But the musician eventually admitted that Catholic missionaries had educated him and that he had tuned his instrument according to their harmonium; though this did not keep him from playing together with other *balas* tuned to the Hypodorian scale.

In general, the *bala* produces two octaves equaling fifteen notes. With the right hand the musician strikes the high notes, with the left the low ones; in the indigenous language one calls them mother notes (low notes) and daughter notes (high notes).³ It should be mentioned that the two hands do not have a well-defined area, and in the characteristic virtuosity typical for the instrument, they overlap and cross each other (cf. ex. 6, 9, 22, 24).

A child learns to play under the guidance of his father who holds the child's hands. A child often uses a *bala* with ten or twelve notes and only approaches an instrument with fifteen notes after preliminary exercises.

We have said that this instrument was common in all tropical Africa, and I recently had the opportunity to see but not hear such instruments in Angola. Here the instrument, which is called *marimba*, differs from that of the Sudan because of the curved frame. This *marimba* has the shape of a bow. The two ends are staked and sometimes a liana representing the bow string maintains the rack. The extreme notes are thus easier for the hand to reach since the instrument is larger than that of the Sudan. It has nineteen keys, implying fairly large movements of the arms that would impair the virtuosity if the keyboard were horizontal. This may be the reason for adoption of the curved form. The calabashes forming the resonators are longer than those of the *bala*.

In Mozambique the instrument is called *timbila*. This word is actually plural. According to H.-A. Junod (1897), it is mainly common among the Ba-Tchopi [Chopi], a people on the coast north of the estuary of the Limpopo. Here the in-

³ Cf. with this designation the low masculine and the high feminine flute of the Ancient Greeks (Herodot, Clio, XVII).

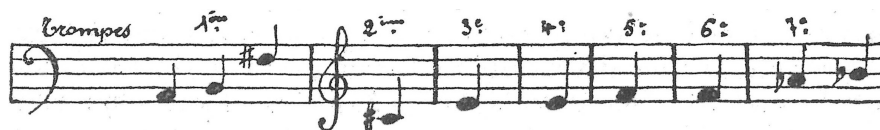
strument only has ten keys. The rack is horizontal like that of the *bala*. The resonators are not made of calabashes but of fruits with ligneous bark of the *massala* (*Strychnos*, Loganiaceae) tree, though it should be noted that both materials amount to the same thing. Each of these fruits is pierced by two openings closed not by the wall of a spider's nest but by the membrane of a bat's wing. Curiously, here again we find exactly the same notes as on the Sudanese *bala*; the five upper scale degrees are missing, leaving only an octave and two notes.

Finally, among the indigenes of Mozambique employed in the gold mines of Johannesburg, I had the chance to listen to a veritable xylophone orchestra consisting of about thirty musicians. There are three sorts of instruments: high, middle, and low. The latter have only five notes, located in the low octave of the instruments in the middle register. The various objects forming the resonators are much larger, and the rack is much more elevated, reaching to the level of the musician's belt. He plays standing up. The musicians are arranged in three rows, with the low instruments in the back as in a European orchestra. I have even seen a photograph showing a bandmaster with a baton in hand conducting his musicians, but I believe that there is a European influence here. Incidentally, these musicians are remarkably disciplined; they attack notes forthrightly and observe nuances not expected to be found among the indigenes. I would not be surprised to learn that this result has been obtained by laborious repetitions under the direction of a European. Be it as it may, all these xylophones are still tuned to the same mode and produce the same notes as the Sudanese *balas*.

When studying the construction of the xylophone we said that one always tunes according to a model, and that the father or master makes an instrument for his son or student. On the other hand, it is known that the Black man considers his musical instruments as indispensable parts of his baggage, and that he carries them with him everywhere. So, it is likely that owners must have taken the xylophone along in this way on their complex migrations. On arriving in a new country the musicians built, without doubt, new instruments with local resources while tuning them according to those they had brought with them. In this way one can explain the uniformity of the scale of the Sudanese *bala* and the *timbila* of Mozambique. What remains is to complete these studies by observing xylophones of other countries and especially investigating their origin.⁴

Horn. - The horn is equally common all over tropical Africa. One finds numerous accounts of it in ethnographic treatises. Such horns are either made of animal horn, elephant tusk or wood. In Upper Guinea wooden horns are most common (fig. 2). The instrument is called *boudou* in Malinke. It has a lateral embouchure and usually only produces one note. The indigenous orchestra consists of several musicians: the one I observed counted seven people whose horns produced the following notes, respectively (ex. 2):

⁴ For these diverse investigations, one will expediently resort to a European instrument with fixed pitches. The piano is difficult to ship and keeps tuning poorly in the tropics. I rather recommend a small removable harmonium, which can be carried on top of the head of a man and is easily found on the market.



As one can see the low horn could theoretically produce three notes. Actually, the musician plays a kind of *glissando* in trying to intone the A, and eventually arrives more or less accurately at the B (in just intonation). As far as the F[#] is concerned, he obtains it with difficulty and uses it rarely. I regret having to add that the bandmaster, who incontestably is the worst performer of the company, plays the low horn.

The second horn plays a fairly correct C[#]; the third and the fourth, being of the same size, play the E in unison correctly. The fifth and the sixth, likewise of the same size, play a correct F. The seventh, the smallest, has a hole at its end. When closing or plugging this hole with the finger, the A^b or B^b is obtained.



Fig. 2. Horn players.

Here is how this is executed: The instrument played by the bandmaster allows for some notes to be heard. The musicians recognize the piece and the high horn joins in, then the others come in each playing their own note. Thus, they arrive at performing pieces where each note is played by a different musician. But the E is played by two horns (third and fourth), which always perform together; this is also

the case with the *F* (fifth and sixth). Hence, these notes dominate the melody in the middle of a general charivari in which the notes of the high horn permeate.

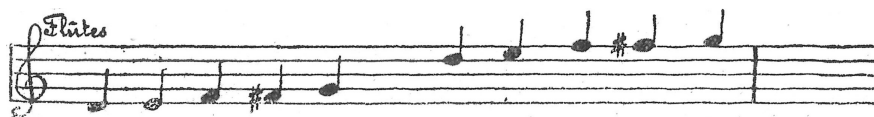
They play standing up lined up in a row or rotating. In the former case the drums are placed at the far right, then comes the chief playing the low horn, then the high horn of the musician playing the *C*[#], then those playing the *F*, and, finally, those which produce the *E* on the left. Of course, they always have to be complete in order to play; this is why they have students in their village capable of replacing them if needed. The pieces can only be of slow character. The indigenes seem to recognize them. In any case, the women, who sing while their husbands are playing, distinguish the pieces, as I assured myself of by interrogating them separately. By all means, it is impossible to comprehend the relationship between what they sing and what the horns play. This grotesque fanfare realizes the most horrible cacophony imaginable. Admittedly, the chief claims to recognize the slightest shortcomings of the performance.

The sound of these horns resembles quite accurately that of our brass. The bass brings to mind the tuba and the trombone, the others our various types of saxhorns.

The colonists unfoundedly call these musicians "horns of Samory". They existed long before the expeditions of Samory and those employed by the warrior Samory himself were much larger and heard from a much larger distance. The musicians I observed can be found primarily in the Wassoulou province. They received their artistic education at the conservatory, if I may say so, of Bougouni where they stayed for three months. When they returned to their country and wanted to give their first concert, they realized with dismay that they had completely forgotten the lessons of their master and were unable to elicit the least tone from their instruments. The province chief, without getting excited any further, sent them back to Bougouni, where they again learned what they had forgotten. This time, however, on their return trip they made sure to play the entire way back and thus were able to perform a brilliant audition upon arrival.

The repertoire of the horns does not offer anything of interest to an ethnographer: tunes for chiefs, marriages, and circumcisions form more or less their whole inventory, and it is impossible at present to conclude anything further from it.

Flute. - We have said that in Upper Guinea, as in all of the Sudan, professional musicians, singers, and dancers belong to special castes, i.e. the griots. The flutists, however, generally claim not to be griots. The flute, therefore, would rather be the privilege of amateurs. Effectively, it does not offer the uniformity of type as the other instruments. I have seen some with two and with three holes, and I possess one with four holes, which produces the following notes (ex. 3):



Most of the time, the musician involuntarily transposes by an octave. I have never seen anything but transverse flutes: the embouchure sometimes is a simple hole, and sometimes it is expanded and forms a kind of funnel on which the musician places his lips. The notes are reminiscent of those of a European flute played by a mediocre performer (cf. ex. 7, 8, 14, 15).



Fig. 3. Flutists from the district of Kissidougou with drums.

In general, there are two or three flutists with or without drums. They always play in unison unless one of them transposes by an octave. The chief intones the tune and the others join in as soon as they recognize it. I observed several of these ensembles, all of which differed in their ability, by the way. One such ensemble attached to the province chief of the district of Kankan could only play seven tunes. It seems that to arrive at this result took one and a half years of work under the direction of an able master who possessed a very rich repertoire, but had given up on teaching it completely to his indocile students. To learn a piece, it is played *pianissimo* but without decreasing the tempo, piecemeal, until it is known by heart.

Another ensemble from the neighboring district of Kissidougou is much more competent. Its two members likewise say that they are not griots (fig. 3). They may be joined by three drums but, incidentally, may also perform without them (probably when the expected fee is not sufficient). Originally, this ensemble played without drums and was instructed by a common master, who passed away about thirty years ago. An indigenous chief then adopted the ensemble and ordered them to add drums. After six months of practicing under the direction of the chief flutist,

they were able to perform together. However, even now they have a different repertoire depending on whether they perform in public with or without drums.

