

MANDINKA CEREMONIES

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Introduction		DPG	iii- vi
List of local words occurring in the text		DPG	vii- xii
Mandinka social structure		DPG	1- 4
I Life cycle ceremonies -			
Naming ceremonies	Kerewan 1947-48	DPG	5- 9
Naming ceremony	Jenyeri Jan.49	AKR	10- 11
Jiba Sisindoo	Bateling Feb.50	DPG	12
Denaani sumango - carrying a child for the first time	Jenyeri Mar.49	DPG	13- 14
Karanding-dungo - going to Islamic school for the first time	Kerewan Dec.48	DPG	15- 17
Boys' circumcision	Kerewan Feb.47	DPG	18- 33
Boys' circumcision	Mandina Jan.49	AKR	34- 40
Lip tattooing (daa-soo)	Jenyeri Mar.49 ) AKR Kaiaf } Kerewan } DPG		41- 43
Girls' initiation	Bateling Feb.49	AKR	44-
Bulu-kuwo	" "	AKR	50- 56
Ngansing-dondoo	" Mar.49	DPG	57- 59
Marriage	Jenyeri 50	AKR	60- 74
Re-marriage after divorce	Jenyeri Jan.50	AKR	75- 76
Marriage by inheritance	Jenyeri Aug.49	AKR	76
Freeing of slaves	Kaiaf Feb.49	AKR	77- 79
Conversion of a pagan to Islam	Kaiaf Mar.49	AKR	80- 81
Funeral procedure	Kaiaf Jan.47) DPG Kerewan ) DPG Jenyer n.d ) AKR		82- 84
Seventh day charity and Division of property	Jenyeri Mar.49	AKR	85 86
Fortieth day charity	(Mali)		87- 89

II	Muslim and traditional events				90
	Kitimoo	Jenyeri	Jul.49	AKR	91
	Sunkare Saloo	"	July.49	AKR	92-93
	Mohamed's birthday	"	49	AKR	94
	Banna Saloo			DPG	95
	Musukoto saloo (New Year)	"	Dec. 50	AKR	96-97
	Dimba tulungo (Mother's play)	Kwinela	50	AKR	98-100
	Kankurang	"	Apr. 50 May June	AKR	101-105
III	Conclusions				106-107.

## INTRODUCTION

This account is the revision of a draft report originally prepared in 1949\*, which aimed at giving a general description of a series of Mandinka ceremonies. These are drawn from my own material collected at Kerewan in Lower Badibu on the north bank, and later on the south bank, at Kaiaf and Jenyeri in Eastern Kiang, and Bateling in Western Kiang, and from reports made by A.K.Rahman for the Nutrition Field Working Party at Jenyeri.

A.K.Rahman had originally been with me at Kerewan as an interpreter, but joined the Nutrition Field Working Party as a dispenser when it was established at Jenyeri by Dr. Berry in 1947. When the dispensary was closed down (1949 ?) he continued to work for the N.F.W.P. as a sociological observer, providing a great deal of information about village life.

I myself stayed at Kaiaf for about a month in May/June 1947, at Jenyeri in February/March 1949, and November 1949 to February 1950. For the next year I lived in Western Kiang, but visited Jenyeri every month until March 1951, on my way to and from Njau in Upper Salum. Illness prevented further work at this time, but Jenyeri was visited sporadically in June, July and September 1951.

I was present at many of the events described by A.K.Rahman - at Mandina for the first day of the boys' circumcision ceremonies; at Bateling for most of the girls' initiation ceremonies; at Kaiaf for the ceremony for the freeing of slaves, etc. But I have little to add to the text of his original reports, for he recorded the events witnessed in great detail, and followed his observations with interviews with key individuals to seek further information.

In some sections - lip tattooing, funeral procedure - I have combined my own and Rahman's notes. Often we were at the same events.

\* [Though it refers to events of some 50 years ago, it can still serve as a useful base when researching present day activities.]

Previous reports on the Mandinka have been primarily concerned with economic conditions. Here we turn to the social events which are of particularly significance in the lives of the Mandinka - the events marked by ceremonies as distinct from everyday routine - the naming ceremonies, circumcisions, marriages, funerals, etc.

These all arouse greater emotional activity than normal routine. Interest in them is shared by a large number of persons, and not merely by those immediately concerned - though this varies from ritual to ritual. They involve a change of status for some person or persons. The social structure is changed at some point, and re-integration takes place; in a single ceremony a whole complex of relations comes into play - kinship, affineship, neighborhood, age, sexual roles, class and caste status, etc. and this serves to re-emphasise social obligations and contributes to social cohesion.

The range over which social relations are activities varies greatly with the nature of the event. The ritual performed when a child is carried on the back for the first time is of interest to only a few women; the death of a popular or important man is a matter of concern not merely to the village community itself but to a wide range of neighboring villages. Naming ceremonies, which are common, often have smallish audiences. Circumcision ceremonies, which are held only every few years, attract hundreds of visitors. Certain ceremonies are primarily of concern to women, others are entirely or predominantly men's ceremonies, e.g. funerals, boys' circumcisions, freeing of slaves - though behind the scenes women prepare the necessary food and munkoo distributed as 'charity'.

In describing ceremonies there are several categories of abstraction. In the first instance we have accounts given by an informant in reply to a question such as "What do you do when a bride is taken to her husband's yard?" "What is the procedure at funerals?" "How is a child named?" . These accounts are based on the informant's own experiences, but normally the informant gives only the barest outline, and often states what should be done rather than what actually is done. Often people who described the procedure at naming ceremonies said "We kill a sheep."

But actual observations show that this is very rarely the case.

Again, knowing that a certain ceremony was to be held, whenever one asked one of the principal actors, what he was going to do, he would often excuse himself by saying "If I tell you this, and then I don't do it, I will be telling a lie, and I do not want to tell a lie." From this one reaches the conclusion that in many ceremonies people did not know exactly what was going to happen or who was going to fill the various roles. Frequently the person who might be expected to perform a certain role is not there - he has been delayed or still is at work on his farm. The elders glance around, fix their gaze on another suitable person present, and ask him to do it.

The procedure at ceremonies can also be described by the outside observer, and from a series of observations a general account can be built up. In actual practice one meets with the difficulty that in most ceremonies different activities are going on simultaneously - some in the open, some inside a house - and one cannot see everything. If one is sitting with the elders, one cannot see what the young men are doing, or what the women are doing. If one goes to the women's quarters one misses what the men are doing - so one has to build up a general account by questioning the people who took part in the activities one could not observe oneself.

Also significant is the question not merely of what is done but what is not done. This stage only comes when a sufficient body of data has been built up covering various times and places. Certain aspects prominent in one village may either be absent in another, or toned down so as to be scarcely noticeable, unless one is particularly on the watch for them.

The mere description of the procedure is, however, not sufficient. There is the question as to who takes the various roles. A single ceremony calls into play a whole complex of social relationships - certain roles may be associated with positions in the social structure, e.g. -in-laws generally act as messengers to convey news of a death; a slave holds up a bride when she is

taken to her husband's home, and does not let her past until given a present, etc. Other roles may be filled largely by chance (taking a body from the Mosque to the graveyard) though the elements of age and sex enter into all roles. In many ceremonies nephews or cross-cousins have preferential roles.

In addition to its significance for the persons immediately concerned there is the function of the ceremony in the community as a whole. A ceremony for the freeing of slaves, while of primary interest to the 'slaves' and their 'master', serves to emphasise still further the inferior position of those of slave descent in Mandinka society.

Every ceremony has its economic aspect. Extra food must be provided for visitors. Luxuries such as oil and sugar are bought, and livestock is frequently killed. Kola nuts are provided; presents and payments are made to drummers and praise singers. Women may want new head-ties, dresses, bangles, and beads for the occasion. Money must be obtained to meet the additional expenses incurred. But besides the direct expenses connected with major ceremonies, there are often indirect expenses. At large ceremonies where people from many villages come together, itinerant traders find a ready market, selling such articles as beads, mirrors, sweets, cigarettes, kola nuts, bracelets, matches, dates, biscuits, perfume, powder, earrings, dark glasses, slippers, knives, caps, cowrie shells, etc. Everyone is in an excited and spendthrift mood, and the hawkers reap the profit.

A further aspect is the psychological one - inter-village rivalry may be revealed at times of circumcision celebrations - rivalry between men and women may be openly expressed (See the competition described in connection with the Mandina circumcision). There may be relief from customary standards of appropriate behavior - e.g. old men dancing when boys are being taken to circumcision; old women performing indecent dances at the Bajoja ceremonies; women and girls permitted freedom to do as they like (Bateling girls' initiation).

### List of Mandinka words

The doubling of a vowel aa, ee, ii, oo, uu indicates a long vowel.

The ending o is roughly equivalent to the

Where a word already ends in a vowel, it coalesces with the o to form oo.  
e, i, o etc.

(Ar. = of Arabic origin).----

alkaali	(Ar.)	village head
alimaami	(Ar.)	Imam . Head of the religious community.
Bajoja		a ceremony during boys' initiation
bantabaa		meeting place in a village , or village ward. raised platform on which people can sit.
Banna Saloo		a Muslim ceremony, 10th day of 12th.month. Id-el-Kabir.
baramboyo		girls' cliterodectomy
barawuloo		a dance held when boys are about to go to circumcision
bii		today
bitang		-in law
biti(ro)		cover(ing)
bulu-kuwo		hand washing
bulu-kuu-lungo		hand washing day
buunyaa		respect ; a gift as sign of respect
butuutoo	(from Wolof)	10th of a dalasi (a coin)
daa		mouth
daa fingo		a plant (black sorrel ?)
dabadaa		a section of a compound
daameng		where
dalasi		a unit of currency, dollar (4/- in old days)
dandang		to accompany
dandango		accompanying
daanirango		begging
daasaamo		breakfast
vii		



daa-soo	lip tattooing
deenaani	baby
diyaa	to be sweet
dokoo	stick; staff
dokoo mutalaalu	staff bearer
dondika	garment
donkili	song
doosaa	ladle, spoon
dukoo	bribe
dungo	entering
faalifoo	settler, charged with certain ceremonial duties
faanoo	cloth, skirt
faara	a tree with red bark. <i>Bauhinia reticulata</i>
fatara	strip of cloth
findi	digitaria
futoo	steamed millet
futuwo	marriage
futu-nafuloo	marriage payment
jala	mahogany tree. <i>Khaya senegalensis</i>
jali	"griot", musician
jambakatango	a shrub. <i>Combretum</i> sp.
jani(ndiro)	burn(ing)
jiba	birth
jiyo	water
jii-faa	high water, flood
jii-tantango	water drum- made by turning a calabash upside down in a large basin of water. used only by women.
jooboo	attendant of the <u>kankurang</u>
juujuwo	circumcision shed

kaba nyunko		a special tree at Bateling . Landolphia sp. ?
kaabiila		a ward (of a village)
kadeewo		a punishment in which the offended party eats the offender's food for a certain number of days.
kafu		crowd; age set
kala		head band
kalama		calabash
kaala		a plant
kamba		to carry, fetch
kankurango		a masked figure
karang		to study
karandingo		student, pupil
karamoo		teacher
kintango		attendant of boy in circumcision shed
Kompino	(Eng.)	Company
konoo		belly
konomaa		pregnant
koora		a 21 stringed instrument
koteeroo		(plate shaped covering made from straw) mask/worn by newly circumcised boys
kotoo		elder brother
kung-songo		head-price
kuntango		a species of antelope
kuuroo		washing
kuruwo		kola nut
kuta mansa yiro		a special pole erected during boys circumcision ceremonies
laa		to lie
leefaa		a cover of coiled straw, used to cover dishes etc.
lenjengo		a particular dance rhythm
leewo		swamp area (dried out)
long		to know
loo		to stand
lulu		five
lungo		day
lung-mutoo		selecting a day

maama	grandfather
maama kung koyo	name of a plant. (white headed grandfather)
malu	shame
mang	not
mantankara	'surgeon's tree'
maanyoo	bride
" bungo	bride's house
" fengolu	" things
" nyaro	" decoration
" dondikolu	" garments
" kalama	" calabash
monoo	pap
mooroo	learned man
munku	flour
nasi	a charm (liquid)
neelingo	an iron rod used to roll seeds out of cotton
ngansingo	initiate
" dondoo	making dance ? clothing ?
" kidindo	scaring the initiates
" sarando	saying goodbye
ngansimbaa	elderly women in charge of girls' initiation
nganing koyo	white thorn
njengo	pumpkin
nonkongo	old coinage = 6d.
nung	to hide
-nundiro	hiding
nyaka	girls' initiation
nyamaaloo	group comprising smiths, leatherworkers, griots.
nyarankolo	'bull roarer'
nyoba jujuwo	circumcision shed with newly circumcised boys
pasingo	puzzle, 'wisdom test'
saateewo-tiyoo	village head- oldest man of founding lineage
sali-dondikoo	dress for prayer day
samasoo	part of boys' initiation ceremonies

samasoo	- literally = spearing the elephant.
samatoo	shoe
sanau/ sanawu	cross cousin (mother's brother's child, father's sister's child)
seefu/ seefoo	chief
sila-nyatonkoo	go-between
sii	to sit
siiring-pato	brides-maid
sisindi	to smoke
sitindo	dressing up (siti = to tie)
solimaa	uninitiated
sumang	to measure
sunkutoo	girl
sunkungo	a tree. <i>Anona senegalensis</i>
suntukungo	rubbish heap
suu	home
taba	a tree
tabullo	a drum (used to call people to mosque, give alarms etc)
talo	a tree
tankango	a tree
tenteng	a winnowing basket
tukuniniyo	part of bride's attire, band hanging down back
wuloo	dog
wuloo	bush, forest
wuraara	evening
- wurāralo	disflowering
yaa	home(wards)
yele	to open
yita(ndi)	to show, showing

English	bush	forest, uncleared land
	charity	alms
	griot	a term comprising drummers, musicians, praisers, etc
	pagn	skirt of locally woven cloth

#### Place names

Spelling has generally tended to follow the common form found on current maps.

If phonetic spellings were followed

Kerewan	would be	Kerewaan
Bateling		Bateeling
Kaiaf		Kayaf
Kwinella		Kuyinala
Kiang		Kiyang

etc.

## MANDINKA SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Mandinka villages are largely autonomous units. Most disputes are settled internally, and the majority of marriages (around 75%) take place within it. Some villages though far apart, are related to each other by ties of kinship (common origin), and continue to maintain close relationships, the people intermarrying and being invited to major events.

The village head is known as the alkaaloo, and is responsible to the district chief (seefoo) for the maintenance of law and order, tax collection, and carrying out government instructions. The senior descendant of the founding lineage is known as the saateewo-tiyoo, village owner. In some communities the saateewo-tiyoo is also the alkaaloo, but in most there are two separate offices, the alkaaloo dealing with external matters, the saateewo-tiyoo with internal affairs - land tenure, marriages, ceremonies, etc. The religious head is the Imam (almaamoo), who officiates at various ceremonies.

The village is divided into wards (kaabiiloo), consisting of groups of yards or compounds. The nucleus of a ward is a patrilineal kin group, which settled early in the village, but the ward includes wives who marry in and gradually come to identify themselves with it, the descendants of later settlers, people of slave descent, and representatives of the caste-like groups - the blacksmiths, leatherworkers, and griots (musicians, praise singers etc.). Where a village is large, each ward may conduct its ceremonies largely on its own. The kaabiiloo is seen as a unit at the main religious festivals, the prayer held at the end of the fast month, and at Banna Saloo (Id el Kabir), when the men go in procession to the village mosque, or prayer ground.