What is inappropriately called “hunters’ flute” is a simple whistle destined for finding each other in the forest. Often it is a simple tube stopped at one end. It is blown like a key; certain whistles of the hunters produce two notes, [but] I have never seen any of such flutes.

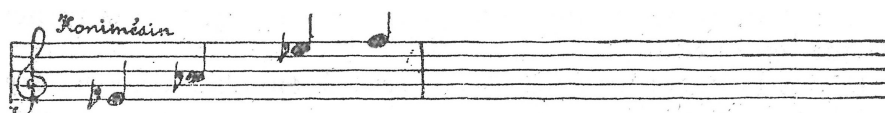
The string instruments can be ranged in three categories:

The type *konimesin* [*ngoni micin*], of small size, with plucked strings. By stopping [lit. “doigté”] it is possible to shorten the strings more or less and thus render several notes. These are, therefore, instruments from the family of our guitars and mandolins.

The type *soron*, of large size. Here, the middle part of the plucked string produces only one note. On the whole, this is a primitive harp.

The type *soko*, where a bow sets the string in vibration. Consequently, this is an instrument of the violin family.

Konimesin. – This instrument has diverse forms reminiscent more or less of those of our mandolins. The resonator can be hemispherical, formed simply by a small calabash on which a sheep skin is tensioned; sometimes it is made completely of wood and more elongated. It has a neck that is in general long compared to the body. The *konimesin* has four strings: two large and two small. The two large ones are fixed on both ends, as with a European instrument; the two small ones are only as long as the resonator and end where the neck begins. As a result, one cannot press down upon these strings [lit. “toucher par le doigté”] and always plays them unstopped. This instrument does not have tuning pegs, nor, by the way, do other string instruments. Leather rings tightly clasping around the neck replace pegs, and these rings are shifted to tighten the strings more or less. The four open strings produce the following (ex. 4):



The two large strings render the lower notes, while the small strings render the two other notes in the upper octave. Moreover, stopping the strings permits to fill the intervals between the two E^b . All in all, the instrument ranges from E [flat] on the first line to F on the fifth.

To pluck the string the musician puts a leather ring on his index finger. A small panther’s claw has been inserted in this ring, and scrapes the string like the quill of a mandolin (the tremolo of the latter is uncommon). Before playing, the musician carefully checks the tuning of his *konimesin*. Then he performs his piece and, from time to time, strikes two strings at the same time, one with the claw of his ring, the other with the thumb – in this way he obtains two simultaneous sounds.

The sonority is harsh and little agreeable, somewhat resembling that of the guitar but much more feeble.

The instrument carries its percussion within itself in the form of a metal plaque embedded at the end of the neck, pierced by holes fitted with small rings. Shocks applied during the performance make these particles vibrate. As an enhancement the musician often even strikes the resonator with the palm of his hand while wearing the ring.

Dounsoukoni. – This instrument [*donso ngoni*] is equivalent to the preceding one, but is reserved for the griots, who accompany the hunters (*dounsou* = hunter). We will return to the topic of the hunt later. I have not been able to note the tuning of the *dounsoukoni*.

Soron. – This instrument is about 1.5 meters high and consists of a huge hemispherical calabash to which a long curved neck is attached. Alongside the latter the strings are tensioned at unequal heights. Leather rings tightly clasped around the neck replace the tuning pegs. The strings are allocated to two vertical planes in such a way that when facing the instrument the musician has these two planes within reach of each of his hands (fig. 4). Thus he plucks its strings one or more at the same time with the thumb and middle finger. To a certain extent the position of the hands brings to mind that of our harpists. The notes resemble those of the guitar.

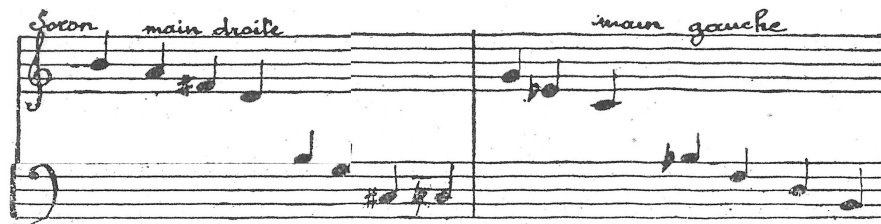


Fig. 4. *Soron* players with their child dancers.

While playing he keeps the *soron* in place with his little fingers and his crossed feet.

The neck is decorated with small metal ornaments, which produce a disagreeable chinking when the instrument is set in motion.

There are eight strings to the right and seven to the left; the following are the notes that they produce (ex. 5):



Musicians claim that it takes ten years of apprenticeship to be able to acceptably play the *soron*.

Bolon. – This is an instrument equivalent to the *soron*. I was not able to observe it for a long time; the number of strings seems to be smaller than in the case of the *soron*.



Fig. 5. *Soko* player.

There are numerous other instruments with plucked strings built according to the same principle; their enumeration would be too long here. Usually they are less perfect and may be played by amateurs, not griots. Of course, there is no absolute rule in this respect.

Soko. – This is a monochord violin with a bow (fig. 5). The musician can play five to six notes. This instrument can often be seen among the former captives of the Fulas. The resonator is again formed by a half-calabash. A leather ring that acts as tuning peg and tightly clasps around the neck holds the string; the bow is an arc. None of the artifices of European violinists are employed. The sound is rather low and somewhat resembles that of a badly played viola. The bow stroke is comparatively correct and rather frank. The musician plays the note by drawing [of the bow] and always legato (cf. ex. 10).

Drums. – Percussion instruments are numerous and often improvised; the musician strikes any sound device within his reach with a stick. When the indigenes sing in chorus they usually clap their hands. It is interesting to observe that when listening to a European tune with a clearly marked rhythm – for example, when playing a double step for them on the piano, which indicates the measure heavily – they strike a rhythmic displacement. This stems from their preference for syncopation on the second beat and not on the first as we would.

It is impossible to mention all percussion instruments here. One strikes membranes tensioned on a frame, be it with the palm of the hand, or be it with a single mallet as with our Provençal tambourine. A simple mortar for rice pounding can serve this purpose. It suffices to cover its opening with a tanned skin, which is kept in place with a binding, and to beat it. This is the *tadoumou*, struck with a mallet, or the *bara*, struck with the hands, and likewise the *giembe* [*jembe*].

The *tamba* is somewhat more complicated: two small mortars whose bases have been removed are attached to each other at their lower ends. The instrument has the shape of an hourglass and two tensioned skins corresponding to the openings of the two mortars. One strikes indiscriminately on one or the other.

Many other percussion instruments exist beyond these tambourines: pits shaken in a sort of net with a calabash bring to mind the rattling of castanets; pieces of metal striking against each other make the noise of jingles. We have said that various instruments, particularly those with strings, are equipped with comparable accessories, which sound when the instruments are played.

Let us also mention the *tabala*, which has the shape and the dimensions of our timpani. It is carried by two men who hold it with one hand while striking with a kind of mallet with the other. This is an instrument not for music but rather of calling, like the bells of our churches. It is located near the village chief and serves the purpose of allowing him to give a variety of signals to his villagers.

If the percussion instruments are not very interesting from a purely musical point of view, they are nonetheless very important for ethnography. All magical and fetishist ceremonies are accompanied by percussion instruments. They are responsible for controlling the dancers' steps and probably have a very ancient origin; their rhythm would be among the most curious to examine more closely.

Finally one must note the absence of the musical bow, which, incidentally, is not mentioned for this region in the monograph by H. Balfour (1899). Encountered in equatorial and south Africa, the *sanza*, i.e., a slat on which vibrating metal tongues are fastened, is also not found.

II. Ceremonies accompanied by music. Indigenous musical repertoire

Banal music. – Under this rubric I subsume the repertoire provided the most by all indigenous musicians. These are, as stated above, banal praise formulae about the one who pays, ending with a request for a donation. One praises the qualities of a person, the beauty of his clothes, the adroitness with which he mounts a horse, the elegance of his steed (usually a poor crock affected by *trypanosomiasis* or *epizootic lymphangitis*), etc.

Often, the song is sung by the griot, the professional musician, or played by him on an instrument and reprised by the crowd. Some have a well-characterized refrain with verses. Here is an example of a song with refrain.

The Syrian merchant Michel without a doubt paid the griot Boun Diallo Saran to praise his merchandise, with the latter having composed the following song to be sung by a soloist and the chorus:

Solo sung by Boun Diallo Saran: "Tell Michel that Boun Diallo Saran has announced that he has many loincloths".

Refrain of the chorus: "It is Boun Diallo Saran who said so".

Solo: "Tell ... many handkerchiefs".

Refrain: *Ibid.*

Solo: "Tell ... many necklaces".

Refrain: *Ibid.*

Thus, one can multiply the verses.

Most of the time, without being equally characteristic, the songs are a long enumeration of qualities following an equal formula, comparable to verses. These songs are partly improvised, i.e., the griot utilizes formulas that are more or less known; he changes the name of the person and slightly modifies his text. On the whole, the same song serves numerous purposes.

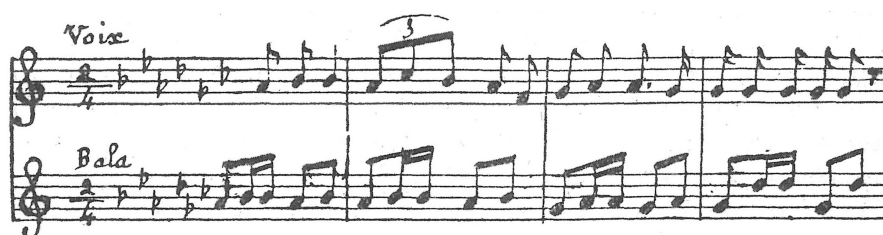
Here are some of these chants notated by the musicologist Mrs. d'Harcourt after the phonographic recording, along with her remarks.⁵

⁵ "In all of the following examples where a *bala* can be heard, be it solo or as accompaniment, I have written the notation with the six flats which the scale of these instruments comprises (see ex. 1), thus granting the melodies their absolute pitch which the phonograph does not always render. One knows that the rotation speed of the recording device, on which the pitch of the notes depends, can actually be different from that of the reproducing device. In our case the tunes have been recorded and reproduced

Chant in honor of a rich indigenous grocer of Kankan. – One felicitates him for being generous, having beautiful clothes, having been able to buy three wives, etc.

This song consists of two comparable verses in a minor tonality; the *bala* accompaniment, which can be heard quite well, produces a rather disharmonic effect. We explain the reason for this in the following way: the singer and the instrumentalist do not seem to preoccupy themselves with the necessities that the tuning of the *bala* notated above would impose. They have agreed, we assume, to sing in G^b ; but the singer is in G^b minor, consequently executing a minor third while the instrumentalist can only produce a major third. In other words, the *bala* strikes a B^b while the singer renders a B^{bb} , which is rather cruel for the ear. [B.d'H.]

Chant in honor of Europeans of Kankan. – This is the famous chant: “Kakendé Kankan toubabou, kakendé tindikan toubabou” which is tooted to the ears of all Europeans; a banal welcome greeting which literally means: “Have a good time, White person of Kankan; have a good time, White person of the hill” (residing on the hill on which the administrative post is built). I have noted this here to demonstrate the way the *bala* accompanies the chant. One sees that there is no harmony; the instrument strives to follow the melody, but it can only produce dry and short tones. It replaces the sustained tones of the voices by repeated notes (ex. 6).



Chant in honor of a son of Samory, the famous Sudanese warrior against whom our troupes fought for so long. – Flute solo.

Rendered by the phonograph in A^b (absolute pitch). Owing to certain melodic figures this solo resembles another tune of the same instrument, a warrior tune notated below (ex. 14). The musician shifts several times to the lower octave either due to inexperience or imperfection of his flute [B.d'H.].

Chant in honor of an indigenous chief. – Executed by the flutists of Kissidougou, famous for their talent, about whom I have talked above (ex. 7).

This chant is the most musical of the series of cylinders I examined. It is a sort of recitative in a slow and noble rhythm with a single theme that is repeated

with two different devices. Thus, the phonographic audition of example no. 21 would have had to be notated in absolute pitch with [t]hree sharps” [B.d'H.]. Likewise, example no. 13 with a single flat; example no. 12 with four flats; and examples nos. 16, 22, and 24 without accidentals in the key signature. We have transcribed the other melodies according to the absolute pitch rendered by the reproducing phonograph.

slightly varied. One may say that it seems to be clearly based on a "classic" pentatonic scale, i.e., the one found among primitive peoples. Only the E^b in the grace notes would situate it in G minor, but these embellishments, maybe added by the instrumentalist or as a modern import, do not change the modal character. This is the only chant in the series under scrutiny that underscores the character of the pentatonic scale so precisely; nevertheless, I believe to have found dispositions of intervals reminding us of it in several other notations, without inferring anything, of course [B.d'H.].



This tune is played in unison by the two flutists. In consideration of their entire repertoire, it is the one most appreciated by European ears.

Chant in honor of another indigenous chief. – Played by the same flutists (ex. 8).

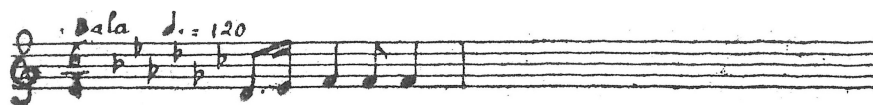


From the abundance of harmonic tones that disturb the recording, I could only reliably notate the brief phrase above in G minor [B.d'H.].

Other tunes played by the same instrumentalists are impossible to notate. As stated, the latter transpose by an octave involuntarily; and in addition, the interval is thereby less precise. These tunes, which are not notated, seem to approximate in their intervals, or character, to the preceding pieces. Most likely they are played in G minor as well.

Tune in honor of an indigenous chief (province of Firia, district of Faranah). – This tune is interesting from a musical point of view because it provides an idea of the indigenous orchestra. It is executed on six *balas*, one of which is played by the chief soloist. The latter starts the piece and the others join in as soon as they recognize it. The accompanying *balas* repeat the theme indefinitely while the chief adds variations.

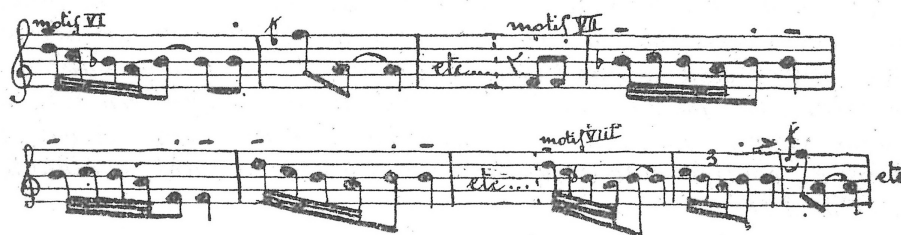
In the phonographic audition this cylinder is remarkable and I regret not being able to transcribe it. The extreme speed of the *balas* and the confusion stemming from their ensemble renders a notation practically impossible. At the very least I would like to try describing my impression when listening to it. Several *balas* together play the same tune or rather the same rhythm, in general in 6/8, so that the same rhythmic figure is reproduced obstinately. Thus, the piece contains some 30 consecutive measures resembling the following [B.d'H.] (ex. 9):



Alongside these *balas*, the *bala* of the virtuoso suddenly starts completely independently, rhythmically and melodically (although tuned to the same intervals) superposing the others while executing diatonic traits of very rapid scales and repeated notes which are beaten alternately with two mallets on the same key. At times the virtuoso seems to be carried away by a veritable possession going from high to low and back in a bewildering rapidity and with an imagination not without character. From this combination, the following results: a rhythmic accompaniment focusing on three or four notes of the *balas* combined in the orchestra; and a very fast melody, i.e., a stream of notes by the virtuoso which stays on top without mixing with the accompaniment; [thus the result is] a very curious ensemble, which unfortunately is practically impossible to notate. The rhythmical offsetting observed here is simply produced by the displacement of accents, however the durations stay the same [B.d'H.].

Tune in honor of a Foulah chief. - Played on the *soko*, a bowed instrument, by a former Foulah captive (ex. 10).





Extremely monotonous, it is composed of quite imprecise intervals. It consists of embellishing turns around the middle B^b (absolute pitch of the reproducing phonograph) to which one comes back constantly after having touched other notes above or below. The most characteristic of them is the E^{\sharp} in melodic intervals of a raised fourth with the B^b . But since this raised fourth is a little bit wrong, i.e., smaller than an augmented fourth, one asks oneself whether the lower E observed in motifs I and III rather is somewhat lower F . This question comes from the other motifs all being based on that note, the F^{\sharp} . In the incomplete notation shown above, we tried to isolate the main motifs that can be clearly heard [B.d'H.].

Now here are several other types of chants:

Circumcision. – On the occasion of boys' or girls' circumcision, large celebrations take place preceded by preparation of the act. I omit everything that belongs to the realm of pure ethnography in order to deal only with the music. The lyrics of the chants presented on this occasion have the aim of encouraging the children to courageously endure the operation: "You have entered as children, you will leave as men". Before the operation the children sing: "A child not only serves his mother, it also helps the neighbors". This is a request for subsidies from the neighbors who shall contribute their share to the costs of the celebration. The parents sing: "I have slept, but I stood up for this occasion". The brothers and sisters: "My brother (or my sister) has been operated, I have felt his/her pain as if I had been operated myself". In a general way one feels sorry for the child being operated on, but still rejoices about the event. One sings the following to the mother: "Your son is on the termite hill. That is fortunate because he may have died in his younger days". It is a termite hill (termites' nest) that serves as an operating table, and the last part of the phrase alludes to the high mortality among young children.

Finally, a satirical couplet for the operators: "The break of dawn, happy for the blood-thirsty tormentors, unhappy for the children".

Now here is a chant that seems to have some connection to circumcision. It is the chant of the Damadian or the *siminka*. The first of these terms expresses the idea of a long limit; the second may allude to the interruption of libations that occur regularly during these celebrations. It is a chant in honor of young people. Maybe it is about somebody – who due to various reasons was not able to have the operation at the usual age – being belatedly circumcised (ex. 11).