The compound or yard (suu-o) consists of an aggregate of houses grouped round a central yard and fenced off from the streets and neighboring compounds. Normally there are only one or two entrances. The compounds are divided into men's and women's sections. The latter contains the women's houses, the kitchens, rice stores, shed for sheep and goats, and chicken places. Each adult male has their

own house, while adolescent boys generally share a place together.

Compounds vary in size from extended families - man, wives, and children, with married sons and their families, to larger units, such as a group of brothers who live and work together, with their families. When the brothers are young, co-operation is frequent; as they become older, and establish their own households, a greater degree of independent action is found.

The section of a compound is often referred to by the name of its head, e.g. 'Mamadu's place'; sometimes by the term sinkiroo - cooking place; in some places by the term dabadaa, this generally implying that the section farms independently.

As the brothers grow older, the eldest may die, leaving a group consisting of a man and his immediate family, and his brother's children. At this time and depending on the age of the brother's children, there is a tendency to split, the brother's children either migrating, or working for themselves. The tendency in recent years is for the large units to break up, and more and more nuclear families establish themselves independently.

Mandinka society is divided into three main social strata - the freeborn, the slaves, and the nyamaaloo - the leatherworkers (karankeewolu), blacksmiths (numoolu) and jaloolu (griots- musicians, praise singers). The nyamaaloo groups are each endogamous, and marry within their own category. Even if they do not practice the trade associated with their group, they do not lose their status. Smiths are of great importance. In former days they made weapons, now they make farming implements. As they work with the four elements fire, air, water, earth (originally in the form of ore), and products of the bush, wood for charcoal, and for making implement handles - they are believed to have special knowledge and powers. They can be used to enforce sanctions by refusing to make implements for a wrongdoer; they act as intermediaries in cases of quarrels or threatened divorce, and try to bring about settlements. In many areas they are the circumcisors, though at Kerewan this task is performed by the head of the 'slaves'. In villages where pottery is made the art is

in the hands of the women. They are also associated with earth, water, and fire, in this activity. In many places the women of the smith category are concerned with female cliterodectomy.

Formerly slaves were divided into two categories - those captured in war or raids, who could be sold, and those born in the household, who could not be sold unless they had committed a serious crime. Slavery was official<sup>ly</sup>/abolished with the establishment of the Protectorate (1893 onwards), but the social distinctions between freeborn and slaves is still strong, and intermarriage is still extremely rare. A freeborn man may marry a woman of slave origin ; but a freeborn woman would not marry one of slave origin. The majority of slaves still maintain a client/protector relationship with the families of their former masters. They have complete freedom of movement, and are no longer under any obligation to work for their masters,<sup>but</sup> they continue to play their traditional roles in ceremonies. At Kerewan the head of the slaves is in charge of circumcision, the head of the slaves in each kaabiiloo leads the procession to the mosque for the main religious festivals etc.

Traditionally slaves belonged to the owner of the mother, not to the owner of the father, though they took their father's surname, and lived in his compound. Among those of slave descent there is a greater emphasis on ties through females, in contrast to the freeborn where patrilineal ties are predominant. Sometimes slaves occupy their own compounds, where one may find people with different surnames, but linked to a common matrilineal ancestress. Sometimes a small family occupies a section of a large freeborn compound. Where those of slave origin often suffer a disadvantage lies in their lack of access to good farm land.

The proportion of the various social groups at Kerewan in 1947 was:

Freeborn	68%	
Slave origin	29	
Nyamaaloo	<u>3</u>	(Leatherworkers 0.5%, Blacksmiths 1.5%, <u>jali</u> 1.0%).
	100	



The Age Set System. There is an age set (kafoo) system, both men and women being organised in sets. In large villages each ward may have its own series, the age range in each group ranging from 3 to 5 or 6 years. There is no formal initiation into a set. The lowest generally recognised are those aged about 11 for boys, of 13 for girls, but below these ages one finds smaller children forming sets of their own. But there is greater consciousness of age differences between 8 and 11 than between seventeen and twenty. The leaders of each age set come from the founding lineages in each ward. In the case of women, their kafoo breaks up with the marriage of members, and all become incorporated in a 'married women's kafoo' which may include all up to about the age of 38. The kafoo groups are called out primarily for communal work, clearing paths after the rainy season, repairing the village bantabaas (sitting place), repairing the mosque, mending bridges, building causeways in the swamps, etc. though they can also be hired for farm work. If food is being prepared as a reward for their services, the corresponding women's kafoo does the food preparation and cooking.

Other forms of voluntary association, e.g. a kompinoo, modelled on the hierarchy of local government and the civil service, may be established for entertainment by the young people.

The term faalifoo is used for strangers who have settled permanently in a village. They have no rights of leadership, but are allowed greater freedom of speech, and can act as go-betweens in marriage transactions, disputes etc. In some place a faalifoo acts as alkaaloo, after one has been dismissed or died, until a new one is chosen and appointed. In many ceremonies they are chosen to distribute the 'charity' - kola nuts, and cakes of rice flour and sugar (munkoo).

(Based primarily on Kerewan material).

A baby is named on the seventh day after birth, and until then is not taken out of the house. If for any reason it has to be moved it will be moved at night well covered up. A fire is kept burning, and a neelingo (an iron rod used to roll the seeds out of cotton) is stuck beside it as a protective measure. The naming ceremony is held in the compound in which the child was born, generally at about ten or eleven o'clock in the morning.

When the time draws near, messengers are sent off to call friends and relatives. A mat is spread out in the compound, and on it are placed a small earthen pot containing water in which jaloo bark (considered bad for witches), and kola nuts have been placed, and a calabash containing a piece of soap and a fibre sponge.

When all are assembled, word is sent to the mother's house. Here the child has already been bathed, generally with water containing jaloo bark, and then washed with nasoo - water which has been used to wash appropriate passages of the Koran off a wooden writing board. The old women who acted as midwife (often the maternal grandmother) then carries the child, covered in a cloth, out of the house in her arms, and sits down on the mat with legs outstretched holding the child in her lap. A man (in Kerewan usually a person of slave descent) is called on to shave the child's head. He wets it with water from the earthen pot, and begins to shave the head commencing with the right side, and working from front to back. As he first touches it with his knife, a sacrifice is made, a fowl nearby being killed by having its throat cut, the blood falling on the ground. If the family is rich, a goat may be killed. In this case cross-cousins generally do the butchering. (i.e. mother's brother's child, father's sister's child).

The child is named by an elder speaking in both its ears, and spitting in them. Saliva is considered endowed with the spiritual power of the words used, and often accompanies blessings and rites of curing. The child's name is spoken, and then the words "bv this you will be called, and to it you will answer." A prayer is also said, and the child is now considered a Muslim. Munkoo (a cake of rice flour

and sugar) is often put on the fontanelle.

The women normally watch the ceremony from the veranda of a house, while the men occupy the center of the compound, though making use of whatever shade there is. The father is generally hovering around his child as it is being shaved. On the outskirts are children waiting for the time when the charity (alms) of munkoo will be distributed.

The child's father buys kola nuts for the occasion, and the women of his compound prepare the munkoo. The father's sisters generally help in pounding the rice on this occasion. The baskets containing the kola nuts and munkoo are brought out and set before the elders. Some of the visitors also contribute kola or small sums of money, and as they present it, a griot, or slave, usually shows it to the crowd remarking "So and so has given this kola. Do you see it ?"

As the child's hair is shaved off, it is gathered and placed in the pot of water. It is believed if the hair is left lying about a bird may pick it up, and this will give rise to headaches. Or a witch with evil intentions may use the hair to work evil against the child. In the case of a first born child the hair may be kept and made into a charm. Otherwise it is buried.

When the shaving has been completed the child's name is announced to the crowd. Prayers are said that it may be a good Muslim, that it may be free from sickness and trouble, that it may have long life, and that the mother may have many more children.

The charity is then displayed to the crowd and distributed, the distribution being made by men of slave descent, though kola nuts are often shared out by freeborn men - generally the descendants of settlers who have joined one of the kaabiiloos (wards). They are commonly known as faalifoolu. Kola nuts are presented to the alkaali and almaami (if present), or sent to them ; then the heads of the various wards, representatives from other villages, elders, and then the younger men. If a smith is present he is privileged to help himself to kola before anyone else. The same applies to sanaawu -cross cousins, or any member of



Kamin: Ceremony: Shaving the Baby's head.

a clan which stands in such a relationship to the father's clan. A small gift is made by the father to the old woman who held the baby, and the few kola nuts in the pot are also hers. The fowl which has been killed is given to the mother. The distribution of the charity is concluded with prayers.

While all this has been going on, the mother has been waiting at the door of her house. It is now her turn to have her head shaved, but only the forehead and the back of the neck are done. Often this is carried out after the crowd has begun to break up.

The amount of food, either given out as 'charity', or to feed friends and relatives depends both on the time of year and the economic position of the father. For example, at a naming ceremony in August - the 'hungry season' before harvest - no food was distributed and only a handful of kola was used. In September when the early crops were being harvested, findoo (digitaria) was being used, while in October at one ceremony ~~ten~~ baskets of rice, findoo, with fish etc. were prepared for those attending.

Women who come to the ceremony or to greet the mother normally bring a 'tie' of rice (a bundle of rice on the head, as much as one can comfortably hold in the hand). The amount received serves to make up for the amount of extra rice cooked for the occasion.

When the child is a first born, particularly a first born son, there is a greater celebration than in the case of later children. In the farming season the ceremony may be held in the late afternoon so that the young people back from the farms can attend, and a feast and a dance will be organised by the kafoo (age set) members. On the other hand if the mother has had a previous stillbirth or her children have died at an early age, either no ceremony or else an abbreviated one, is held. In one such instance, the naming took place at a much later time than usual, only about ten people were present, and a knife was merely passed over the hair without shaving it. Such a baby may be given a name like Mallafi (I don't want), or Suntukung (Rubbish heap).

There are also minor variations from place to place. In Eastern Kiang in Kaiaf, the shaving of the child's head took place in the women's quarters; the charity was distributed in the compound of the kaabiiloo head, while the subsequent celebration (dancing) was held in the father's compound.

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There is one ritual about which I have inadequate information.

- the ritual designed to enable a child to speak correctly.

Barabara Thompson, describing the situation in Keneba (Western Kiang) writes: "The 'consultant' gave the 'paediatrician' a piece of kola nut. She chewed this and spat into the baby's mouth three times. In between times, she rubbed the kola juice round the baby's gums with her finger. This was done to ensure that the child would not be dumb or have any speech impediment."

J. Obstet. Gynaec. Brit. Cwlth., vol.74, August 1967, p. 510.

Ed van Hoven in L'oncle maternal est roi: la formation d'alliances hierarchiques chez les Madingues du Wuli (Senegal), Leyde (Netherlands), 1995, 75, also describes the ritual in which he refers to the kola nuts as nenkoto boo kuruwo - kola nuts for releasing the underside of the tongue. The ritual should be carried out by a woman who speaks clearly and correctly.

A.K.Rahman

Pefu Manjang, niece of Sute Sanyang...and wife of Bakarinding Sanyang of Kwinela, who is a second cousin of Pefu, gave birth to a baby boy on the 1st of January. On the 7th day the following ceremony was performed for the child's naming.

First of all a message was sent to the father and other relatives at Kwinela as soon as the child was born. He and his relatives and friends got ready and collected money and arranged for griots to accompany them, praising the father highly and speaking of his excellent birth. The girls of Pefu's kafoo (age group) decorated their heads and got new clothes for the naming day. Elderly women of the family at Kwinela prepared rice for the occasion.

On the seventh day this crowd of men, women, and girls walked to Jenyeri, arriving about 8.30 a.m. They entered the village in their best dresses with drums sounding behind them. They lodged with their respective families in Jenyeri. At ten a.m. the drum sounded again, and the strangers and local people co-mingled. The father and elderly people walked in front, the girls and boys with the drummer and his instrument walked behind, in a dance like manner, singing and clapping. On entering the wife's compound the faalifoo (Babanding Sanyang) introduced the party to the compound head, Lang Damfa. Greetings were exchanged, and the men took their seats on the mats in the middle of the compound.

The father entered the wife's house, greeted his wife, saw his baby, and presented his wife with a goat to provide milk. When he came out the griot announced his gift.

After a pause the almaami opened the ceremony with prayers and requested the women to come out with her baby.

She came out, dressed in her best clothes, with her aunt holding the baby following her. The mother had a small clay pot containing water. They then sat on a mat by themselves.

The father produced 100 kola nuts, 100 rice cakes, and a goat.

The woman's guardian also produced 100 kola nuts and 100 cakes for the sake of her niece. The kolas and cakes were mixed together, and the almaami said another prayer over them, and then moved to the baby and his mother. Here he gave his blessing and turned to the father who told him the name to give his son. The almaami repeated the name, and spat in both the baby's ears, and rubbed the baby's head with his hand. In the meanwhile someone was holding on to a goat. A good shaver was then called on to shave the baby's head. Five kola nuts were placed in the pot containing the water to wet the baby's head. As soon as the shaver started, the man with the goat slit its throat.

When the shaving of the baby was finished, the mother's forehead was also shaved. The cakes and the kola were distributed to everyone present. A second animal was killed, but this is not obligatory. The meat was taken to the women, as well as the rice brought by the visitors. The women then proceeded to prepare the mid-day meal, sending the best dishes to the visitors.

After they had eaten, drumming started, and dancing continued up to sunset.

The young men in Jenyeri gave a lot of money to the drummer so that he might sing their names, and make them famous. They also made friends with the girls from Kwinela, and bought them presents from the store such as head ties.

The men and some of the elderly women returned to Kwinela after dinner. But the younger people and the drummer stayed until the week end, dancing every day. The people in Pefu's compound fed them even though they lodged with other people in the village. Every day was considered a feast day. No more goats were killed, but fowls and good fish were abundant in the meals.

1 These kola nuts were shared by the aunt and grandmother. The grandmother was holding the baby while it was being shaved, while the aunt gently dropped water on its head.



Berend Timmer in a paper presented at the 39th annual meeting of the African Studies Association, San Francisco, 23rd-26th November 1996, describes the normal kulliyo, and an abbreviated form, tup-tupo (from the word tupi, to spit.) He also refers to ~nangboo, a slightly bigger form of the tup-tupoo.

In his description of the tuptupo, he refers to a Serahuli family living in a Mandinka village in the Kombo. The father had travelled on business to the Casamance and his whereabouts were unknown. His Serahuli wife's relatives were unwilling to undertake responsibility for the naming. His other wife's brother (a Mandinka) had also done nothing. "Thereupon, the head of the house and the Imam discussed what to do. They decided that the child would be given a name early the following morning, with as little ceremony as possible. The naming ceremony would only be a tup-tupo, the kulliyoo would be left for Ibrahima to do at a later date. The ceremony would be limited to spitting the child's name into his ears, (and presumably establishing him as a Muslim.) The following morning, just after the first prayers (around 6 a.m.) the baby was given a name. Only a few people were present; some of the men who had come to pray at the mosque and two elderly women who were already awake met in Ibrahima's house, together with the Imam, Mariama and her brother Bakary. Seven people altogether, just the amount needed to make it an Islamic congregation..... "

He then describes the rites in detail.