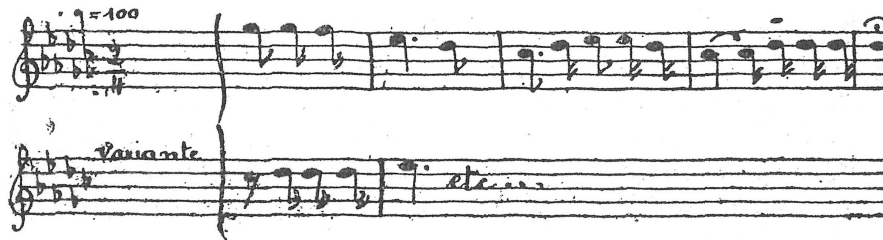
This very rhythmic chant is clearly audible on the phonograph. Curiously it is tremendously reminiscent of certain European – we could even say Breton – folk tunes. At some points it quite directly possesses the melodic character of the pentatonic scale. It should be noted that it consists of only six [scale] degrees.

The *bala* accentuates this melody with regular quarter-note strokes that fall on every beat and produce the same repeated note, i.e., the tonic G^b , this time together with the chant [B.d'H.].

Marriage. – Marriage is always accompanied by celebrations and music, though importance varies with the couple's wealth. Here are some of the songs for this occasion. When the bride joins her husband: "It is agreeable to see a beautiful woman walk by on this road to join her husband. Her husband is helpful". Naturally, this is an indirect request for a donation. When the ceremony has ended and the marriage consummated – in case the bride had still been a virgin – the bride

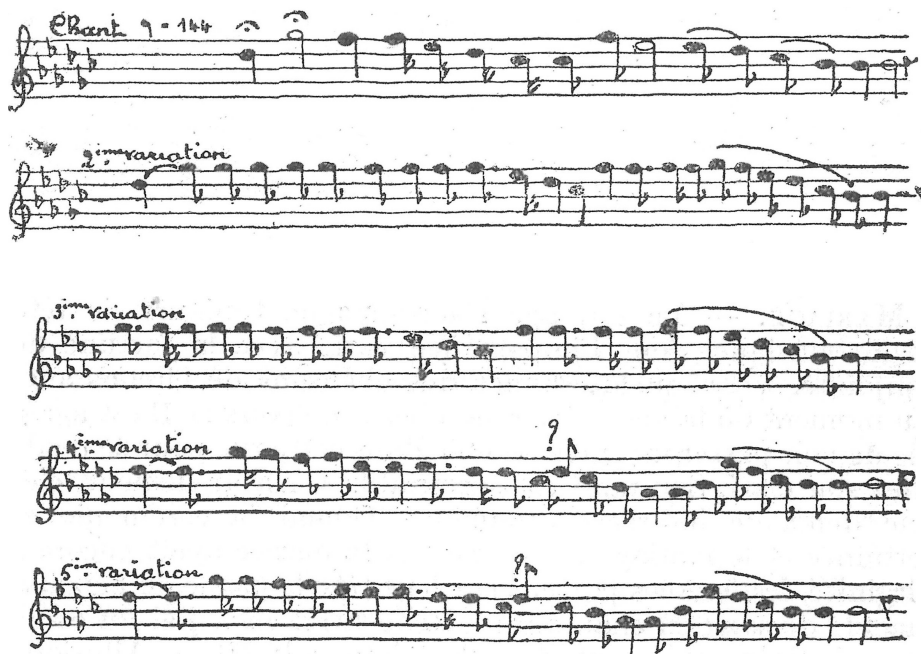
carries her bloodstained loincloth on her head singing: "Meet me, I have a *canari* (indigenous clay jug) full of honey on my head". This is an allusion to her precious burden. In the opposite case women go away uttering a satirical song: "I thought I had to do with an unripe *karité* nut, but it was ripe already". One knows that *karité* [Shea] butter made from the fruit of the *Butyrospermum Parkii* [Vitellaria paradoxa] is very common among indigenes in their cooking.

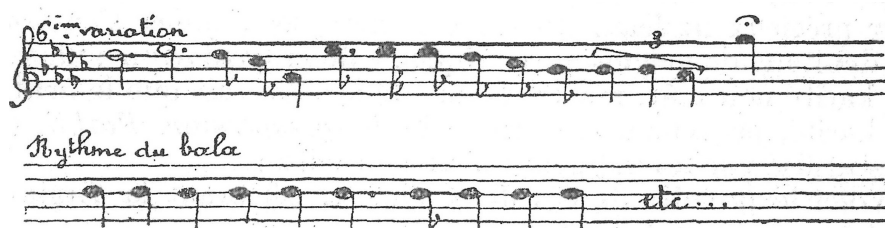
Here is the first of these two chants celebrating the bride's virginity (ex. 12):



This is a very short phrase repeated many times. [B.d'H.]

Death and burial. – The pomp of the ceremonies depends on the wealth of the deceased. On the occasion of a death, one sings the following: "In your life you have done everything you could. Now you are not going to do anything more". The young girls sing the following: "My grandfather has fallen [is dead]. Soon one will no longer remember him". Here is the translation of the song notated below: "The misery of death will not prevent war. Misfortune, if the deceased has no son; luck, if there is somebody who can continue his exploits". Originally this song was addressed to warriors, but now it is sung for any deceased (ex. 13).





These variations are quite close to each other. The song's intervals are only approximately correct, thus I express considerable reservations regarding the rigor of their notation. Nevertheless, I hope to have thereby given a sufficiently exact idea. The *bala*, of which one hears the rhythm and only very little of the notes, accentuates the singing with strokes of quarter notes, now and then interjected by rare eighths notes [B.d'H.].

War. – During the battle the musician spurs the courage of the combatants while protecting himself as much as possible from being hit. Then he chants praises of the vanquisher, whoever he may be: "One does not stay immobile on the battleground. One has to fight and move forward against the enemy". Furthermore: "Chase them, advance on them, and cut off their head". For the vanquisher: "Regality is yours".

The following is a flute tune played to encourage the combatants (ex. 14):



This melody is strongly connected to another played by the same musician in honor of a son of Samory. We have cited it above [ex. 6]. It was easily notated due to the clarity of its rhythm and the exactness of its intervals [B.d'H.].

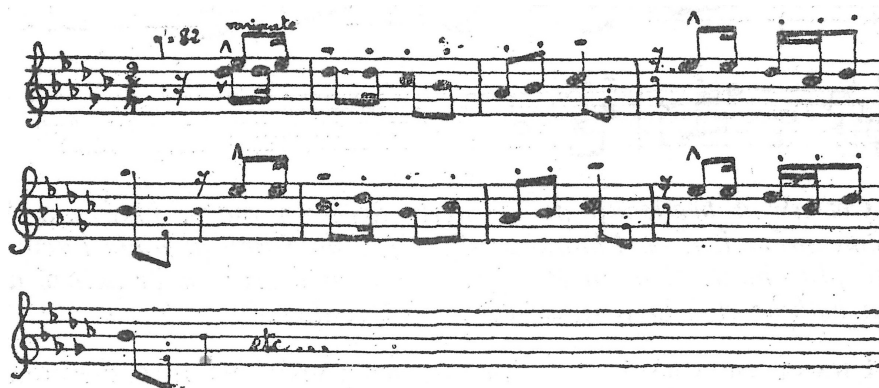
Chant of mercy. - Sometimes the musicians intervene to plead mercy for a man condemned to various punishments or a woman beaten by her husband. One sings: "You are a great chief but let this poor man (or this poor woman) be". Here is a flute melody played with this intention (ex. 15):



We were only able to notate one distinctly audible phrase in G minor. Harmonic tones involuntarily produced by the instrumentalist muddle the recording throughout the piece [B.d'H.].

Agricultural labor. - During the period of agricultural work, certain chants are performed. These chants are generally used to encourage the men and women to work hard in the field they are cultivating or harvesting. The Black loves working with music (see below the association of *kourcikoronis*) and this is not specific to field work. I have not been able to properly collect a single song from this category. Among the fetishist tribes, a plea is addressed to the spirit of the field explaining to him that the only desire is to cultivate the land without damaging it. The spirit is asked to please support this operation.

If winter comes late and the crops might be impaired by too extensive drought, the divinity or spirit is asked to make it rain: "God is almighty, he can make it rain if he wants to". Or: "God, you who has put us on a land where it does not rain, tell us where to go to find water". This latter song is notated here (ex. 16).



This very rhythmic melody with incisive syncopation can be compared to Negro music in the United States. The intervals can be clearly perceived on the phonograph. The small notes in the third, fourth, fifth, seventh, eighth, and tenth measure are much feebler. It seems the instrumentalist considers them discreet accompanying notes. The theme is repeated numerous times [B.d'H.].

In many primitive countries there are ceremonies of a magical character to ask for rain. Here is the ceremony that exists in Upper Guinea:

The inhabitants go to the nearby river to fill calabashes with water, and they then carry them back on their heads while singing a tune. In this tune the divinity or fetish (the lyrics are rather obscure) is asked why it has not rained this year, and pleas are made to end the situation. The people then return to their homes, and the women take off all their clothes and continue to sing while dancing. Looking for water in order to attract water from the sky probably corresponds to the great law of primitive magic: like attracts like.