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Nyangboo refers to cutting the hair, instead of shaving. Nyango = a hairy head. One can say i kungo bee be nyanding implying that you need a haircut. In Fode Kaba's time at Koro, he captured 80 elders and told them that he was going to convert them. While they were sitting down, he would tell his soldiers to take one of them away and have his head shaved. They would take them one by one, but instead of just shaving them, they then cut off their heads. This led to the notorious phrase Kor' kung-liyo, "the head shaving of Koro." Even today in Koro, a man does not say "I am going to a head shaving ceremony", he says "I am going to a hair-cutting."

(M be ta nyambo to.) (Nyang-bo). Source:  
Bambo Suso's narrative: Fode Kaba

in Gordon Innes: Kaabu and Fuladu: Historical Narratives of the  
Gambian Mandinka. London: S.O.A.S. 1976 p. 264-5 & 300-1.

Mark Hudson in Our Grandmothers' Drums (1989) describes several abbreviated ceremonies in a Western Kiyang village. In the first case/a young woman had obtained a divorce. She felt that, though she had to follow the choice of her parents for the first marriage, a woman marrying for the second time should be able to choose her own husband. She had refused to marry the person chosen by her family and been expelled from her maternal house, though she stayed on in the same compound with another old woman. "She stayed like that for many months refusing to marry the man of her father's choice, and he refusing to let her marry the man of her choice. Then she found herself pregnant with a third child."

Almost no one had gone to the naming ceremony, but she had given the child, a daughter, the surname of a young man who had been working in the village as a teacher. He had been moved to another village on the north bank. At first he denied all knowledge of the child, but later agreed to marry her.

In another case (pp. 313-4), when the child was born it was named virtually without ceremony. What charities there were, munko, but no kola nuts - had been paid for by the girl's mother, since the child's father, living at Brikama, had not deigned to turn up - a fact that had caused them all considerable consternation."

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The abbreviated ceremonies I saw at Kerewan were explained to me as being done in that way, because previous children had died, and they did not want to draw the attention of witches or evil spirits to the event.

February 1950 D.P.G.

In some communities in the afternoon following a naming ceremony a special rite is held in the women's quarter, women alone being present.

A small heap of sunkungo leaves (the mother takes an infusion of sunkungo leaves as medicine after she has given birth) is made outside her house and set alight. When the blaze has burnt down a little, the mother with the child in her arms jumps twice across the fire (in the instance seen, from west to east, and then from north to south), and hurries back indoors.

Barbara Thompson: "The first fourteen days of some West African babies,"

The Lancet, 2 July 1966, p. 40-45, describes a ceremony at Keneba (Western

Kiang) (pp. 7-8)<sup>of offprint.</sup> which involves both the "smoking", and an ax being slipped down her back, before the baby was placed there. cf Denani Sumango described on page 14 of the present work.

Comparative Material

A description of a Wolof ceremony is given in:

Gambian Studies No.22. Verbal and Visual Expressions of Wolof Culture . 1989.

Based on material from David P. Gamble and David Ames, pp. 141-160.

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Mark Hudson: Our Grandmother's Drums, 1989 provides details of ceremonies in a village in Western Kiyang. pp. 117, 178-80 ; and of abbreviated ceremonies on pp. 313-4, & 81.

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DENANI SUMANGO - RITUAL PERFORMED WHEN A BABY IS CARRIED ON THE BACK

FOR THE FIRST TIME.

Seen at Jenyeri, Eastern Kiang

When a baby is to be carried on the back for the first time a special ritual is performed. The ceremony is a quiet one and attracts little attention, and I have seen only one instance of it.

In this case the ceremony was held several days after the naming of the child. It took place in the women's section of the compound, just outside the women's house. The only people present were the baby's mother, the maternal grandmother, a young girl - a "sister" (a father's brother's child) and myself. The other women of the compound were pounding rice nearby, but did not come over to watch.

The small girl stooped over in a position ready to have the baby laid on her back. It was held over her by the grandmother, while a neelingo (an iron bar used to roll the seeds out of cotton)\* was slipped down between the baby and her back, dropping to the ground. The mother picked it up and handed it back to the grandmother. This was done three times. The baby was laid on the girl's back and a head of rice\*\* put in the baby's left hand, the neelingo in the right. A cloth was put round her and she was tied to the girl's back. She remained there for only a minute or so before being taken off and carried back to the women's house.

When the baby is a girl, a neelingo and a head of rice are used. If a boy a small ax blade, and a head of millet. At Kerewan I was told that the neelingo was used for both boys and girls and that they do not put any rice or millet in the baby's hand.

\* When a baby is born a neelingo is stuck beside the fire in the mother's house, as a protection against witches. It is kept there until the child is named.

\*\* Rice farming, and picking, cleaning and spinning cotton, are women's work.

KARANDING DUNGO (GOING TO ISLAMIC SCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME)

Kerewan (Lower Badibu)

The occasion when a child is brought for the first time to a teacher for religious instruction is marked by a special ritual. The ceremony normally takes place during the latter half of December or in January, and is generally held on a Wednesday, about five o'clock in the afternoon.

The elders of the ward (kaabiloo) meet, and the children commencing school are brought forward one by one to a prominent teacher, who writes a charm on the right hand of each with a pen and ink (a local ink made from soot). A little munkoo (cake of rice flour and sugar) is rubbed over it to give it a flavor and the child licks it off.

The child is then given the first lesson in reading. Three or four lines are written in Arabic on a new wooden slate "Bisimilahi...etc." and the teacher reads out the letters, the child repeating them after him. After going through this several times, the child reads the letters on his own, and in conclusion is given two large balls of munkoo - as much as he can hold in each hand. When all the children have had their first lesson, a "charity" of kola nuts and munkoo is given out to those present, and the ceremony is concluded with prayers.

Two such ceremonies were seen on the 22nd December 1948. In the first two girls aged about six or seven were to start school. The ceremony took place in the compound of the lineage head (Fatikunda), and a notable religious teacher of Kerewan origin, who had been living in Kiang, but come back to Kerewan on a visit, was invited to take part. The writing on the children's hands was done by a teacher from the Imam's compound. The Imam himself was present and after opening with prayers invited the other religious teacher to continue. After suitable protestations he took over, writing a few lines on a wooden board, and teaching each girl her first lesson.

Men from the Esakunda branch of Fatikunda kaabiloo were also present but took no active part. The village alkaaloo was not there - he was in rather

poor health at the time, and was represented by his younger brother, who received a large share of the kola nuts distributed.

A second ceremony took place immediately afterwards in Jawarakunda ward. Here the elders had already gathered, and the ceremony began when a few men came from the karanding-dungo at Fatikunda and presented them with kola. The children in Jawarakunda were both of slave descent and live in Jalokunda. For their religious instruction they were going to Arafang Karamo Jawara, who was himself of slave origin. The ceremony was accordingly held in the compound of his 'master', Kanjura Jawara\*. The writing on the children's hands and the instruction was performed by Baba Suware, who lives in the compound next to Kanjura, and is his elder sister's son. Kola nuts were shared by Dembo Darāme, an elderly religious teacher living in Jawarakunda kaabiloo. The blacksmith, also resident in this ward, stood up and took his share first. Kola was then given to the alkaaloo's brother, and to other elders present. The munkoo was shared out by one of the Jawara's slaves.

- \* Kanjura was an elderly man, who still had vivid memories of slave raiding in the days before the Protectorate was established. He remembered how dangerous it was to go unarmed even to Kintekunda or Saba. His own sister was captured and taken as a slave. He then set out, captured two slaves himself, and was able to exchange them for his sister, and bring her back home.

Kerewan was originally a Jaxanke town - their society being characterised by a body of religious scholars supported by the labor of a large number of slaves. Everyone in the town was still conscious of the social origins of everyone else, and the traditional roles expected.



Amadou Hampate Ba in Amkoullel L'Enfant Peul, Memoire. 1991, pp. 150-152, describes his experiences at the age of seven, when he began to study, his teacher being Tierno Kounta (Cherno Kunta) .

### BOYS' CIRCUMCISION CEREMONIES

Kerewan (Lower Badibu). February 1947

These ceremonies were held at Kerewan on the first of February 1947, the first time for many years. No ceremonies had been held during the war years, and in 1946 there was a general shortage of food. The elders had been considering the matter for some time, especially as the harvest had been better than in previous years, but nothing had resulted. Other Badibu villages had already started their ceremonies, and what finally induced the Kerewan elders to take action was the fact that a number of their boys ran off to Salikenye to join the ceremonies there. Kerewan people felt shamed by this and decided to hold their own ceremony. This began on a Saturday, the day considered most propitious for such an enterprise. For several days previously the boys went round to their friends and relatives informing them that they were going to circumcision and asking for gifts from them. On the Friday evening there was drumming and dancing in town.

#### Going to Circumcision

Saturday, 1 February 1947. The majority of the boys were taken out "to the bush", early in the morning, and were waiting at the far side of the hill behind the old Agricultural Station. They sat in groups, kaabiloo by kaabiloo (ward by ward). They took off their normal clothes and put on a single white cloth. In most places blacksmiths are the circumcisors. Here the head of the slaves was in charge, with elders of the main slave families assisting. At about ten o'clock the operations began. A boy sat or was supported in a semi sitting position by relatives who held his arms and supported him from behind. When the cut was made, a kola nut was stuffed in the boy's mouth. The boy was then carried to a stone or tree trunk on which he was placed. After the wound had bled for a while, it was tied up, being bandaged with leaves.

In the village other boys who had not yet been taken out, were being carried round the village shoulder high by the young men, or in a few cases, on horseback.

Kerewan had no horses, but some were borrowed from other villages for the occasion. The boys' heads were covered with a shawl of dark blue locally woven cloth. Drummers and women and girls accompanied them, singing and dancing. A few of the women were dressed in men's hats and coats, while many of the young men had put on women's dresses and wore headties. This cross dressing is characteristic of the event. Other youths were carrying cutlasses, brandishing them in the air, engaging in mock combats with each other, and drawing the blades across their chests and arms without cutting themselves, to show the power of their charms. Women who had had stillbirths or a succession of children dying at an early age were performing a series of grotesque dances - one was dressed as a hunter and carried a gun, another as a fisherman, casting a net in front of the advancing crowd. Several aged women were dancing with sticks between their legs, hobby horse fashion. Round the bantabaas, where normally only men are to be found, were groups of excited old women engaged in telling each other that their son or grandson had gone for circumcision.

Though women are not allowed to see what goes on "in the bush", yet they play an important part behind the scenes. Mothers feel that the responsibility for the success or failure of a son lies in her training, and a son is exhorted not to do anything which would bring dishonor to her. As an incentive to be brave during circumcision, a youth may be offered a girl as a future wife, if he shows himself worthy. Women have to take care of the numerous visitors to the town, preparing the extra food and drawing the water necessary. During the initiates' the whole of ~~their~~ period in the bush responsibility for their food lies in the hands of women, who have to see that the food is abundant and nourishing. At public events, e.g. when the initiates return to the town, the women provide the singing and dancing which welcome the boys back again.





Note young men dancing are wearing women's dresses.

Kerewan: 1947

Circumcision ceremonies

YOUNG MEN DANCING WITH CUTLASSES, PASSING THEM ACROSS THEIR CHESTS



VISITORS FROM THE NEIGHBORING VILLAGE OF SUWAREKUNDA



Circumcision taking place on the hillside.



Boys resting in the circumcision shed at mid-day.



The event also attracted hawkers from various places, who spread out their wares, kola nuts, cigarettes, head-ties, perfume, etc. on the ground. Young men who were not immediately concerned with the initiates were drumming and firing off guns.

When a party accompanying a boy reached the edge of the village, they halted for a moment. Then if the boy was being carried on a man's shoulders, the carrier ran with him to the bush; if on horseback, the horse was galloped off, the young men running behind. A few youths would remain behind for a moment, chase the girls back into the village, and then follow the rest of the men.

In the middle of the day parties of young men and women arrived from neighboring villages - Suwarekunda, Kintekunda, Banni, Kunjur, and the Jokadu Mandinka villages. As each village group came it halted on the outskirts of Kerewan, so that stragglers could catch up, and any individuals who had come early could join them. The visitors then entered as village units.

In the afternoon a jujuwo (shed) was erected by Kerewan youths about two hundred yards from the village, between it and the Old Agricultural Station, enclosing a large taboo tree. These trees are generally considered the abodes of protective spirits. The shed was about twenty five yards square, the walls being made of woven reed matting, and roofed over for about nine feet all the way round, but open in the center. It had two entrances, at the east and west sides, and on the south west corner a small annex made where food could be prepared for serving.

All through the day boys continued to be taken to circumcision. By four o'clock nearly all the visitors had arrived and by six many began to return home. Normally one would have expected dancing till late at night, but by nightfall everyone was too tired to do anything more - there had been late dancing the previous night. When a party from Salikenye arrived about ten o'clock at night the village had become completely quiet.



After circumcision the boys from Sirifkunda, and from the Almaami's section of Sisekunda, did not join the rest of the boys in the main shed, but went to a smaller shed of their own attached to Sirifkunda. There the training they would receive would have less secular content, and more Islamic instruction. Here there were 31 boys compared with a total of over 200 in the main jujuwo.

### Life in the Circumcision Shed

A senior member of one of the 'slave' families remained in charge of the shed, and one with second sight was responsible for protection against evil forces. The wounds were regularly inspected and dressed, various leaves being used as medications. (Probably some medicine was also obtained from the local dispensary).

In a few days time when the wounds were healed, small groups of circumcised boys began to make raids into the village carrying thin canes in their hands and holding over their faces circular covers called koteeroo. They would run through the streets, escorted by their attendants (kintangolu)- previously circumcised boys- chasing girls, beating any that they caught, and stealing chickens. The beatings were playful rather than severe, though the girls made a considerable noise when touched. Older women were not chased and defended their chickens with vigorous abuse which was generally effective.

When outside the shed, the boys are not allowed to speak, unless an elder requires a response.

Even a fortnight after the beginning of the ceremonies boys were still being taken out the the jujuwo. These late comers were generally young men who had returned from Bathurst (now Banjul) and Dakar in response to messages from their fathers or brothers. The age range in the group was considerable, from small boys to late teen agers. The older boys had generally been circumcised, but would still be considered solima, until they had been through a period in a jujuwo.

The general routine is that the boys leave the jujuwo in the morning and go into the bush where they receive instruction. In the heat of the day they return, and either sleep or play games. In the evening they are instructed by means of songs, the boys sitting round the shed under the roofed section, while the drummers and kintangolu walk round the taboo tree leading the singing. The boys beat time with two pieces of stick which they strike together, and the older youths go round with canes beating any of the boys that are not singing or beating time.

Discipline in the circumcision shed is in the hands of the attendants of the boys who have previously been through the ceremonies. Each boy has his own kintango who stays with him at all times.

Many activities cannot be performed without permission. A boy must sleep in a position stipulated. He must observe a certain procedure in eating- the boys are seated around calabashes, but must not begin until given permission. They must clean out the calabash<sup>a</sup> even if they do not feel hungry. A boy cannot go out to urinate or defecate without permission and an escort. He must avoid scratching his body. He must avoid abusive language, no matter what he feels. All contact with women has to be avoided. Complete silence must be observed outside the shed. The boys must memorize the songs and sayings taught and are punished for failure to repeat them correctly. In brief the aim of the training is to develop endurance, bravery, discretion, respect, and obedience. Any lapse is met with instant punishment.