Hunting. – Here we deal with more interesting types of songs. Almost all hunters are fetishists. They form relatively closed guilds and among these guilds most local customs are found. The hunters wear a special costume. In front of their huts are trophies consisting of the skulls or horns of their victims. They boast of being sorcerers. If they have wounded a dangerous animal they are able to transform themselves to prevent the animal from recognizing them. They know the name of the elephant they intend on hunting, which is indispensable to mastering such a creature. Each hunter has his griot. Sometimes, as an economic measure, a griot may serve several hunters to whom he sings about their great hunting feats. Often he calls them “my husband” which signifies that he is subordinate to them like a wife to a husband. Fortunately, he sometimes knows hunters’ legends. Here is one:

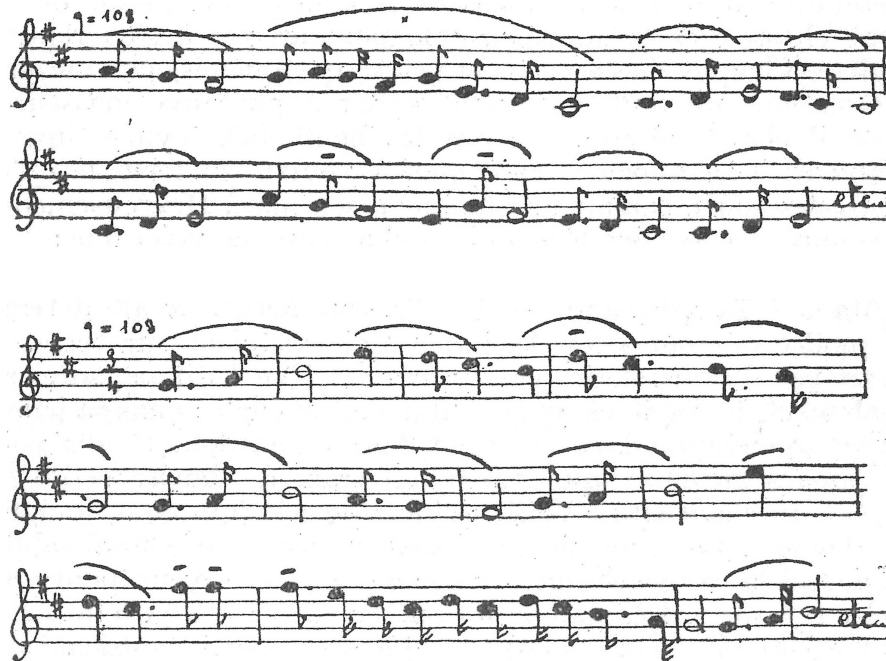
Using sorcery, Mambé Taraolé, ancestor of the present hunter, had hunted half of all antelopes on earth. One antelope, a sorcerer itself, had stolen his eyes, resulting in blindness for Mambé Taraolé. But his younger sister, a sorceress, too, morphed herself into an antelope and met the other antelopes as they danced, rejoiced, and sung the following: “Here are the eyes of the one who chased us”. Morphed into an antelope and unrecognizable, the young girl mingled with them and sang the following words: “Give me those eyes so that I can have a look at them”. As soon as they were in her possession, she vanished and brought them to her brother. The only musical part of the story is this song of the young girl asking to see her brother’s eyes. The rest is not sung; it is simply narrated. The continuation of the story, although not musical, is an interesting example of a legend. The great hunter Mambé Taraolé, now in possession of his eyes, killed all antelopes except for one – a pregnant antelope about to give birth to its offspring. He also killed all the other animals on earth except for the birds and the animals living in the water. Thus, the spared antelope gave birth to a calf, which repopulated the world with all species of antelopes and analogous animals.

The lions were reborn in the following way: A woman from the Taraolé tribe, married to a Keita, had two children: a human son and a lion. This is not astonishing because the lion is the *tana*⁶ of the Keita. The panthers were reborn in an analogous manner among the Kourouma where they, too, are the *tana*.

As far as other animals are concerned, the narrator is a little bit embarrassed in explaining their reappearance. Had they perhaps come from far away or had the great hunter not exterminated as many animals as legend has it?

⁶ One knows that the *tana* or *téné* of the Malinké is a sort of taboo. One will find the discussion of this synonymy in ethnographic studies on Manding peoples.

The vocal part (song of the young girl) is notated below. Two slightly different versions exist (ex. 17 and 18).



The same melody is repeated over and over, a veritable haunting melody with insignificant variants. The intervals are more or less correct except for the C which is notated as C[#] in the key signature and which is performed a little bit too low in the course of the song. The actual note is between C[#] and C^b [B.d'H.].

These kinds of narratives with interspersed song can be found in various countries. The Reverend P. Trilles describes their genesis according to observations he made among the Fan [Fang or Pangwe], a Bantu tribe in the Congo (1912). Furthermore and more precisely it is a matter of totemic narratives: "If the narrator notices that the attention of his audience starts to dwindle, he quickly moves to a point where the narrative is interrupted by a song. He takes his seven-string *mevex* [*mvet*?*], and starts with a brisk chord, which is followed by 'Eh! Yélé' shouted very loud in a high voice. All sleepers wake at once and respond instantly on the same note: 'Eh! Yélé'. Then the singer continues his musical phrase and finally takes up the narration again, which he continues without getting weary until another lash of the whip is necessary. Again a song interrupts the narration, accompanied on the seven-string *mevex*. All listeners respond in chorus".

The hunters' stories are also often tales that can be found all over Africa. Animals play roles similar to those in our fables. The shrewd animal par excellence is the hare, who plays mean tricks on others; it is the fox of La Fontaine's fables.

* [Hornbostel (1913, 328) discusses an arched harp called *ngomo* with seven (or eight) strings (cf. Erich M. von Hornbostel: "Musik". In *Die Pangwe*, Vol. 2, ed. Günther Tessmann (Berlin 1913), 320-357. Eds.]

The hyena on the contrary is the poor creature that is mocked by all; it is the donkey of our fabulist.

The elephant and the hippopotamus had lent money to the hare. After a certain time, the two creditors claimed their debt. "I will pay you", said the hare. It then cut off a very large liana as long as the distance from Kouroussa to Sangharella (about six kilometers). It placed its two creditors at the two ends advising them to follow the liana, the money being at its other end. So they both advanced, each from its respective side, and met halfway. They understood then that the hare had fooled them and decided to seek revenge. "Go look for it in the rivers", said the elephant to the hippopotamus. "I will take care of exploring the bush". But the clever hare had overheard them. Not far away there was the cadaver of a small antelope with a large wound already invaded by maggots. The hare slipped inside and thus was able to go drink in the marsh where it met the hippopotamus. The latter taking it to be a real antelope said to it: "Poor animal. Who, after all, has inflicted this enormous injury on you?" - "It is the hare, answered the would-be antelope, who has bewitched me so that I am now in this state". The hippopotamus reflected on this and went to meet the elephant. The hippo told the elephant what it had seen: "The hare, it added, seems to me to be very dangerous for its enemies. It would be advisable to leave it alone". Therefore, they agreed not to pursue any claim against the hare and thus the hare had rid itself of its creditors.

The donkey boasted about being the king of the whole area. The hyena, wanting to test it, asked the donkey to make it rain. The donkey urinated. The hyena then challenged it to make fire. The donkey, turning, lashed out a hoof into the hyena's face, causing the hyena to see fire (see stars). The hyena then went away and now only attacks donkeys that are deceased.

The other songs most often are banal praises addressed to the hunter: "One has to be courageous to attack the injured lion. Only X ... can do that".

Now here is another ceremony that is practiced on the occasion of the death of a famous hunter. The spirits of the animals he has killed during his career wait for the spirit of the hunter so that they can take their revenge. Therefore, it is necessary to intervene with an act of expiation. First, there are songs of a banal kind: "The hunter who has killed ... (here the name of an animal) has disappeared. The ... can now live in peace". In this way one sings a number of couplets while changing the name of the wild game each time. One carries the deceased's gun in the funeral cortege. Afterwards there is a ceremony of magical character. A friend or a student of the hunter takes his gun and mimics a hunting scene. He lies down, creeps, and crouches. He aims the gun and shoots in the direction of a supposed animal (nobody plays the role of the wild game), shouting: "There it is, I have killed it, I have killed the panther, the lion, the elephant, etc." Then one fires the gun into the cavity that will hold the hunter's body. During this time one sings a song whose lyrics are as follows: "Sighi, Sagha, shigi, somo, shaga". Except for *somo*, these words have no meaning in the country's present language. *Somo* is the name of a small grain from the forest on which the singers feed if need be. So this is a true magic formula determined to guard the hunter's spirit against bad treatment by

the spirits of the animals he has killed in his lifetime. A corpse is lowered into a grave only after these various ceremonies have been performed.

This magic melody has been recorded twice in succession (ex. 19 and 20).



It consists of one motif repeated four times in similar fashion. The first time, all intervals are correct; the other times are the same except for the B^{\sharp} in measure 7, which is executed too low. This note is located between B^b and B^{\sharp} . The second recording presents a tune of exactly the same musical character. The same motif is repeated many times. The intervals are quite exact. The three notes that fall on the first beat of the second measure are sung in a gliding way so that one does not hear all of them in each repetition of the theme [B.d'H.].

When a hunter has killed a lion or a panther, one conducts an analogous ceremony, likewise in order to appease the spirit of the killed animal. For wild game of lesser importance, one refrains from such a ceremony. I believe that this custom tends to disappear like all fetishist customs do.

Mr. H. Labouret announced at a conference of the Société de Géographie [Society of Geography] on November 19, 1920 (in *La Géographie* 35 {1921}, 98) that an analogous ceremony had been observed in the Black Volta area, Lobi region.

These various hunters' songs (ex. 10-13) are accompanied by the *dounsou-koni*, i.e., a hunters's *konimesin* (*dounsou* = hunter). A solo of this instrument, recorded on the phonograph, could not be notated.

The rhythmic impulses of this fast melody are quite similar to the impression produced by the *bala*, albeit with less suppleness. The instrument's sonority is feeble. A single constant phrase is repeated, and the intervals produced seem to be insufficiently precise to fix them in notation [B.d'H.].

Fishing. – Like the hunters the fishers perform interesting musical manifestations. The large aquatic fauna (crocodiles, manatees, hippopotami) seem to have vividly

struck the imagination of indigenous narrators. Uncountable stories exist in which these animals play a role.

In the event of the death of a famous [female] fisher, an expiatory ceremony is carried out. Such a ceremony is analogous to the one just described for the hunters, but in this case a fishing scene is mimicked; however I have not been able to obtain as many details about this particular ceremony.

In the vicinity of the great rivers – the Niger and its feeder rivers – lakes exist which, due to flooding, connect with these rivers during the winter season. Then, during the dry season, in meager times, the water disappears from the area of inundation and the whole fauna gathers in the residual pools.

This is the moment chosen for the great annual fishing events. On a fixed day all inhabitants gather near the pool carrying large conical fykes. One man steps into the water; he throws rice and cola nuts into the pool while announcing to the lake's guardian spirit that they are going to fish. He asks the spirit to favor this operation in order to avoid accidents, crocodiles, etc. The people respond with "amina" (Arabic *amin*, Hebrew *amen*). Then the man lifts the fyke into the air thrice and all hurl their bodies into the water. Tight rows of several layers are then formed. Next, the people at the ends of the rows near the shore encircle the fish. All open fykes are pushed forward, forming a trawl. In the past, this ceremony must have been accompanied by music of a magical character. Today, nothing interesting can be found. Here are the lyrics of a song usually sung on this occasion, but is of a banal kind. It is about a young girl waiting for her fiancé and singing his praises: "I have not yet seen the horse my fiancé mounts. It is the most beautiful one and my boyfriend is the richest, the best dressed, etc." From then on, there are banal praise phrases.

Since the singing is not very clear in this song, I have abstained from notating it. The *bala* can be heard quite distinctly. It marks the six eighths notes of a 6/8 measure regularly. At times the ensemble seems to be more concerted than in the case of other accompanied songs. Is it possible to say that it stays like that throughout the piece in spite of the discords, which in this case can be attributed to the wrong intonation of the [female] singer? The phonographic audition does not allow for clarification of this issue [B.d'H.].

Here are other stories that refer to aquatic animals, but are no longer sung today:

A crocodile from Sankaran (district of Kouroussa) one day changed into a man and adopted the profession of weaver of the village. Nobody noticed the metamorphosis, but a *somono* (fisher), who passed by at that moment, spotted it and killed the animal. One has to be a *somono* or stem from a *somono* family to perceive these kinds of substitutions.

The daughter of this man was called Banaso Kindiou Kondé. A crocodile, which had changed into a *noumouké* (blacksmith), produced the rings to make gris-gris. The young girl entered the hut to have her father's harpoon repaired. Seeing her, the crocodile, aware that it would be recognized, fled and reached the river, but the young girl followed, caught up to it in the water, and killed it with her father's harpoon.

Formerly, these metamorphoses of crocodiles were frequent.

Here is another story told by Famodou Bamba (*Bamba* = crocodile). He has the crocodile as *tana* due to the following circumstances.

Bamba, the ancestor of the race [ethnic group], went to war with the Keïta as allies. He arrived at the bank of the river (the Niger or one of its feeder rivers), which swollen by the rain of the winter season was impassable. Bamba transformed himself into an enormous crocodile (*balafalan'dian*) and carried all Keïtas on his back.

Another story: One day, a man was snatched by a crocodile, which pulled him into the river and hid him in a hole dug into the sand of the bank slope. After concealing the man, the crocodile went away, without a doubt intending to return later to eat him. A cricket dug its burrow exactly above this hole. It started to communicate with the man, who had been unconscious. He awoke and noticed daylight through the insect's burrow. He increased the opening with his knife and thus escaped. As a reward for this service he swore that neither he nor his descendants would eat crickets, and this insect became his *tara* [sic! read: *tana*?] (*Kéré* = cricket). It is common knowledge that numerous peoples have eaten crickets since ancient times. In Upper Guinea these insects are pronged with pieces of various fats in-between the layers, and then roasted.

We have said that the pools all have a spirit that is addressed at the time of fishing. The spirit of the pool of Boumana (a distance of six days south of Kouroussa) lent his assistance to the warrior Kondé Kourouma, and designated the villages that Kondé Kourouma should conquer. Kondé went to the village and found all inhabitants chained; he did not have to try to become master of the population. This lasted for seven years but ended when the Foulahs took Kondé prisoner and cut him to pieces.

A spirit also dwelled in the Diéliaba [Jeliba] (Niger) in Kouroussa. A black bull, which was skinned leaving only the head and the claws, was sacrificed to the spirit. The skin was then thrown into the water, and, in the event the spirit accepted the sacrifice, the bull came back to the surface emitting three roars before disappearing into the water. Since the advent of the Europeans, the bull has no longer roared, and the spirit has moved to a place several kilometers downstream. The European authorities prohibited these manifestations, which beyond doubt were a pretext for indigenous propaganda impairing our influence.

Incidentally, it is not only the waters that possess a spirit. Many animate beings and inanimate objects can also have one. They serve, so to speak, as an altar for the divinity. Sacrifices are especially made at the feet of trees.

The tree (*Eriodendron anfractuosum*, kapok) located at the ancient market place of Kouroussa had a spirit that harmed all who came close. An indigene passing by it at high noon could no longer speak until the evening. Even the Europeans would suffer this baleful influence. The administrator Pobéguin⁷ suffered an attack of fever when looking too closely at this tree.

⁷ Mr. Pobéguin, former administrator of the colonies and distinguished botanist, to whom we owe a remarkably documented *Essai sur la flore de la Guinée française* [Essay on the flora of French Guinea] (1906).

Unfortunately, all ceremonies of sacrifices for various spirits are accompanied only by banal music, and incidentally these ceremonies vanish. The only song I was able to listen to that refers to animals concerns the boa snake: "The boa is the strongest of all snakes". I do not know what these lyrics are alluding to (ex. 21).



This song is performed by a female voice with *bala* accompaniment. One can sufficiently distinguish the latter to realize two peculiarities: First, the *bala* does not attempt to execute the same melodic line as the singer. It has the intention of accompanying her [the singer] with a tune specific to the *bala* (although the word accompany does not carry the European meaning which would be attached to it in a musical context). Second, this accompaniment is not concerted, neither concerning rhythm nor tonality. From a rhythmical point of view there is a displacement of their respective rhythms of one third of a beat, i.e., an eighth note, between the *bala* and the singing which both perform in 6/8. On the other hand, from the point of view of superposing notes, which result from the simultaneous performance of singing and *bala*, there is no harmony in the European sense of the word. The voice and the instrument do not proceed in the same tonality, so that extremely barbarous interferences result because of coincidental occurrence and not on purpose.

Thus, the great difficulty and perhaps impossibility of rendering this melody in notation is understandable. I have notated only one vocal phrase because it is repeated identically many times with the exception of a small variant marked in the musical example. The intervals are quite correct, and the rhythm is very precise [B.d'H.].

Finally, lascivious dances, which are so common in Black countries and have been described repeatedly by voyagers, need to be mentioned. In Upper Guinea these dances have nothing particular and are usually not performed in public. I believe, by the way, that many dances, which originally were lascivious, have now become banal. The indigenes aim at a merely comic effect: "It is to make one laugh", they say.

III. Musical Associations. Societies using music

It is well known how common secret societies are among Blacks, especially among fetishists. In Upper Guinea only relics are found. The magical ceremonies and sorcery rites have transformed themselves over time into banal celebrations, thus losing all originality.

Here is what I was able to find about these ancient traditions:

Mandiani. – The *mandiani* or *boundian* are little dancing girls chosen for their choreographic talent in the course of a kind of contest that takes place in front of a jury of young people. Ancestry is not at all taken into account as long as the girls do not originate from captives. Each wealthy village has its own *mandiani*. It even often happens that each political party has its own *mandiani* because in the colonies, just as in civilized countries, there are often two parties per village: the one of the present chief and that of a former chief or an ambitious man who strives for power, i.e., the opposition. The two parties each have their own dancer. As soon as a dancer is chosen, a beatific existence begins for her. She adopts a generic name: thus, in Kouroussa where two parties exist and therefore two dancers are present, one carries the name of *boundian*, which literally means long tip, and the other carries the name of *bouresani*, which means gold of Bouré (the Bouré is an area in the district of Siguiri where gold is found). They are supported and spoiled by the party's main family. All their vagaries are indulged and they have several persons at their disposal at all times. A little griot girl is assigned to them and accompanies them in their dances. They stay *mandiani* until puberty, and then step back and another is chosen in their place.

Their hair is styled in a special way, and they wear a costume for their dance. Often, this is a kind of loose overcoat covering them completely and leaving only two openings for the eyes (fig. 6). To dance they take off this coat and are thus clad in little trousers with vivid colors; their torso is bare.



Fig. 6. *Mandiani* in grand costume.