The kintangolu see that the drum is beaten when required; that the fire in<sup>out</sup> the shed is properly maintained; that the boys clap and sing with/slacking off; that any senior visitors that come to visit the boys are courteously received; that food is properly served, etc.

The head of the slaves in charge of the jujuwo supervises the activities of the kintangolu, but the enforcement of discipline is left to them.

Much of the instruction is given in the form of songs which are learnt by the initiates. Many of these contain archaic words, and obscure references - references to plants and animals - the meaning of which has to be learnt and is part of the secret training. Some words and phrases are used only in the circumcision context.

One group of songs reflects life in the circumcision shed:

All must undergo circumcision to obtain adulthood....the hardships must be borne without complaining....their predecessors were treated in this way, and so must they be....they must learn complete obedience....authority must be respected... if they were talkative before, they must learn to keep silent when required.... all initiates are equal here, there is no distinction between different classes or castes...praise is given to the first to heal.

As the time for the return to the village draws near, the joy of returning is stressed, but a warning is given that secrets must not be revealed.

Some songs refer to the officials, the old man in charge of the shed, the circumcisor, the wound dressers, etc.

Sometimes the songs repeat traditional Mandinka proverbs:

"An egg cannot fight with a stone, nor can a pigeon fight with an eagle."

Whereas in normal speech they are used singly, they tend to be grouped in pairs during instruction.

Appropriate behavior towards elders is stressed "if an old man owes you a debt, remind him secretly." (i.e. do not shame him in public.). "If you are undertaking something, inform your elders, for they may have a greater understanding of it." The wisdom of elders is stressed : "An old man sitting down, can see what a standing youth cannot."

Youths are told not to marry a virtueless girl. "I cannot paddle your canoe, because it has no paddle...." and to avoid girls of loose character "You black skinned girl, a lover has made you pregnant...I know the people of today." Avoid dealings with prostitutes, particularly wharf-town girls. Other songs deal with sexual behavior, its pleasures and dangers. Youths are warned against

committing adultery for husbands can track down and punish them.

Many songs reflect traditional moral behavior and offer a general attitude to life. "Don't deceive people...deception is a deep pit into which you yourself may fall...be generous...greediness is dangerous....don't throw away a good reputation...don't be excessively proud....act politely....don't bite off more than you can chew....even when full today, be prepared for hunger tomorrow....all things come to an end (even hardship)....little by little achieves much in the end.....look before you leap....beauty does not prevent a person from dying... These items are often couched in obscure language, which is then explained to the initiates.

Many songs carry multiple meanings- a straightforward interpretation, a meaning with sexual significance, and a deeper philosophical meaning. It is the deeper meanings that are the real secrets of the circumcision shed.

A song like "Meat, oh, meat  
If you see a knife in the meat,  
Someone put it there."

or "If you enter a place  
Enter my the main door  
If you come in the back way  
People will believe you are up to no good."

are the type of songs which can carry multiple meanings.

One of the aims of the teaching is to provide individuals with material which they can use later to comment indirectly on inappropriate behavior by an age mate. By hearing the words of a song that fit the context sung quietly, the offender will know that his actions have been noticed and are drawing disapproval. At the same time there is no direct face-to-face confrontation, and no outside parties are made aware of the situation. Various signs, how to call another man, without letting women present know, are taught to the initiates.

Kerewan: 1947

Circumcision Ceremony

(a) Pole erected for the Bajoja ceremonies

(b) Initiates and their kintangolu dancing around the shed.



CIRCUMCISION CEREMONIES - KEREWAN. 1947.

Group of recently circumcised boys. (Note the wide age range),



Boys with their kooteerolu covering their faces.



KURO (WASHING)

22 February

During the period that they are in the jujuwo after circumcision, the boys are not permitted to touch water except for drinking. They must not wash themselves or their clothes until a special ceremony is held. On this day in the early morning they are taken down to the creek to bathe and wash their clothes. When the sun has dried their garments they return in single file bearing firewood they have collected.

After this they divided up into kaabiloo groups and marched into the village, their faces covered by their kooteros. The boys went to their individual compounds and threw down the wood in the yard, and went to pay their respects to the compound head, kneeling before him. They then went indoors. They were still not permitted to speak to women, even their own mothers. A few youths ran through the village chasing the girls, but most remained in their houses. At mid-day the boys were collected up again and returned to the jujuwo. The afternoon was spent resting or playing.

The boys were told that that night a devil was coming to try to eat them. In the evening they were gradually worked up into a state of fear. The young men sang songs about the "devil", and all the boys who wanted to relieve themselves were told to go out before supper, otherwise the devil would get them. By supper time most of the young men and many elders had come out to the shed. Immediately after they had eaten, a deep roaring sound (made by a bullroarer - nyarankoloo ) was heard going round the shed. The devil had come. The newly circumcised boys were rushed to the center of the shed round the taboo tree, while the older youths ran round them to protect them, singing, jumping, firing off guns, and making all possible noise to scare off "the devil". Some seized firebrands, and threw them over the roof. Even elderly men leapt wildly up and down. Attendants were stationed at the entrances of the shed, both to keep the devil from getting in, and stop the boys from getting out. They and the elders kept crying the name "Choore Maama,

Choore Maama (Grandfather Choore)."

After a while the devil ceased to roar - he had been driven off, and the boys were allowed back to their places round the sides of the shed, but hardly had they settled down, when the roaring began again, and they were rushed back to the tree, and the yelling and dancing continued as before. The night's performance was considered a great success. The devil paid many visits, but failed to get in, and, in the words of one old man, "plenty boys spoil their trousers."

The next day, after the previous excitement, was a quiet one. But in the afternoon the boys came out and cleared the ground near the jujuwo where a pole - the kuta mansa yiroo - was to be erected.

#### BAJOJA

A pole about twelve feet high, on the top of which had been placed a pot, was erected at night on the cleared ground near the shed. The next morning early, the boys went down to the creek to bathe and wash their clothes. They returned about two o'clock, bringing back wood and thatching material. This time they wore newly made koteeroo (face masks) decorated with coins and painted designs, (See photograph, page 29 ), presented to them by their fathers or brothers. The boys were given their ~~mid~~<sup>day</sup> meal in the village, as much as they could eat, and were visited and congratulated by male friends and relatives. They returned to the shed about three o'clock. After a short rest each group marched back to the bantabaa of its own kaabiloo, where the elders had sheep, goats, and bullocks tied up ready for them. All lay down on their stomachs in single file for a few minutes (See photograph p. 29 ), then rose up and went off through the village. The elders began to slit the throats of the animals, and when the meat was all cut up, the boys were called back to receive their share.

At five o'clock the villagers gathered to watch the dance at the kuta mansa yiroo. Women were present and stood about thirty yards from the pole on the



side nearest the village. The men were on the jujuwo side. The boys came out and danced round the shed waving their koteeroos, sometimes throwing them into the air, and then danced round the pole which they circled about a dozen times at high speed. Small boys who could not keep up the pace or were in danger of being trampled were carried on the shoulders of young men. (See photograph:p.28B ). The boys then lay down in two rows, about twenty yards from the pole, facing the village. Individual dancing started, for the most part only elderly men and women taking part. Much of the dancing was of a very amusing and highly indecent character. A man dressed as a hairy devil, and a woman with a fish net, provided a good deal of entertainment. After an hour the boys rose, circled the pole and returned to their shed. Dancing, now taken over by the younger men and women, continued until nearly dark, when the drummers moved off into the village.

#### THE VISIT OF A KANKURANG

The following day (27 February) a similar ceremony was held, but was attended by a much smaller crowd. It was rumored that a kankurang (See photo on page <sup>45</sup> ) would make his appearance, but he failed to appear, and his visit was postponed until the following day. The performance then was somewhat marred by the fact that the best drummer failed to turn up. The kankurang, however, was ready, and came down from the hill behind the Agricultural Station, escorted by two attendants, and vanished into the shed.

The kankurang did not come from Kerewan itself, but from one of the Mandinka villages in Jokadu. He was dressed in a skirt of leaves, with projecting buttocks, a shirt of red bark from the faara tree, a long pigtail of bark hung down his back, and a tongue of bark came from his mouth. His face and arms were smeared with clay, and his elbows and ankles had bands of bark tied round them. In one hand he held a cutlass, in the other a stick. He danced backwards and forwards over the bodies of the boys, who were lying down, tapping them with his stick, occasionally breaking through the crowd of spectators, holding up prominent

people and threatening to beat them or knock off their hats unless placated with a present. From time to time he flung his knife or his stick over the heads of the crowd. None of the spectators, except for some of the children, seemed particularly in awe of the figure. This may have been because Kerewan was an old Muslim village, and regarded the kankurang as something of a pre-islamic element.

The kankurang's visit and the bullroarer were not originally planned in the ceremonies. I had asked about them when the ceremonies were about to begin and was told that such customs were no longer observed here. But there happened to be a Mandinka from up-river who knew how to make the bullroarer, and he re-introduced the element.

#### FINAL STAGES

On the first of March the boys went to pay their respects to the District Chief at Kintekunda, taking firewood for him. In the evening they returned, danced round the kuta mansa yiroo for a few minutes, and retired to the shed.

On the third of March the boys returned from the shed to the village. At dawn they went to the Mosque where the elderly people met them, and prayers were said. They then went down to the creek to bathe, returning about ten o'clock. The shed was demolished, the matting and useful poles being brought to the old man who had been in charge of the shed. The rest was burnt. The boys then scattered and went to their homes. In the evening they re-assembled and went to pay their respects to those living in the Government area.

There was one event still to come, Sitindoo, when new clothes and a feast are provided for the boys. This would normally take place a month after the boys had come out. Food supplies, however, were running short, so the ceremony was postponed indefinitely.

A report from The Gambia News Bulletin, 16 January 1975, p. 1 & 5 states:

KEREWAN PAYS HEED TO PRESIDENT'S ADVICE AGAINST FOOD WASTAGE.

Kerewan set the first satisfactory example by responding to the President's recent appeal against food and money wastage in traditional ceremonies. Reports reaching Banjul from the Commissioner's Office say that the villagers of Kerewan have recently circumcised more than 200 children and in response to the appeal made by the President, their parents avoided the traditional way of taking them to the bush where much food and money are usually wasted. Instead, the children have returned to their respective homes and prayers were offered for them at the mosque without any kind of feasting.

The Commissioner in charge of the Division, Mr. Mamour Jagne praised the villagers for what he called "this bright example". He further appealed to the people of North Bank Division to respect the President's advice by following Kerewan's example.

BOYS' CIRCUMCISION CEREMONIES- MANDINA (KIANG)

Account by A.K.Rahman

(1) Appointment of the day (lung muta).

On the 15th of January 1949 at a meeting at the Mosque the elders of Mandina decided it was time their boys went to a jujuwo (circumcision shed). The first step was to engage a fortune teller (seer) to choose a lucky day for commencing the ceremonies, and a collection was made to pay the expenses.

The following day three elders went to consult Cherno Silla of Jinani- a famous mooroo (learned man). After receiving their present, he informed them that the Saturday which fell on the 6th day of Anabisukuwo-nola (= 5th February) was a propitious day. He also instructed them to kill a red goat as "charity" (alms).

The elders returned to Mandina and killed a goat, which was provided by the alkaloo. Nothing further was done until the end of January when messages were sent to other villages in Kiang to spread the news, and invite everybody, strangers and local people alike, to attend.

(2) Farewell to relatives (Ngansing-sarandoo)

On Wednesday the second of February boys who had relatives living in other villages, left Mandina to pay them farewell visits. Each boy was escorted by a griot. One went to Jasobo, one to Jomar, one to Kolior, one to Masembe, and one to Jenyeri.

The boy who came to Jenyeri was a son of Lang Kante Jali, a famous griot, who had been a follower of the king at Jenyeri. (There are no longer any members of the royal lineage in Jenyeri). Jenyeri received him enthusiastically and within a few minutes the boys and girls poured into the compound where he lodged to greet him. The girls provided food for the evening meal.

After supper all the kafolu (age sets) met at the bantaba to discuss the handing over of the boy. The griot who accompanied him opened the meeting by saying: "I am sent by the boy's uncle and mother to bring

him to you. They propose to send him to the bush on Saturday. They are your nyamaaloo (i.e. the caste group comprising smiths, leather-workers and musicians) since earliest times. They feel that anything happening in their family should be known to you for without you Kante

Wali would not have come to Kiang. The boy is your nyamaaloo, your son, and your property. I have been asked to hand him over to you, as he is to go to the bush on Saturday, and I have done so."

There was a pause and the crowd signified its general approval. One of the men replied: "This shows true relationship and love. These nyamaaloo have performed their duty to us. Now it is our turn to do ours. Had it not been for present circumstances, this boy would not be circumcised at Mandina. Jenyeri ought to circumcise him and be responsible for all the feasts. That was what our fathers did for his father and that is what we should do. Unfortunately we are not circumcising this year, and the notice they give us is short. Now you Jenyer youths, this is an occasion on which you can show your nobility in mind and birth. Prepare yourselves for the day."

The leader of the main kafoo then spoke: "We are all here. Let us prepare to accompany this boy to Mandina on Saturday. No subscription will be made. Every person is to go with what he has. We should bear in mind that we will be challenged by the neighboring villages, and we should show the people that though the men have died, the blood still flows." (A reference to the death of Jenyeri heroes in the Soninke-Marabout war against Fode Kaba's forces.)

Finally the alkaaloo rose and said: "Now this is clear to everybody. We need not waste time here. Tomorrow evening a barawuloo (a special dance held before circumcision) should be given in this boy's honor. It should continue the whole night. Buy as much gunpowder as you like, and fire guns all night. And in the morning after breakfast, get ready and take the boy to the Field Working Party Compound. A lorry is going to Mandina from there. Whatever happens, don't lose prestige."

### (3) Accompanying the boy to circumcision.

On Saturday the whole male population of the compound where the boy lodged, and the young women, assembled in the center of the compound, singing. All the other young men and boys, and women and girls were waiting for them at the bantabaa. Those going to Mandina were easily recognised. Men wore women's dresses, and imitated women when singing and dancing. Young women wore their brightest dresses and were adorned with beads and ornaments of every description. Middle aged women danced like men. Some carried oars pretending to be fishermen; some with kooras followed people shouting as if they were male griots. Others wore long strings of snail shells of various

colors and sizes. Some made themselves as ugly and ragged as possible. Some of the boys wore shirts made of cement bags, others had feather hats. The men put on their anti-gun and anti-knife charms, and each carried a cutlass or a gun. On this occasion everyone is free to behave as he or she wants, and behave as foolishly as they like. Slaves smiths, etc. can speak as openly as they like. Elderly men can dance among the boys and girls.

Drumming began and the party walked to the Field Working Party Compound. Only one elder accompanied the procession, the rest remaining in the village. The smith was singing the barawuloo donkiloo - a song relating the great events of Jenyeri's past and the bravery of the Saanes. These songs stir up village pride and make the youths boastful and generous, so that they give clothes and money away freely.

The lorry took the party to Mandina, but so many kept coming that they did not form themselves into the village group until about one o'clock in the afternoon. They then started singing the barawuloo from about a hundred yards outside the village, and began dancing and firing off guns. The young men were brandishing their cutlasses and knives, rubbing them across their chests and arms and thighs without cutting themselves, to show the power of their charms. The dance continued until about 4.30 when it broke up, the women and girls going to the village, the men taking the boy to the "bush".