They make their entrance in a variety of ways: be it wearing the wide overcoat and being carried on a kind of litter [palanquin], or be it on the shoulders of a strong fellow who dances while they make all kinds of contortions atop their cavalier.

After these preludes they put their feet on the ground and start dancing while the crowd forms a circle around them. They follow the rhythm provided by the drum *giembe*. While the *mandiani* dances, her little griotte escorts her and answers her so to speak. One might say, it seems, that pantomimes are performed by the two little girls. The *mandiani* mimes discontent and pouts in a corner. Her little griotte brings her a calabash on whose rim pieces of fifty cents are fixed. The dancer refuses them. The crowd sings: "My little girl refuses silver** and gold". The little dancer then crosses her hands behind her back, pleas pardon of her griotte, and the scene starts all over again.

As I have said, the *mandiani* dances to the sound of the drum, but in addition, there are melodies of the *bala* and singing heard during this ceremony. They are added and in no way in time with the rhythm of the drum which controls the dance.

Every now and then, young people move forward and reach out for the *mandiani* with a protective gesture uttering an exclamation doubtlessly in admiration. When the dancer displays signs of fatigue, a strong boy approaches her, grabs her quickly and takes her away, but it is seldom the case that she stops on her own. I have observed this abduction in many indigenous dances. Maybe it has an extremely ancient origin.

The two rival dancers never dance together, but one after the other. After the ceremony, the reciprocal merits are discussed and the more skillful one receives compliments while the other is showered with innuendos.

The songs are nothing special. They are always praises and encouragements for the dancer: "My little girl, beware of dancing like a dog, dance in a sensible way swinging your sheep-tail". This sheep-tail is part of the *mandiani*'s traditional costume.

Here is the notation of variations for the *bala* that are usually heard during the ceremony (ex. 22):



** [In the original: "l'argent" which can denote "silver" or "money". Eds.]



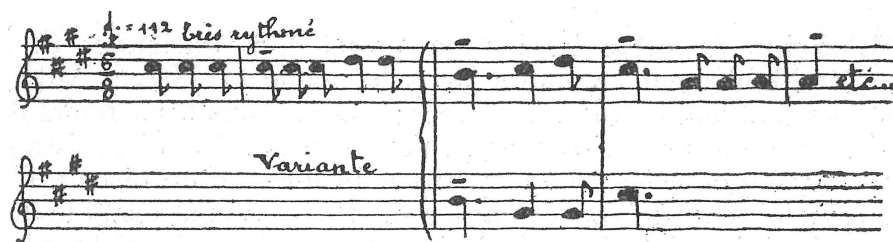
The origin of this institution seems to be very old and presumably has its source in primordial magic. In the olden days the *mandiani* were sorceresses. Like all sorcerers in this area, they morphed during the night, leaving their physical shell and adopting the form of a bird. They have been seen standing upright and dancing on the steep roof of indigenous huts. Today their power only consists of putting spells on their rival (for example, making a rival fall during a performance). But the latter, a sorceress herself, does the same so that the maledictions neutralize themselves.

Let us now look at another secret society. According to M. Delafosse (1923) it has three degrees: *konkosso*, *kondé*, and *koma*. The root *kon* or *kom* is a marker of the divinity. The *konkosso* are small children at the beginning of initiation, i.e. catechumens, to whom one starts revealing the secrets of the society. I have not received a musical document of the *konkosso*.

The next degree is constituted by the *kondé* or *koundé*:

Kondé. – *Kondé* (*dé* = child) consists of young boys. This practice seems to have degenerated more or less. Here is what is left of it in Upper Guinea. Each year the not yet circumcised boys choose one among them, usually the one who dances best, to be *kondé*. Formerly, the chosen one completely changed his way of life and retired to the forest where he dedicated himself to sorcery, probably together with the other members of the association. He only came out masked. Today, the child lives with his companions and wears his costume only for ceremonies (fig. 7). However, he is not allowed to say his true name, and nobody who knows it is to reveal this name. He is still a bit of a sorcerer and with the help of magic is able to balance several mortars, used to pound rice, on three pestles arranged in a bundle. I hasten to add that I was never allowed to be present at this feat. Those who insult the *kondé* or denigrate him may die if they do not immediately beg his pardon. Numerous examples thereof are cited. The *kondé* dances through the streets escorted by his companions because the mask covering his face impedes his sight. The following is sung to him:

“Here is the *kondé* leaving the forest”, an allusion to the forest where in former times he used to hide (ex. 23).



This chorus of boys, singing in unison, consists only of the notated musical phrase. It is well chanted and sung quite correctly by the ensemble [B.d'H.].



Fig. 7. Masked *kondé*, seen from the front.

In another song the following is sung to him: "He is as handsome as a tumbled tree", which refers to when the bark covering a tree has disappeared – a bizarre comparison.

The chorus, again in unison, is in 6/8 rhythm [B.d'H.].

Various praise phrases: "He is as pretty as a starling". This refers to a purple starling (*Lamprocolius purpureus* [Lamprotornis purpureus]), well known among European milliners who order it from the African coast.

Another song announces disagreeable things to him. One reminds him, indeed, that soon he will have to be circumcised. From this moment on he will no longer be *kondé*; another will be chosen in his place.

Koma. – This higher degree of the secret society consists of adults. Its aim is to look for individuals who bewitch their fellow citizens and attract misfortune on them. This may even be unknowingly because it is possible to bewitch somebody without being aware. The member of the society representing the *koma* walks through the villages at night escorted by his supporters who play drums. He is clad with a panther's skin, and very much dreaded. The non-initiated, i.e., women, children, and griots, will die if they lay eyes on him.

Since our arrival in this country, the *koma* has become more and more harmless for reasons one can easily guess. The *koma*'s melody, which I have heard, is very peaceful. One simply invites him to dance in the village square.

This melody played on a flute could not be notated due to the insufficiently clear recording. At least one can discern that it has some connection to those played by the same instrumentalist dealt with above (ex. 14 and song on honor of a son of Samory). Thus, it does not have an original character [B.d'H.].

Let us now look at some associations utilizing music for various ceremonies.

Konkobas. – These are associations of musicians playing *bala* whose chiefs are dancers. Those I observed in the Kankan district in fact consist of two troupes, one of the *diamou* Koniata, the other one of the *diamou* Kondé. Each has their own chief but when united the oldest Kondé chief takes command of them all. There are eleven *bala* players, including the two chiefs, and two percussion instruments. The musicians' women sing while their husbands play.

They seem to be griots, at least they do what griots do. They do not work and sing praises to the one who pays them. Their *balas* are tuned in the usual way dealt with above.

Here is how their sessions take place. The chiefs place themselves in the middle. As an insignia they carry a kind of long cap somewhat resembling the chechia [similar to a fez. Eds.] of the Zouaves. In its pocket they carry the earned money. The other *balas* place themselves in line to the right and left of the chiefs. The percussion instruments are placed at both ends, and behind them the [female] singers are gathered.

The chief starts the concert with virtuosic exercises on his instrument. He plays a "cadence", if I may say so, characterized by fast descending passages. Then, calming down, he commences the melody which all other performers go on with, which the women sing, and which the chief intones himself in case the memory of the chorus fails. The percussion instruments come in, too, and the piece is underway. Thus, the theme continues being repeated infinitely. Now and then, the chief inserts variations where he proves true virtuosity while the other musicians continue to play the theme. I have seen them play without break for a whole afternoon. In front of them is a large open space where the assistants dance. If nobody is paying attention, they play languorously without much effort. But as soon as an indigene approaches and seems to be willing to dance, they awake and

hit their *balas* with all their force. The chief then asks the dancer's name in order to shower him with compliments during his choreographic exercises. Of course, the dancer pays the musicians when he is tired.

So far, there is only banal music but when the celebration is staged in honor of a European or an indigenous chief whose age no longer permits him to dance, the chief himself takes charge of this. He withdraws discreetly and puts himself under a bizarre apparatus (fig. 8) that covers him completely. Fitted in this apparatus he comes back in front of his musicians and dances. It would be interesting to know the origin of this mask. Unfortunately, I have not been able to obtain serious information on this subject. Through its root the word *konkoba* indicates a sect of initiates, probably of a secret society. But it must have degenerated, and its present representatives are only ordinary griots.