#### (4) Handing over the boy to the operator (Mantankara)

When they arrived at the mantankara (i.e. the surgeon's tree), the boy was set down on a sheet of white cloth. All the villagers stood round him. The griot sang a long praise song - the history of the Saanes. One of the elders finally stopped him and said "Jenyer people, here is your boy, and this is the last opportunity for action. Do what you want to do, and leave the world to say it." Guns were fired off, and another speaker said "We will not forgive anyone who goes about looking for change." So saying he threw down eight shillings (two dalasis) on the cloth. Another threw down 3 dalasis, and so on. They were there, throwing down money, and boasting for about an hour. At six o'clock the money was collected up and taken with the boys to the juujuwo-tiyoo, the man in charge of the circumcision shed. After the formal greetings, the boy was handed over with the words: "We, the

people of Jenyer, are herewith handing over this boy to you on behalf of his parents, because we have equal rights over him. We give him to you to prepare his mind for the new life ahead of him. Here is the money presented to him by his relatives and friends. About forty two dalasis was counted out. (Kwinella people had also made gifts, making up perhaps a quarter of the amount.)

The crowd then moved to the village bantabaa, leaving the boy with his fellows in the 'bush'. The women meantime had gathered in the alkaaloo's yard, and handed over the rice which was to be used in feeding the boy while in the juujuwo. Then they returned to the bantabaa, where they danced for a while.

(5) Ngansing kidindoo - Scaring the initiates.

The circumcision shed was built during the afternoon about three hundred yards from the 'surgeon's tree', on the far side of the road. About half past six, the man in charge of the shed told the boys to stand up, and shouted "hirrr". The boys ran to the juujuwo, followed by all the men. When the boys and their followers reached it, they knelt down facing the tree in the center of the juujuwo.

The circumciser, the juujuwo-tiyo, and the alkaaloo, went round the tree three times, then stood before it and said: "Tree and its dwellers (i.e. the protective spirits), we come in peace and hope to meet peace. We have come with our young ones to seek your protection from Satan, from witches and from all other evils. You have protected us and protected our fathers. We beg you to protect these boys likewise. By your powers and greatness we will be comforted."

After this they told the boys to sit under the tree, leaning their backs on it, and to sing for the tree and the spirits in it. This continued until sunset.

(6) Bajoja.

The Bajoja took place on the following Tuesday. On the night of Monday-Tuesday, the kuta mansa yiroo was made. This is a pole about ten feet high cut from a jaloo tree, which witches do not like. The pole is cut and smoothed in the bush at night, so that no woman can see how it is done. At midnight the craftsman and the juujuwo-tiyo come to the open area near the village, and erect the pole, placing on top a pot containing water. The top of the pole is hollowed out, so

that the pot can remain there without being blown off by the wind. When the work is finished they return to the juujuwo to wait for the dawn.

In the early morning drumming started at the juujuwo and all the boys walked to the kuta mansa yiro, their faces being covered with their kotērolu (plate shaped coverings of straw), so that women would not be able to recognize them. When they reached the pole the boys lay down with their heads towards the kuta mansa yiroo. The kintangolu (the older or circumcised boys who are their teachers and attendants in the juujuwo) danced round the kuta mansa yiroo. The women then joined the crowd and sang. This continued until about ten o'clock when the boys returned to the shed.

The pasingo (wisdom test) was held in the afternoon. This is a competition between men and women. The men went off to the bush to decide how to puzzle the women. On returning they took a long rope, and spread it in a large circle on the ground in a loose knot, where they knew the women would later be standing, leaving the ends stretching further away. The rope was then covered over with sand.

When the pasingo time came the men started the tricks. A man with a monkey on his side covered by a huge gown, came into the ring of spectators, danced, and then shook himself setting the monkey free. It fell on the ground and ran towards the women who fled in fear. The men cheered. Next an elderly woman came with a calabash full of water, and a steaming pot on the calabash containing fire and dung, so that it smoked but did not blaze. The top of the pot was covered. She stood in the ring, and said: "I am carrying fire and water on my head. How did I mix them?" The men failed to give a satisfactory answer. She lifted the cover and smoke escaped, uncovered the calabash and shook herself. Water splashed out. The women cheered and laughed at the men.

The men then decided to finish the entertainment by drawing both ends of the rope together and binding all the women's legs. Some fell over, others bumped into one another. They were so surprised that panic overcame them, and they ran shouting towards the village. The men chased them crying "Run, run, the devil is after you." The men were considered victorious.

After this the boys went to the juujuwo-tiyo's compound in the village instead of to the shed in the bush. They spent the evening dancing, and after the dance they were reminded of all that was told to them in the juujuwo. They spent the whole of the night awake. The



The next morning they washed, dressed in clean clothes, and were handed back to their parents. At midday the shed was burnt by the boys. It is believed that if any of the materials from the shed is taken to the village and used, the village will be burnt down in a few days time, owing to the anger of the spirits in the tree. After the shed had been demolished the boys knelt and offered thanks to the tree and its spirit, praying that they might live to see their own children do the same.

Mandina went through its ceremonies in less than a week. This was because all the boys had been previously circumcised, and there was no period of waiting for the wounds to heal. But even though the act of circumcision had been performed, the boys were still regarded as solimaa (uninitiated) until they had been through the initiation period "in the bush".

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(Answers to queries from D.P.G.)

Mandina is a very small village, and the people were not well off for foodstuffs, so many possible ceremonies were not performed.

None of the boys went round the village chasing the girls or stealing chickens. This only happens when you have newly circumcised boys (nycba juujuwo).

There was no special washing ceremony (kuuroo). This would have increased the time and number of feast days.

As the juujuwo was a small one, there was no visit by a nyarankolo (bull-roarer).

The Samasoo is also an expensive one. Again, as the boys were few in number, and food was short, they did without.

No kankurang appeared. This was not necessary because his task is to protect the newly circumcised against witches and evil spirits, and there were no newly circumcised boys present.

There was no visit to the Mosque when the boys came out. Areas which were formerly Soninke often ignore this stage.

There was no feast connected with the sitindoo (dressing up). The boys simply put on clean clothes when they were ready to return home.

Comparative Material

A useful article is:

Oumar Cisse        "La circoncision au Khasso: Role et places des different actants,"  
                          Etudes Maliennes, No.46, 1992, 34-56.

See also:

Abdou Gnabaly     "La circoncision chez les Diakhanke (Guinee),"  
                          Islam et sociétés au Sud du Sahara, 1988, No.2, 151-154.

A brief description of the Wolof ceremony is given in:

David P. Gamble,        Peoples of The Gambia. I. The Wolof.  
 Linda K. Salmon &  
 Alhaji Hasan Njie        Gambian Studies, No. 17, 1985, 28-29.

For the Fulbe,

Amadou Hampate Ba    Amkoullel: L'Enfant Peul. Memoires.  
                                  1991, 217-227.

An early account of circumcision in the Upper River area is given by

Richard Jobson:        The Golden Trade, 1623  
                                  (1968 edition, pp. 137-150).

Bouillagui Fadiga     "Une circoncision chez les Marka du Soudan,"  
                                  Bulletin du Comité d'Études Historiques et Scientifiques  
                                  de l'A.O.F.    T.XVII (4), Oct-Dec. 1934, 546-577.

(DAA-SOO / DA-SO -LIP-TATTOOING)

D.P.G. & A.K.R.  
(1949)

The majority of Mandinka girls have their lips tattooed a bluish color. Red lips are not considered beautiful. Tattooing is generally performed in the dry season from January to March, when the rice harvesting is over and there is little work to be done. Kerewan had several women skilled in the operation living in the village: in the case of many villages in the Kiyang Districts the task is carried out by itinerant specialists.

At Kerewan the <sup>t</sup>tattooing is performed inside the compound and afterwards the girls remain indoors until their lips are healed. On the south bank the tattooing is generally carried out publicly in an open space beside the village bantabaa or under a shady mango tree. It takes place early in the afternoon, about two o'clock, and is attended by most of the girls and young women of the village. A jii-tantango (water drum, consisting of a calabash <sup>a</sup>upturned in a large basin of water) is beaten, and the girls attending sing and dance.

The woman who is tattooing sits on the ground with her legs outstretched while the girl lies flat on her back with her head between the woman's legs. The girl's head and eyes are covered with a cloth, leaving only the mouth uncovered, and another cloth is spread over her body. To one side is a bowl containing medicine - jambakatango leaves in water - on the other, a horn containing a charm. The girl washes out her mouth with the jambakatango solution, and the operator begins pricking her lips with a small bundle of half a dozen nganing-koyo (white thorn) thorns tied together. She next rubs in black powder which is made from burnt daafingo leaves, lamp black, and washing blue. The pricking is then re-commenced. When the bleeding becomes profuse the girl spits out the blood into a hollow in the ground on her left; sand is sprinkled over it, and she washes out her mouth with the jambakatango solution. As the pricking goes on, a friend continually pats her on the chest.

Generally a group of girls of the same age have their lips done together.

When a girl leaves the place where the daa-soo has been done, she is normally carried home by her father's brother's<sup>s</sup> daughter, her father's sister's daughter or her husband's or fiance's daughter. In some cases a person of slave origin belonging to her husband's family carries her. If the carrier is a man, the girl is carried on his shoulder ; if a woman, the girl is carried on her back.

The mouth takes about a week or ten days to heal. At Kerewan the girls remain indoors during this period. At Jenyeri they often continue their daily work soon afterwards, but their mouths are covered by a piece of cloth about four inches square hanging down over their lips and tied round the backs of their heads with string.

While their lips are still swollen the girls have to eat either by holding back their heads and dropping in small portions of food, or by pouring it in with a spoon. Drinking is done by pouring water into the mouth from the handle of a kalamaa (a ladle-like calabash), or with a bent cigarette tin.

It is considered cowardly to refuse to have tattooing done.

The tattooing procedure figures in a film made in 1971 by the Senegalese film maker Ababacar Samb-Makharam. In the film a girl, Kodou, interrupts the ritual and flees, bringing disgrace to her family. Because of this and her "dreaming", visions of a horseman coming to carry her away, she is treated as mad and tied up. An outsider from the city, whose vehicle has broken down, persuades the family to let her be treated in a modern hospital but this seem to have little effect, and her relatives take her away. They then go to a traditional healer who treats her by inducing a trance state by drumming and dancing (ndëp). In the end she seems to make a readjustment to village life.

See also: David P. Gamble,  
Linda K. Salmon,  
Alhaji Hassan Njie

Peoples of The Gambia. I. The Wolof  
1985.  
Gambian Studies No. 17, 29-30.

The Mandinka text and English translation of 7 songs is given in  
David P. Gamble. Elementary Mandinka. Gambian Studies No. 20, 1987, p. 84.

Typical are songs in praise of the girl being tattooed:

"Dance for her,  
This child does not know disobedience,"

"Have you a child like this at home ?  
Behold, there is none like her."

"Come let us repay the debt,  
Some debts are sweet,  
The debt has got to be paid."

(Urging dancers to repay the girl  
for her loyalty.)

"The fat slave woman's stomach is full,  
Behold, her master is good."

(The credit for a girl's virtue belong to  
her parents.)

"(Nonsense phrase)  
I who stagger,  
Would I not fall ? "

(A song making fun of those who  
cannot dance.)

"Lala's mother cannot dance,  
Lala's mother is only good at eating."

" " " " "

"Oh slave, oh slave  
slave of a slave ."

(A song of sympathy. Slave refers  
to "Slave of God"... God will take  
care of her. )

"Baby, baby o.  
She takes after her mother,  
The little Laibo is angry  
She takes after her mother."

(Laibo refers to a gypsy like  
woodworker, and is used as a term of  
contempt.

"Let's go, let's go,  
The monkey has come to your place."

(Indicates either that a stranger has  
come to the gathering, or the old  
man who usually stops the dance is  
coming."

Bateling, Western Kiang. February 1949. A.K.RAHMAN

These started on Friday 11th February 1949, with drumming and dancing. Relatives and friends came from all parts of Western and Central Kiang - Kantongkunda, Tankular, Jamaru, Burong, Sankandi, Baijana, Jataba, Dumbuto, Sandeng, Wurokang, Bambako, Kwinela, and Kuno Mansasansang; from Bondali in Fonyi, and Jenyeri and Kaiaf in Eastern Kiang. The women brought rice or money for their friends or relatives whose daughters were going for initiation. Twenty one sheep were killed by the Bateling people - the village consists of only eighteen compounds - and three drummers were there, one from Kwinela, one from Burong, and one from Bondali. Supper was not served to the strangers until nearly midnight. After supper, the Sergeant, who was the seefoo's representative, the seefoo having gone to a Divisional Conference at Mansakonko, announced that the ceremony was a woman's one, and no man should disturb them. Every woman was at liberty to do whatever she liked. No man was allowed to guard his wife during this period, and if he heard that any man had beaten his wife, or fought with another man because he was joking or chatting with his wife, that man would be tied with rope and kept in the chief's cell until the ceremony was over. Let no man ask a stranger where he was going if he found him in his women's quarters. All unmarried men should give up their houses to strangers.

After this announcement the girls were brought together in the Ngansimbaa's house. (i.e. the old woman in charge of the operations). The Ngansimbaa for Bateling was assisted by ngansimbaalu from Kwinela and Jataba, and the ngansimbaa from Bambako, who is the senior ngansimbaa in this area. They all met at the house for the Nundiroo (Hiding). No man or woman, apart from the girls and the ngansimbaalu is allowed to be present. The senior ngansimbaa prepared medicine with which to bathe the girls - consisting of jaloo bark, sunkungo leaves, tankongo roots and salt.

KANKURANGS

At Kerewan: 1947

At Bateling 1949



These were mixed in water, and while she was stirring them she recited: "In the name of our ancestors and their knowledge, by the powers of the kankurango, we seek refuge from all evil spirits, Satan, jinns, wizards and witches ; we seek protection from all bad breezes and winds in honor of the Kabaa Nyunko, (This is an old tree in Bateling which was worshipped by their ancestors and is still respected at the present day. It is impossible to find out exactly where it comes out of the ground. See photograph on page 47 ), and its blessings. She kept on repeating these words and spitting on the water after repetition. When this was completed she called the girls one by one, and washed them, starting with the genitals, then the face, the right hand side of the body, the left hand side, and finally the feet. After this it is considered that witches will find their bodies bitter... She then told the girls to be seated and instructed them as follows: "You are now adult women and are supposed to be sensible. This is a custom which we did not invent, but a thing which has been observed by our ancestors from time immemorial. That is why we do it. Any woman who does not pass through this is not clean and will never be married or be fit to be trusted with any domestic duties. Besides that, this is a women's concern and must be kept secret. If any of us reveal these secrets to any man, the spirit will take revenge on us. It is not a question of sickness or bad luck, but of immediate death. So you see how strong our faith must be in the grandfather spirit and his laws. As from today you are in his hands. He protects you from all evils while you are in the juujuwo and the only way you can offend him is by telling any of these secrets to men. You also have the kankurang to aid you. The kankurang will help you where we fail (i.e. if witches raid the girls). The kankurang is neither male nor female, he is a spirit sent by the old spirits to guard you. He is very powerful and brave, and if he suspects that secrets are being told he will kill us."