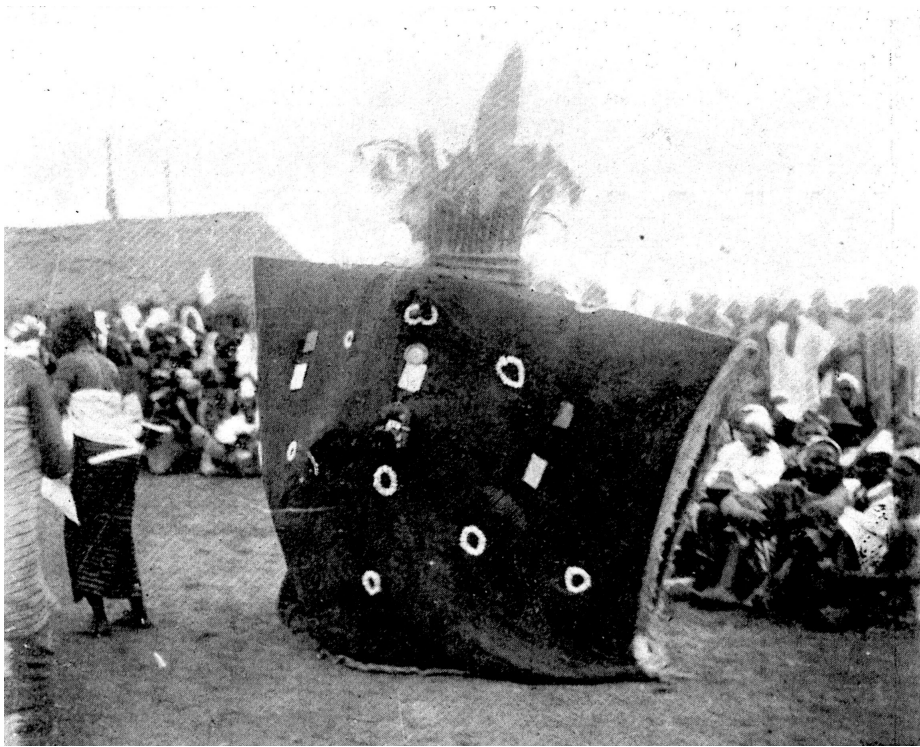
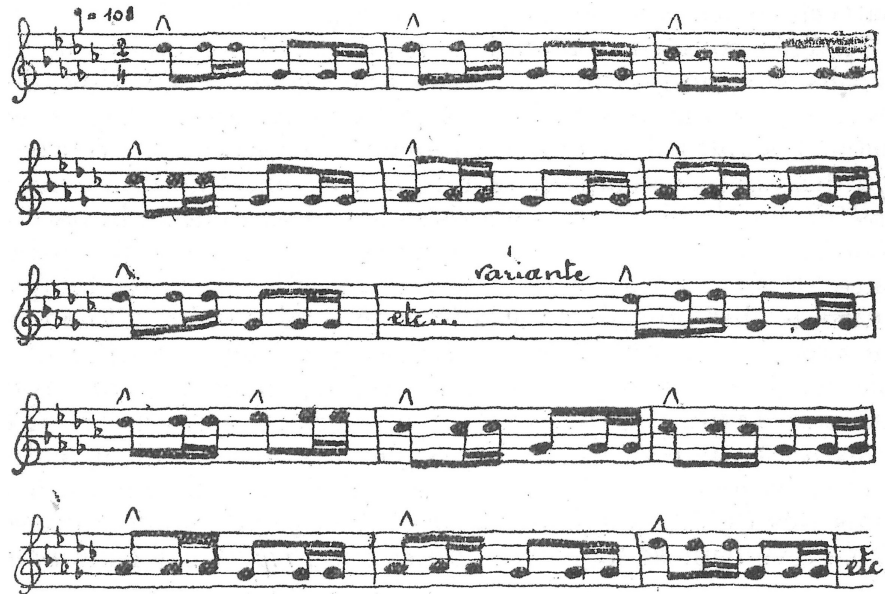


Fig. 8. Dance apparatus of the *konkoba*.

For common occasions the *konkoba* make music and sing praises of the chiefs, married couples, circumcised individuals, and deceased persons. Formerly, they encouraged combatants and consoled the wounded. They [the wounded] thanked them by adumbrating a dance step if they were able to. Their [the *konkoba*'s] repertoire consists of some thirty melodies whose lyrics they modify according to the necessities of the occasion. Nevertheless, in earlier times the chief composed a song (lyrics and music) in honor of a war chief. It is considered without false modesty to be a masterpiece.

I could not record the orchestra but only an isolated *bala* that afforded me melodies of the *konkoba*'s repertoire (ex. 24).



It is a repeated theme conforming to a very special type of melodies of virtuosity particular to the *bala*.

Another theme, not notated, consists of variations full of curious rhythms displaying a dizzying and frenetic speed. [B.d'H.]

Kourcikoroni. - This sect, whose name literally signifies old trousers, forms an association aimed at supporting work in the fields. On the whole, this is only a specialization, i.e., an exaggeration of what happens in all indigenous cultures. We have said that the indigene likes to work accompanied by music. Europeans, who are in charge of a construction site, often utilize this peculiarity. They allow a musician to perform, and the indigenes use their tools in rhythm. Often, while the boys are farming, the girls are behind them encouraging them with their songs. They wipe their boyfriend's sweaty forehead.

The founder of the *kourcikoroni* sect received his secret from a spirit dwelling on the mountain of Kouranko (Kankan district). Essentially, it is the formula of a drug that permits working without tiring and executing fire exercises (the latter is to be discussed later).

Before working they first eat rice containing the drug in question. Then they place a banner at the end of the field that is to be cultivated during the day and start their work committedly. They pretend to work without tiring. Of course, this is a collective suggestion. In reality, the accomplished workload is nothing exceptional but appears to be considerable compared to that delivered by their usually rather lazy fellows. Songs accompany such agricultural work. These songs are simple singsong on a few notes in which one vaunts the courage and the endurance displayed by the laborers.

Another ceremony, also accompanied by music, is the fire dance. In order to execute this dance, the *kourcikoroni* rub their body with the famous drug and also put it into the rice they have to eat. Then they light up large braziers of wood around which they perform their dance, lining up in single file with the chief leading and seven sub-chiefs seconding him. Three musicians, a masked dancer, and some fifty simple *kourcikoroni* form the troupe's ensemble. The musicians use percussion instruments exclusively: two small drums and a large one they strike with their hands. The rhythm is clearly binary: one can beat it in 4/4 time. The first beat is marked by two eighths notes, executed by the two small drums. The other ones seem to vary at the musician's discretion. The dance mainly consists of alternately bringing each foot to the fore, then moving it back roughly to its original position. The body turns to the right and the left alternately. Sometimes the *kourcikoroni* run in a way that allows them to stretch their legs as much as possible. They have a special costume consisting of fringed trousers reaching down to the knees. As this is all occurring, the women sing to encourage the dancers. After a certain amount of time of this exercise, the chief approaches one of the braziers ignited during the dance and puts red-hot pieces of wood on his chest. His disciples follow his example. One can restart the dance and the fire exercise no more than twice or thrice. It is hardly necessary to note that this is a simple phenomenon of calefaction. The individuals are sweating due to the very tiring dance they have just performed. The secret drug is a sort of grease with which they have lubricated their body. Thus, when the red-hot charcoal comes close, a layer of vapor forms. It intercalates between the charcoal and the skin, and prevents contact. Upon examination the following day, no trace of a burn can be seen.

This sect consists solely of fetishists. It is very ill-reputed among musulmans who often withdraw when the exercises begin, at least the dignitaries.

Bando. – This sect of dancers conducts its exercises while adorned with a necklace made of sheepskin. Its origin is supposed to be recent, but it is likely that it is the transformation of some other institution of a magical character that has now disappeared. Be that as it may, its present chief, Diéli Koro, was awakened one fine night, he reports, by a large black monkey. This creature offered him its skin under the condition that he should make a garment out of it and dance with it. Diéli Koro accepted the offer and founded the *bando* sect. Since it is almost impossible to get hold of the skin of this large monkey, it is replaced with sheepskin. The members appear mainly in the *diamou Béréte*.

A drum struck with the palm of the hand accompanies their music. It is a march in 4/4 time: the first two beats are performed as eighths-note triplets, and the third and fourth are performed as quarter notes. The first note of the first triplet at the beginning of the measure is strongly accentuated. Their songs have no special attributes. The following is sung for them: "*Bando, bando*, your costume is very pretty".

Soronfoulalou. – This is a fetishist association of musicians playing the *soron* – the instrument with plucked strings discussed above (fig. 4) – and of dancers. It is said that they originated from Fouta-Djalon, and their *soron* is little known in Upper Guinea. During the times of the wars of Samory, they were taken captive by this conqueror and dispersed. When peace had been restored, those remaining

reassembled and moved across the country playing the *soron* trying to find the missing members of their family, like Lothario looking for his daughter. Their children wear striking colors and dance masked. During the dance they approach the person who pays and by childish cajoling try to flatter him in order to obtain as much money as possible. Incidentally, the association's chief claims that this works very well, and that his children earn more money than he himself. Here, too, the songs have no special characteristics; the same praise phrases are always used. On the occasion of a celebration, one sings the following: "The chiefs (or the commanders if they are Europeans) are assembled here. They may live long, to them the women!"

They also have flattery songs for weddings, circumcisions, and deaths. For the latter, they rather try to woo the heir than to lament the deceased: "I homage the chief who is dead, but in spite of his death there are others."

Such are the few associations of musicians I was able to observe. Most likely there are many more.

We have only looked at professional music, as it were. But each Black is more or less a musician and instinctively warbles songs commenting on each of his actions. The porters complain about the weight of the pieces of baggage on their head; the boy reprimanded by his master ridicules him in satirical couplets; the woman complains about not having received the necessary money from her husband to afford a loincloth. H.-A. Junod has rightly remarked the origin of numerous indigenous songs of the Baronga of Mozambique. His observations can be applied to the Sudanese races: "Somebody has heartache. One or another accident, one or another chance happens to him, and he celebrates his fortune or misfortune with a couplet he has invented. If the melody is agreeable it is repeated by others from one to the next until it becomes a truly popular song".

Here, I end these remarks about the musical manifestations in Upper Guinea. I do not dissimulate that they are very incomplete and very likely contain inaccuracies that all those who have dedicated themselves to similar studies will excuse as they know the difficulty involved. I wish only that these observations could serve as a point of departure for more profound investigations, and that a colonial musician would have the idea to further investigate what I have only sketched.

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