After this she took the girls' head ties and made a knot in the centre of each. She asked them to fasten the head ties round their heads placing the



The famous Kabaa Nyunko tree



Girls being taken to the swamp area - concealed in the crowd.



knot on the forehead. This style is worn only by initiates, so that the spirit can recognise them. The girls then went to bed.

Meanwhile the men and women were dancing in the village. Most people did not go to bed, and dancing and singing continued until sunrise. Those who became tired would go and rest for a while, and then later get up and join in the dancing.

At dawn the ngansimbaalu woke up the girls, gave them food, and washed them as before. Mothers and sisters came to visit them and encourage them. At eight o'clock the crowd with the drummers outside the ngansimbaa's gate to await her appearance. When she came out with the girls the crowd accompanied them as they went down the path to the swamp area. (see photograph, page 47 ). When they came to the cotton tree which is about a mile from the swamps, the drummers and the men stopped, and the women continued to the place where the operation (clitoridectomy) was to be performed.

The senior ngansimbaa walked round the area to make sure that no man or animal was around. Animals were suspect, for it is believed that some witches are able to assume animal form, appearing as a dog, goat, bird, etc.

The girls then sat on mats facing the senior ngansimbaa, while the other ngansimbaalu did the operations, the girls being brought to them one by one. The senior ngansimbaa applied medicine after the operation.

Other women then sang songs about sexual intercourse and the desire for it. They tell the girls how men behave during intercourse...They sing that men will do anything when they wish to marry them, and show love and service during the engagement period, but after marriage, things change completely, and men begin to treat them badly.

When all had been completed, the girls were carried home on women's backs. They were met by the drummers and griots at the cotton tree, where the women started dancing and singing again, until they reached the ngansimbaa's compound.

They stood there for a few moments, and then went to the bantabaa with the girls. While the woman and girls were dancing for the initiates, who were seated on mats, the young men collected millet stalks and made a shed (juujuwo) at the back of the ngansimbaa's house. When this was ready the ngansimbaa and her girls returned there, while the rest continued dancing until about two o'clock when they stopped for lunch. Before the girls entered the shed, the senior ngansimbaa went in, to drive out any evil spirits that might be there, uttering words which were neither Arabic nor Mandinka.

About 6.30 the kankurang came to the village with his attendants (joooolu). He wore a mask over his head with two horns, and a suit of taloo leaves. (See photograph, p. 45 ) They went direct to the ngansimbaa's yard where the kankurang stood behind the juujuwo and calling the ngansimbaalu by their names said: "I have come to tell you that you have undertaken the responsibility of protecting these girls. Now they are here, they are all my daughters, and I am making it plain to you that if any of these girls happens to be troubled even with a headache your lives will be in my hands. I shall take you to the bush and if no satisfactory explanation is given, you will die. Do you hear ? I am watching you wherever I may be, and whatever you do here is known to me."

Then he went to the chief's compound and called the Sergeant saying: "You are the seefoo's representative today, and I want you to know that tomorrow night I shall appear in Bateling to see what is going on in the girls' juujuwo and I want every soul in Bateling- male and female - to be at the bantabaa from after supper to sunrise, only the seefoo and his wife whose turn it is to sleep with him, the alkaaloo and his wife whose turn it is, the almaamoo and his wife, the Sergeant and his wife, will be excused. All the rest must be at the bantabaa, villagers and strangers alike. If anyone thinks that he cannot bear this he should leave the village before Sunday night. I shall go round the village from house to house, and if I find any house locked I shall break the

door and beat the occupants severely and then conduct them to the bantabaa. He then went away and the sergeant sent the village crier round to announce the kankurang's message.

About eight o'clock the girls were given their supper and their wounds dressed, and then they started singing, which they kept up until after midnight. The other men and women who had not slept for twenty-four hours had a chance to sleep. The rest of the night was quiet. In the juujuwo the girls slept on mats spread on the ground. A fire was kept burning, and a drum was beaten in turn by the ngansimbaalu throughout the night to show that they were not asleep.

Unfortunately one of the girls who was weak and a leper complained of headache and fever. The kankurang heard of this and was alarmed. He came to the juujuwo and told the ngansimbaalu that they had been careless, and that he had seen a witch enter the juujuwo, but thought they would have attacked her. Now, whether this girl dies or not, the ngansimbaalu should be prepared to give an account of the girl's illness on Wednesday afternoon when four kankurangolu would come from Kwinela. This made the ngansimbaalu very angry.

On Sunday night the kankurang appeared and chased everyone to the bantabaa. Jooboolu (attendants) were posted all round to see that nobody left. If anyone wished to go to the latrine or to urinate a jooboo escorted him and brought him back. All men had to be seated, and women standing, clapping and singing all night. From time to time the kankurang inspected the jooboolu at their posts and entered the compounds looking for runaways.

#### BULU-KUUWO (Hand washing)

Wednesday, 13th February, was the day fixed by the ngansimbaalu for the bulu-kuuwo. As Kwinela and Bateling are related villages, when one holds such a ceremony, the other acts as master of ceremonies. In this case the people of Bateling lodged the strangers and provided the food, which was handed over to Kwinela people for distribution, and the ceremony was organised by Kwinela.

In the early afternoon the young men went into the bush to prepare the dresses for the kankurang. Three suits of taloo leaves were made, for the kankurang was to dance all night, and spare suits were necessary. The men came back from the bush and when they were in sight of the town, the kankurang was dressed. He came to the village about halfpast five and went first to the ngansimba's compound to greet her. He then ordered the people to meet at the Rest House about 150 yards from the village. (This was a mud walled thatched house, on the outskirts of the village, built for the use of visiting Government officials.) His jooboolu (attendants) were partly Kwinela boys and partly Bateling boys. They went round the village ordering everyone to the Rest House compound, and by quarter past six the whole population had assembled there, the women on one side, and the men on another.

The ngansimbaalu and their staff bearers (dokoo mutalaalu) sat on a mat by themselves. Thirteen large calabashes full of rice and futoo (millet) with plenty of meat were brought from the village. These were provided by the chief and the girls' parents. Ten goats were killed for the occasion. The food was taken on one side and kept in a small hut.

Dancing started as soon as all had come. The first to dance was the Dumbuto ngansimbaa. Other women followed. Finally the Bateling ngansimbaa rose up to dance and as she did so all the women flocked round her. She danced quietly, moving slowly towards the chief, who threw some coins to her, which her followers gratefully collected. The ngansimbaa paid her respects to the chief and then returned to her place. Shortly afterwards the kankurang appeared and danced for about ten minutes. Then he stopped and his attendant ordered everyone to be quiet. When all were silent he said: "Kwinela and Bateling and strangers. I want to tell you one thing. Night is beginning to come. This business is a thing which we take from our fathers and grandfathers. Now if any of you thinks he cannot stand the strain, he may say so and walk out of Bateling before night. Every house will be entered by jooboolu, except the

seefoo's house, the alkaaloo's house, the almaamoo's house, the Sergeant's house, the European's house and his clerks. (i.e. the Rest House where DPG was staying). These people are allowed to sleep if they like, but if we suspect them to be hiding other people in their houses, the jooboolu will have to enter to search them out."

After this speech the food was handed over to Kwinela for distribution. After the distribution by the faalifoolu, the crowd moved back to the village, and the kankurang disappeared into the bush. In the village the women assembled in the ngansimbaa's house. Here they had their evening meal, and the girls' hands were washed for the first time since their operation.

In the village girls were visiting their boy friends in their houses, and the boys were parading up and down the street chatting with the girls who were all dressed up in their finest clothes. The chatting was abruptly ended by the arrival of the kankurang in the village as soon as the moon had risen. Doors began to slam, and girls rushed out of the houses to the bantabaa. Boys came out with sulky faces, feeling annoyed with the kankurang and his attendants for interrupting their fun.

Practically everybody had met at the bantabaa by midnight, though the kankurang and his attendants continued chasing hidiers out of the village for another half hour or so. The ngansimbaa and her staff bearers were almost the last to come. When she sat down the drummer changed his drumming to lenjengo. The ngansimbaa's first song was:

"Kuntang konomaa be leewo to,  
i yaa, wuloolu wo ! "

"A pregnant deer is in the swamp,  
home, dogs."

The 'pregnant deer' meant a person whom she suspected to be absent from the bantabaa. The attendants understood, and rushed off to make a search.

The elderly women continued dancing through the night, interrupted by occasional visits from the kankurang, who threatened those who were not singing or clapping.

About half past two in the morning an unfortunate accident happened to the kankurang. A millet stalk apparently caught between his legs and caused him to stumble in the fire, or very close to it. The crowd fell silent. The kankurang tried to clear himself by pretending that he had done it deliberately, and stooped over the fire, beating on it with his leaves, and causing sparks to fly out. But his leaf skirt had come loose and was falling off. The women rushed over shouting "kadeewo, kadeewo." The men on the other side came to the help of the kankurang, and took him away from the crowd. The women insisted that the men must suffer kadeewo, a punishment in which the offender's party comes and lives off the offender's food supplies for a certain period of time. But the claim did not succeed, for they failed to fall on the kankurang and undress him, and could not identify what part of his dress was off, so the men got away with it.

But the Kwinela ngansimbaa wanted her revenge, and told the Kwinela men present to be ready for kadeewo and to produce three kankurangs to punish Bateling. Bateling people became scared. Kwinela ngansimbaa said that she should have done it last year, but they knew Bateling was short of food, so she was going to do it this year, now, this very moment. She was not going to Kwinela, but would stay here and send for all Kwinela to come to Bateling to spend seven days punishing the villagers. However, the Bateling ngansimbaa persuaded the Kwinela ngansimbaa to postpone the argument till after sunrise. Meantime the kankurang had dressed himself in a new suit and re-appeared. As soon as he came the Bateling ngansimbaa sang:

"Malu man diya n ye

We do not like shame,

Maama, tee laa,

Grandfather (=kankurang), go to bed,

Bii, n te nyaka la."

Tonight we will not sing nyaka."

mocking the kankurang, who was a Kwinela youth.

During this time, the jooboolu were seven in number, four from Kwinela and three from Bateling. They were all young men. The elderly jooboolu saw

that the number of girls in the crowd was decreasing. Earlier it was mentioned that no one could leave without being escorted by a jooboo, so that when any girl wished to go off for a drink, or any other purpose, a jooboo escorted her back to her yard. But often when the boys escorted a girl, they did not bring her back, and sometimes they did not come back themselves for a long time. The elderly jooboolu realised that the younger jooboolu were making some unusual bargains with the girls, so they abused them, seized their whips, and took over the jobo-ship. When the elders went on their first round at least twenty girls came racing back from all directions. They stirred up the women who were clapping, but had now become very sleepy, and the whole show became livelier. The old women resumed dancing, and a number of the men were forced to dance by the kankurang.

For all the activities of the jooboolu, the crowd was appreciably smaller <sup>it</sup> by about five in the morning. The drumming and singing was stopped while the morning prayer was said in the Mosque, round about 6.30 a.m.

The kankurang took the opportunity of returning to the bush to dress himself again, and many of the women slipped off to the village. The kankurang came back at seven, and his jooboolu rounded up the women again and forced them to dance until 9 a.m.

Then the kankurang disappeared behind a cotton tree about ten yards from the crowd followed by his jooboolu. The senior jooboo stood in front of the tree facing the crowd, and the kankurang crouching behind the tree uttered a cry, at which all the crowd clapped. Then there was silence until the senior jooboo who spoke for the kankurang said: "Ngansimbaa, the kankurang is greeting you and wishing you well." This was repeated three times. Then he said: "The kankurang thanks you for your services and is telling you that he wishes to go back to his nest. Have you any complaint to make ? " There was no answer for a little while, then the Kwinela ngansimbaa's staff bearer stood and said: "Yes, my ngansimbaa has something to say. Last year, as you know, the Bateling ngansimbaa



circumcised two girls without Kwinela's knowledge. She knew very well that since earliest times all ceremonies happening to Kwinela are under Bateling's mastership, and when one takes place at Bateling under ours. But she did it regardless of the country's laws and customs. If she wants to change the customs, we do not. Now she and Bateling as a whole are "kadeeta". The kankurang on hearing this asked the Bateling ngansimbaa to explain. "It is true," she replied, "We circumcised two girls last year, but had good reasons for not doing it publicly. These girls were the chief's step-daughters and were of age and ready to be married. So he saw me about the matter, and said that the girls were engaged long ago, and were of age, so he wanted to give them away to their husbands. But he could not do so without the girls being circumcised. Bateling was not in a position to hold such a ceremony, and I knew that the girls were of age, and one of them was even suspected of being pregnant. To avoid any shame coming to the village, I did the operation." The Kwinela ngansimbaa said: "I would like the seefoo to come here. Will the kankurang please fetch him. The seefoo came, escorted by two jooboolu. He was asked to stand before the Kwinela ngansimbaa who asked him: "Did you order Bateling ngansimbaa to circumcise two girls last year without observing our customs?" The seefoo said: "Yes, we did it when we were pressed by urgent circumstances." Kwinela ngansimbaa said: "It is plain that you did it to show your power as a seefoo, but by God you can do anything you like in your district, but you will never alter these customs. Your father and forefather were greater kings, but they never dreamt of altering them. Now you agree that you have done wrong, and the penalty is kadeewo. The kadeewo starts today. I shall stay here and send for all Kwinela to come to me here. Tell your villagers to hand over rice stores to Kwinela women who will cook for us for the seven days I am going to stay. Three Kwinela kankurangolu will appear at midday, and I want all Bateling men and women including yourself to be in an open place outside the village. All of you must be seated in the sun without hats or shoes." She turned to the senior jooboo, and said "Repeat my words to the kankurang."

The seefoo appealed to the elders from Kwinela who were present. They begged for forgiveness, but the Kwinela ngansimbaa was adamant. The seefoo pleaded "We know we have done wrong and we know the penalty. But I beg the ngansimbaa and the people of Kwinela to consider this. Bateling is a small village. Though we have rice, most of it is already eaten in the course of this ceremony. If we are to have the whole of Kwinela which is forty times larger than Bateling to stay here seven days, eating out food and doing what they like, we shall die of hunger before the rainy season. If you say it must be done, it will be done. We must, it is the law. We will suffer, but will never complain or try to argue. I am only asking out of your kindness, if you would consider this, and impose a fine on us instead of kadeewo." The Kwinela ngansimbaa whispered to her staff bearer and then said to the seefoo. "All right, I cannot promise you that I shall fine you instead, but I shall go home today and discuss it with my elders and the result will be known to you then. I shall promise one thing, that I will not be cruel, though you deserve punishment. Secondly, before you leave here, you are to pay five dalasi to buy kola, so that I can hold the meeting with my elders. The seefoo accordingly took out a handkerchief, loosened a knot and produced the amount required. The ngansimbaa handed this to her staff bearer. Bateling ngansimbaa apologised to the Kwinela ngansimbaa, but the latter refused to shake hands until she could discuss the matter with her elders. The argument ended here.

The Bateling ngansimbaa turned to the senior joofoo and said: "Tell the kankurang that I have done my duty. The forty girls handed over to me by the senior ngansimbaa are in the shed all well. There was a little suspicion (referring to the girl who had been ill), but that cleared away. Tomorrow I intend to wash them and return them to their parents, if he approves. The kankurang replied: "That is good. I knew you were fit to look after them. That was why they were given to you. As you said, you may hand them over tomorrow. I have no objection. I am going back to my nest." Then he disappeared into the bush. The crowd scattered and everyone went off to catch up on their sleep.

Ngansing dondoo (Dressing the girls)

This ceremony was held on the 21st March 1949. After the excitement of the previous ceremonies this was a very quiet affair. Food had been lavishly spent on the earlier events, and because of the possibility of a hungry season occurring later, no general invitation was issued to other villages. So the only visitors were close relatives of the girls.

At about five o'clock in the evening they began to collect beside the bantabaa carrying their ngansing dresses and ornaments in a bundle. All had had their hair dressed specially for the occasion.

The ngansing dress consisted of a dark blue skirt and undershirt, a dark blue dress, and a kaloo (band of cloth) round the head. This was the original form of head dress before head ties became common. Round their ankles the girls wore strings of beads or small silver chains; round their necks, charms and necklaces of njengo seeds, small shells, cowrie shells, and beads; on their heads a bunch of charms to which was tied, so that it hung down the back, a long string on which groundnuts were threaded. A special leather belt on to which were fastened coins, was made for the occasion. One or two girls wore a head tie instead of this belt, while a few had both. Over their heads they wore shawls. Only an occasional girl had footwear.

Mats had been spread out at the bantabaa for them to sit on, and they began to put on their new dresses and ornaments.

When all were ready a calabash of rice was put in the center of the ring of girls. Two girls came out and sat one on either side of it. At a signal they made a grab for the rice, while a woman stood on the calabash breaking it into pieces, which the girls also seized. The only explanation forthcoming was that the girls were "of the same father and mother."

(A photograph of a new initiate from Kerewan is shown on page 58 ).

Kerewan: Girl after initiation in coming-out dress.



Immediately after this, dancing began. Groups of three or four ngansingolu were led out, and danced up to the drummer, and back again to their places. It took about an hour for all to dance, and the ngansimbaa brought the ceremony to its conclusion by dancing herself. When she rose to dance all the girls bowed down as a sign of respect.

The audience at the dance consisted of about 70 women and girls (excluding the ngansingolu), and 40 youths and boys. No adult men attended.

The next day another dance was held, which lasted about an hour and a half. The ngansingolu now danced individually. The audience was much smaller than on the previous day, perhaps 50 women and girls, and 30 youths and boys. A few of the younger men showed up, but many drifted away again before the dancing was concluded.

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A dramatic account of excision in Mali is contained in Ahmadou Kourouma's novel "The Suns of Independence," translated by Adrian Adams. Africana Publishing Company, 1981, pp. 21-24

A Gambian woman's viewpoint is expressed in an article by Fatu Jaw Menneh (of Mandinka and Fula parentage), written in reply to an article relating to Sierra Leone appearing in Essence, March 1996, p.54 by Mariama L. Barrie "Wounds that never heal".

Mark Hudson in Our Grandmothers' Drums (1989) provides details of the ceremonies in Keneba (Western Kiyang), Chapter 10, pp. 182-211.

A brief account of the final stage ngangsingsitindo is given on pp. 235-236.

For details of the types of circumcision performed in the Gambia, consult: Singhateh, S.K. Female Circumcision: The Gambian Experience: A Study on the Social Economic and Health Implications. Banjul: The Gambia Women's Bureau, 1985.

## MARRIAGE

A case history from Jenyeri. By A.K.RAHMAN

### I

In 1939 Braima Damfa decided to marry Nyoominding Saane, the daughter of Nyaling Njay.

In the first place he consulted his mother, and elder brother. Having obtained their approval, the latter was asked to undertake routine investigations regarding her luck, fertility, whether she will have long life, whether her jino (spirit counterpart) is a faithful Muslim, wicked or kind; whether there are any (See note on page 74 ) charities to be made before entering the contract, etc. His brother consulted his favorite seer, a learned man in Kabadaa. After paying a consultation fee he was assured that the girl is a lucky woman and would make a very good wife, bear many live children, and her presence in the family would increase it. That her jino counterpart is a kind Muslim, and would bear no grudge against the human husband; that a charity of salt should be given to an elderly woman who is not very black in color. They carried out these instructions faithfully.

Next they had to find a sila nyatongko (a go-between). Lang Damfa, the head of Braima's family is also the kaabiloo head and the kaabiloo head is the one who engages a go-between. He selected a friend, Babanding Sanyang who accepted the task. This was some three months after the consultation with the seer.

### II

Kurru-luloo (Presentation of the five kolas). One evening Babanding was called by the Damfa family. They gave him the five kolas to go to Seku Jalamang and his kaabiloo people to ask for the hand of their daughter Nyoominding Saane, 'whose love God has planted in Braima Damfa's heart.'

On his arrival in Seku Jalamang's compound Babanding called for a meeting of the whole family and delivered the message. Seku Jalamang in reply said "In truth I have no objection to Braima Wonto marrying Nyoominding, but I have very little authority over her marriage. Though I married her mother when she

(Nyoominding) was still very young, and have been feeding her and clothing, and training her since then, I still have very little say over this. You had better go first to her father at Mandina, but before then ask her mother."

The matter was then referred to Nyaling Njay, who said " I have been informed of this by Wonto (Braima's mother) and I have no objection, but the girl has a father and the best thing to do is to start from him." Babanding, knowing they were right, agreed to go to the girl's father at Mandina, but asked them to send a messenger with him to act as a representative and to recommend at the same time. This was agreed, and Babanding and Ngansu Sonko (representing Jalamang and Nyaling) journeyed to Mandina the next day.

When they arrived at Mandina, they lodged with a friend. (It is not a sign of respect to go directly to the father's place) and told him of their mission. After dinner their host went to the girl's father and said: "I have some strangers who have come to see you." The father asked "What for ? I hope they have come in peace." The other replied : "Peace only, they are your sons-in-law." The father at once knew what it was about and said "Bisimilai," (Arabic for 'In the name of Allah, used in Mandinka to mean 'so be it', 'welcome'.) The other returned to his strangers and said to them: "The man says 'Bisimilai'. So they went to him and after the usual salutations, their host, addressing the girl's father said: "This afternoon Babanding and Ngansu Sonko arrived from Jenyeri. Their mission is a peaceful one. They have come to strengthen the link which we met on this earth. The Damfa family sent Babanding to Seku Jalamang and Nyaling Njay asking for your daughter. They wanted her for Braima Wonto Damfa, a very serious young man, and hard working. Jalamang and Nyaling who knew Braima very well agreed, but they could not do anything about it unless you instruct them to do so." Then Ngansu Sonko said : "It is true. Seku Jalamang and Nyaling asked me to accompany Babanding to tell you that they and the whole kaabiloo approve of Braima Wonto. But knowing that the girl is your daughter they referred him to you. Yours is the meat and yours is the knife, you may cut where you like."

The girl's father turned to the people of his compound, and every one murmured : "I hear". Finally the girl's father turned to them and said: "I have heard what you have said. This is a good thing, and I am very grateful for what Nyaling and Seku Jalamang did. Jenyeri and Mandina are one and the same, and since of old we have been marrying one another. Now go home and rest until tomorrow. I shall in the meantime discuss it with my own people." They said the usual closing prayer. "May Allah's benediction and salvation be upon Mohamed and upon his disciples", and retired.

The following evening the other party returned to the girl's father for the reply which they were promised. On their arrival the father said: "Now go back to Jalamang and the people of Damfakunda, and tell them that I have heard what they said, and that I shall reply to them in a few days time. We have nothing bad for them, only that it is too soon for us to make a decision." The party hoped for success and returned to Jenyer the next morning. The message was delivered accordingly to both families.

Three weeks passed, and no reply was forthcoming. Babanding went to Mandina a second time with the five kolas. This time Nyoominding's father said he did not know who Braima Damfa was. Would be fathers-in-law always say this, even to their own nephews, in order to receive a present. Babanding came back and told the Damfas what the girl's father had said.

Ten days later Braima Wonto sent ten dalasis to the girl's father at Mandina, this time not by Babanding, but by another messenger. This is because the dukoo or bribe, is outside the official contract, and in the case of divorce is not recoverable. After sending the dukoo, Babanding returned to Mandina after a few days with the five kolas. This time they were accepted, and a message was sent to Jalamang and Nyaling that the father had agreed, and that Braima should seek her from Jalamang and Nyaling at Jenyer, whom he has given full authority to act on his behalf.



From that day on, Braima began visiting the girl in Jalamang's yard, now having the right to do so, by the acceptance of the kuruu-lulu. When visiting Braima used to bring three or five kolas for Jalamang and Nyaling, and as they are now his father and mother-in-law, he leaves his shoes at the gate and enters barefoot. (It is contrary to custom to walk in the compound with shoes on, and violation of the rule may lead to the marriage being broken off.) Braima is allowed to go to the women's apartment and sit with Nyoominding on the platform outside the house, chatting until bedtime. During this period Braima bought her a new dress and a new headtie, and gave her small sums of money at dances.

### III

Kaabila londang kuruo (Kola for knowing the kaabiloo).

This is a kaabiloo concern. It is a bundle of forty kolas. This was given to Babanding who took it to Arafang Bakari Saane (the head of the kaabiloo)'s house. Babanding placed the kola before Arafang Bakari and said: "You are no doubt aware of Braima Wonto's engagement to Nyoominding Saane. The five kolas were accepted by the father at Mandina, and Seku Jalamang was given authority by the father to act on his behalf. Now the girl is growing fast, so the Damfas sent me with the kaabila londang kuruo and here it is." Arafang Bakari then sent a messenger round to collect all the members of his kaabiloo. When they were all present Arafang Bakari told them what Babanding had said. They passed it round, and finally the faalifoo Ngansu Sonko was asked to loosen the bundle and share the kola. This was done accordingly. Arafang Bakari addressing Babanding said: "Tell the Damfas that we have accepted this kola and know them as our sons-in-law. As from today the girl is Braima Wonto's wife, she is here for him; if she dies it is his wife who dies, and if she lives, it is his wife who lives. He should seek her in the usual way." The Alahu Ma Salli prayer followed this, and they then discussed the marriage money.

Seku Usman Sane, the Almami said: "In seeking our daughter for marriage Braima Wonto should seek her as free born. Our futu-nafuloo (marriage money) is sixty-six dalasis. May Allah join them in happy union, and make their luck agreeable, and give them long life. May Allah protect them from Satan and make them good muslims and make them bring forth muslim children." All said: "Amen." Then the "Alahu ma salli.." closed the ceremony.

Braima Wonto continued paying this dowry by installments - a bit every trade season, and helped Seku Jalamang and his young brother on their farms. On two occasions he thatched Seku Jalamang's women's house, and he built their platforms years. On every Tabaski feast he provided a new dress for the girl and a new head tie, and skirt and three dalasis which must accompany the sali dondikoo (feast dress). All this goes through the silanyaatonko, Babanding Sanyang. On one occasion he sent the girl's father a gown costing him fifteen dalasis. He helped Seku Jalamang's brother build his new house. Every year he pays the kafoo to transport Nyaling Njay's rice from the swamp to her store. When everybody is busy with his farm, they send him to Kabadaa and other places on business. He finished paying the marriage money in 1944.

#### IV

Wuraaralo (lit. good evening, but here means 'disflowering'.)

At the end of the 1944 trade season Braima Wonto decided it was time to sleep with his wife, so he gave Babanding one dalasi and five kolas again. (The custom is to send these for such a request.) This time it was Nyaling Njay he went to and not Seku Jalamang. This stage of the transaction is left entirely to the woman. Nyaling agreed and promised to let the girl sleep with her husband the next Thursday night.

In the meantime Braima Wonto provided the usual articles: Konoo janindirango (literally: burning the belly). This is a goat (which cost six dalasis) to be killed and shared among the girl's mother's family (none for the father); two bottle of palm oil (fifty butuuts), and two chickens. These are for the girl's

lunch the day after intercourse. The fowls cost between one and two dalasis. On Thursday night the girl was clad in loose white robes, stripped of all charms, strings, and beads, and was escorted to Braima Wonto's house by two elderly women from the girl's kaabiloo. To get rid of the elderly women Braima paid them 50 butuuts each. (The required amount).

Early next morning the girl's sanau-olu (cross-cousins) came into the house asking for the girl's pagn. This is called faani yitandoo (displaying the pagn). They received it, spread it, and examined the blood stains. When they were satisfied of the presence of the blood, they began dancing, clapping, and singing. After a while they folded the pagn and ran off, shouting: "We are not disgraced, no shame has come to us, ours is a virgin." They entered Seku Jalamang's house and showed the pagn to Nyaling who expressed her joy by dancing, and cried, her mates joining her in the dance. When they stopped Nyaling kept the pagn.

From that day on, Nyoominding continued to sleep in Braima Wonto's house. In 1947 they had a daughter. Now Braima has full rights over his wife. No other man dare talk secretly to her, or go to the girl's mother's house. Braima Wonto lives in Bajonkoto, and the girl is in Sansang-kono, so after dinner he comes for her.

Although at this stage Braima has rights over his wife, he has not yet complete control. She is still considered a sunkutoo (girl), who goes to the bantabaa (for dances etc.), whether he likes or not, shows very little respect for him, refuses to go to sleep with him if there has been a quarrel, and if he beats her her mother stops her from going to him altogether until he pays a fine - daa-yelendirango (lit. opening the mouth), which is two dalasis. Braima has paid this many times.

Daanirango (lit. begging, but here means 'claiming').

In March 1950 Braima Wonto sent Babanding again with three dalasis fee and kola to ask for the transfer of his wife from her family to his. This was accepted and Braima Wonto was promised his wife at the beginning of the rainy season. Both parties have to get ready. The husband buys gunpowder (2 dalasis & 50 butuuts), a goat (8 dalasis), three chickens (3 dalasis), kola nuts (one dalasi), and cash (3 dalasis in small change). The girl's mother bought a lot of local cloth from Kabadaa (woven by the Fulbe) and dyed them. The cloth and dyeing cost her 33 dalasis. She made four bundles of millet into futoo (steamed millet) and bought a sheep costing 8 dalasis. All these preparations were made without the knowledge of the girl. Young women who have not yet been under the complete control of a man don't as a rule like the idea. It is believed that if they know about it, they may run away, or do something which might delay the ceremony.

On Thursday, after all the preparations had been made, Nyoominding on her way home from the rice swamp heard guns being fired. She asked her friend : "Who is getting married ?" The other knowing about the cause replied: "Perhaps Wonto Damfa." Nyoominding did not know until she reached the compound and found a crowd of woman cooking. She stood confused and perplexed. A sanauwu of hers drew near and said: "There is no need for alarm, you will be 'covered' tonight." When she heard these words she fell on the ground crying. They then took her inside the house.

In the meantime Braima Wonto and his kaabiloo youths were firing off guns. Women in both kaabiloos were also busy cooking and dancing. At about 7.00 p.m. the food was ready. On this day the girl's kaabiloo is responsible for the food. The food was served in three large calabashes - one for the husband's kaabiloo, one for the sila nyaatongko (go-between), and one to the intermediate father (maanyo be loola daameng , lit. where the bride will stand), a reliable man chosen to whom the bride will be handed over. He in turn hands her over to the husband. In the case of a dispute or a fight, the woman will run to this man,

and he will play the part of a father. Only very serious disputes come before the real father.

## VI

Bitiroo (The covering). After 9.00 p.m. when everybody had eaten, the drummer started drumming at the bantabaa, and the women beat the jii-tantango (water drum) in the bride's house. To entertain the bride, her companions would come by to see her. Boys of Braima's kaabiloo kept on firing guns. This went on until midnight. The elders then said: "It is night now, cover the girl." Her companions on hearing this rushed in and ran away with her. They hid her and then returned to the bantabaa. At 4.00 a.m. when all were drowsy and tired, Seku Jalamang and his kabiloo people sent for the almaami to come and cover the girl. Babanding was also called for. They asked him to produce the maanyoo basoo (bride's mat). They sent to Braima who delivered the mat, which he had bought for 75 butuuts.

After getting the mat, many people, including elders, assembled in Seku Jalamang's yard waiting for the bitiroo. But the bride was nowhere to be seen. She was still hidden by her companions. About 5.00 a.m. after the elders, annoyed by the delay, expressed their displeasure, the girls returned the bride. Maanyo -kuwo. (Washing or bathing the bride). Only women who have already gone through the process are permitted to attend. Men don't as a rule attend, but what happened briefly is this. The girl was made to sit on a wooden mortar turned upside down, one woman stood behind her burning some leaves and making some noise, while another poured water over her, and the third rubbed her skin briskly. Some ten or twelve women encircled them singing and beating the water drum. This lasted for about thirty minutes. After the bath two elderly women led her to the center of the compound where people awaited them. She sat on the mat facing east. Another girl, who was not yet married was made to sit beside her. She is known as the siringpatoo (brides-maid). The bride did not put on any special dress or ornaments. She wore instead a loose white skirt

and covered her upper half with another.

One elderly woman said to the men: "Here she is." Then Seku Jalamang turned to the almaami and said "Bisimilai." Before the almaami could get up, the elderly women said: "Our 25 butuuts has not been given us yet." Braima Wonto's representative paid her <sup>the</sup> money and the almaami asked for the white pagn with which to cover the bride. A pagn was sent from Nyaling Njay's house. The almaami, holding the white pagn, stood for a while and then said: "Marriage is one of the commandments of God. The reward which a married couple get from God is great. No one is ever perfect in faith unless he is married. Tonight all foolishness ends for this girl and she enters seriousness. Her paradise is at the feet of her husband. A wife is bound to be obedient to her husband, seek his pleasure, respect him, refrain from what he does not want. No matter how much she prays and gives alms, if she does not get the praise of her husband, she will not enter paradise. It is the husband's satisfaction and commendations that God regards; without these she shall be cast into hell fire. The children's blessings also depend on the marriage; if the wife is faithful her children will grow up to be men of high rank and reputation, but those who trouble their husbands bring forth only lame beggars and thieves."

Addressing the girl, he said: "This white pagn with which I am going to cover you is a heavy load; your position in the next world depends on how you behave after being covered with this pagn. You should be patient and kind. You may encounter many difficulties in the new family you are joining, but you should be patient and humble yourself to your husband's brothers even if they are younger than yourself, respect his elder brothers, his uncles and aunts; his mother should be your mother. You should have no friends - your husband is your only friend. Look after his belly, and learn to know what he wants and does not want." After this the Almaami held the pagn over the girl's head and said the following verses from the Koran:

"Observe prayer at sunset, till the first darkening of the night, and the daybreak reading- for the daybreak reading hath its witnesses. And watch unto the night: this shall be an excess in service: it may be that thy Lord will raise thee to a glorious station: And say O my Lord, cause me to enter with perfect entry and to come forth with a perfect forthcoming, and give me from thy presence a helping power. And say truth is come and falsehood is vanished. Verily falsehood is a thing that vanisheth."

After saying this in Arabic he covered the girl's head with the pagn. The women then led her to her husband's house, while her girl friends followed mocking the husband and his brothers.

## VII

Siringpatoo (Bride's maid). This is usually a first or second cousin. Nyoominding's siringpatoo was Jonfolo Saane, a second cousin. The siringpatoo stays with the bride over the 7 day period, sweeping the house, and getting water, etc. Although a chicken is cooked every day for the bride, she gets very little of it. The bride's meal is served on a leefaa (a circular straw lid used for covering food); she does not eat from calabashes or basins. The best part of the food is enjoyed by the siringpatoo.

The bride remains in the house for three or seven days. In this case it was three days. She must be unseen by men, and other people who are suspected of being, or having connection with, witches. Every morning women flock in the house to get some food, and have a little dance. Braima Damfa spent a dalasi each day on kola for three days. This kola is known as Daasaama kuruwo (Breakfast kola).

## VIII

On the morning of the third day, being Monday, was the buunyaa (respect) ceremony, and kamba dandango (conveying the baggage). The buunyaa is the husband's concern and the kamba dandango is the mother in law's. The husband killed a sheep which he bought for 8 dalasis to entertain the bride, and the bride in

return was to show respect. A number of elderly men were called to witness the ceremony. When they were ready the husband laid down the sheep ready to be slaughtered. One elder called the women, saying: "Are you ready?" (that is for the bride to come out). Nyoominding was then led by her senior mate to the center of the yard where the men assembled. The bride came near her husband and knelt down. As Braima was in the act of killing the sheep, the men said to the bride: "Call your husband." She said: "N kotoo" (lit. my elder brother). This is the respectful way of calling him. From that day on she will never call him by his name. Having done this the bride returned to the house. About an hour later the bride's mother with her party of women carrying the bride's belongings arrived in the compound. This was the kamba dandango.

When they arrived they stood in a circle in the center of the compound with the loads still on their heads. The carriers do not put down their loads until the husband pays them.

A mat was spread on the ground near Braima's house on which the bride was made to sit, still in her white robes. The women said: "Come on, we want to dress the bride." Braima Damfa's sisters came round each saying "I will dress my bride." There was a little argument between the bridegroom's sisters and cousins on one side and the bride's sisters and cousins on the other side, as to who should dress the bride. Finally the elderly women decided that the bride's relations should do the dressing - which was in accordance with the usual practice.

After this Braima Damfa came out with money to pay the carriers. Each put down her load after receiving her pay. Payments were made as follows: for carrying the box containing clothes 50 butuuts, water jar- 50 butuuts, assorted calabashes - 10 butuuts, wooden mortar - 50 butuuts, tentengo (winnowing basket) 10 butuuts, cooking pot - 30 butuuts . Normally the sanawolu are the carriers. After this the sila nyaatongko's representative opened the box and the bride's aunt took out three blue pagns, and one white and the tukuniniyo (head gear). Luntang Saane, a distant cousin of the bride was asked to dress her. The bride



Kerewan:

BRIDES



was asked to stand and the white cloth with which she was wrapping herself was taken off, and a dark blue frock was given to her. She put this on and then Luntang produced another blue skirt which she put on, and then another blue pagn as over-cloth, and finally Luntang Saane applied the tukuniniyo. This is the most important element. The tukuniniyo must not touch the ground or the husband will die. It consists of a blue head tie (local cloth) and a strip (fataroo) of cloth. Luntang tied the headtie firmly on the bride's head and then tied the strip of cloth around it. Then she gave the bride a little calabash to hold. This is called the maanyoo kalama (the bride's calabash).

The sila nyaatonkoo's representative who was waiting for the bride to be dressed now began to count the bride's possessions for Lang Damfa. He counted 31 pagns, 10 dalasis cash, one mortar, one tenteng (winnowing basket), one water jar, one load of calabashes, and one goat. All these were received by Lang Damfa, and later taken into Braima's house.

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The bride now takes over routine domestic work. She has been instructed to copy from her senior mate (Braima's first wife), and to make her her consultant in any matter. She will now start the routine work with her co-wife. The senior wife does the midday cooking, and the bride cooks dinner and breakfast. They sleep with their husband by turn, each of them two nights in a row.

She goes to the rice farm like everybody else, but she must be careful not to let the tukuniniyo get wet or drop for the sake of preserving her husband's life. She should not walk without the maanyoo kalama, and when working in the field she should tie the tail of the kalamaa with her tukuniniyo. Brides always go about with an extra calabash on their heads. This is to keep off rain-all to preserve the tukuniniyo. (See photographs on page 71 ).

The bride's position in the new kaabiloo

Now that the bride is in her husband's compound, she no longer belongs to her father's kaabiloo. She joins her husband's kaabiloo. She loses all rights over her relations' land. Her husband gives her land to farm. To the villagers women do not own land. All land whether farmed by men or women is vested in men. Women themselves are the men's property. She can, however, borrow land from her father, but that is optional. In some cases fathers present their daughters with a portion of land, but this is very rare.

The end of the maanyo-yaa. The bride continues to put on her maanyoo dondikolu (bride's dress) until jii faa (the time when the swamp is fully flooded), about September-October. At that time she takes off the tukuniniyo and dispenses with the kalamaa, either using it as a doosaa (ladle) for dishing out food, or preserves it as a souvenir.

Before the maanyo-yaa finishes she should have become a very loyal woman, curtsying to every man she meets, talking gently and politely to all, avoiding quarreling, showing Allah that she is keeping her promise to be faithful, etc. But after disposing of the maanyoo-fengolu and becoming a free married woman, she can fight or quarrel if she wants, but she has to remember that it is her husband who will cause her to enter hell or paradise.

Note on the spirit counterpart.

In Mandinka thought every person has a spirit counterpart - a man has a "devil wife", a woman a "devil husband", who is with them from birth. The partner is invisible, but always near its human partner, accompanying him or her where ever he/she goes, and sometimes defends and protects him/her against other evil spirits. At night it shares the bed with its partner. If the devil partner is a jealous one, and does not wish to share its partner with another human, it can cause the person when asleep to urinate involuntarily... the urine is said to become poisonous causing the other person to die. If knowledge of this comes to light after a marriage, it is grounds for a divorce, and a sacrifice has to be made to appease the angered spirit...

(Sometimes I used to explain that I had a very jealous spiritual counterpart, which served to protect me from some unwanted attention.

One of her good points is that she does not cause incontinence ! DPG)

### MARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE

Here there are no special obligations or charges other than the marriage money. But the man must gain the woman's consent, because her relations cannot now arrange a marriage without her agreement. The man usually has extra expenses because there are always rivals.

In January 1950 a woman who had obtained a divorce through the District tribunal from her husband came from Sankwia to stay with her brother in Jenyer. Shortly after her arrival, men began to seek her in marriage, two from Jenyer, one from Toniataba, and one from Jomar. They all made gifts to her brother, so that he would speak well of them. However, the suitor from Jomar was known to be much richer than the others, and the two poorest candidates withdrew. Both remaining candidates sent their five kolas on the same day. He brother called the kaabiloo members and told them about the matter. They welcomed the idea, for they felt that a woman should not be unmarried. But as she was an adult woman, and not a young girl, she should make the choice. She decided on the suitor from Jomar, and her brother indicated that she should come out and say so for herself in the presence of the people. She did so, and the kaabiloo head said : "It is your choice, so if things turn out to be bad for you, don't blame anyone." She said : "Yes". Her brother added "You chose of your own free will. No one forced you. If tomorrow you come back complaining, I shall not be responsible." She replied : "Yes." So the kola from the Jomar suitor was shared, and the other's kola returned.

Marriage money was fixed at 30 dalasis. The silanyaatonkoo (go-between) paid this on the spot. Half was given to the women, and half shared among the kaabiloo elders. This is because if she decided later that she wanted a divorce without reasonable cause, the kaabiloo would have to refund the marriage money. The following day the new husband came to sleep with his wife. He lodged with a friend and the woman joined him there at night, providing dinner each evening.

Two weeks later he sent another five kolas asking for the formal transfer

of his wife. This was accepted by the family, and the following day she was asked to pack her belongings and go to her husband's village. There was no ceremony involved, and no one gave her advice. In fact many people in the village did not realize she had gone until several weeks later.

#### MARRIAGE BY INHERITANCE.

When the husband dies it is usual for the widow to re-marry one of his brothers, after the period of mourning. During the mourning period a widow should not walk around too much, nor talk to any of the deceased husband's brothers; other men may talk to her.

In one case the husband was survived by five brothers. He had had two wives, one of whom <sup>(Mariama)</sup> was younger and prettier than the other <sup>one</sup>, the older one being Fatumata. They returned to their original homes, Mariama in Jenyeri, Fatumata to Japeni. When the period of mourning was over their families sent five kolas to their original home, saying "The period of mourning has ended." The brothers met to discuss who should marry these two women. The eldest brother said: "I am not concerned in this. I am old now, so I leave it to you. These women have been blessed with children by your deceased brother and it is fitting that they remain here, so that the children will not have to move about. Each of them said he preferred <sup>r</sup>~~k~~ Mariama. After some argument the two youngest brothers were dropped from contention. The two remaining brothers still opted for Mariama. Eventually they both sent engagement kolas to her relatives. She accepted the younger brother. The kolas were shared among the family, and he was declared Mariama's husband. Marriage money of thirty dalasis was charged, to be paid either in cash or in the form of goats, sheep, or cloth.

The older brother was annoyed, but then went to Japeni where he arranged to marry the other widow.

Although the marriage money of 30 dalasis is mentioned in these marriages, this is mainly a formality, and often nothing is actually paid.

Mark Hudson's Our Grandmothers' Drums (1989) provides a great deal about marriage. Marriage choice 80-81 ; inheritance of widows 95; transfer of brides - 147-8, 228-33, 281-283, 292-293. Included are translations of various songs.

Ed van Hoven: L'oncle maternel est roi: la formation d'alliances hierarchiques chez les Mandingues du Wuli (Senegal), provides detailed descriptions of marriage procedures in Chapters 10 & 11. (pp. 173-236).  
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FREEING OF SLAVES

Notes by

Ceremony at Kaiaf (Kiang East), 4 February 1949 at the Mosque. A.K.Rahman.

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 Banna Saane was bought by Fonyi Saane<sup>a</sup> shortly after the Fode Kaba war in the eighteen nineties, when she was still a little girl. She remained Fonyi's slave until her death, when Fonyi's son, Lang Saane inherited her. She married Mamadu Saane and had three children, Kajali, Dembo, and Karafa. According to Muslim tradition the children belong to the master of their mother, not to the master of their father. This Lang Fonyi had four 'slaves', though since the abolition of slavery when the Protectorate was established in the 1890s, slaves are no longer obliged to work for their master or give up their earnings. The memory of slave origin, and the consequent social status still remains. (In making the traditional "charity" those of slave descent generally give the 1/10th of their crop to their "masters", the freeborn paying their charity to the almaami, or others in need.)

Dembo Saane, the second son, went to Nema-kunku for Arabic studies when he was young. He spent over twenty years there with his teacher. Eventually he came to the section of Muslim law which dealt with slaves. Knowing that he was of slave descent, he was particularly interested in it, but on learning of the punishments which await slaves who are not loyal to their masters, and knowing that he had not fulfilled any customary obligations, he confessed to his teacher that he was of slave origin. The teacher on hearing this told him to leave the school, for slaves are not permitted to pursue their religious studies as far as the freeborn. This served to increase his fear, and he went back to his teacher to ask advice. The teacher told him to go to his master, ask his forgiveness for the past, and then beg him to allow him to purchase his freedom. Otherwise he was sure to go to hell fire when he died. All his studies and prayers and charity would mean nothing, for God created slaves not to serve him (directly), but to serve their masters.

Dembo decided to do this, and returned to Kaiaf, where he explained the  
 a Fonyi is here a woman's name.



situation to his mother and brothers. They went to their "master", and he, knowing that they had not fulfilled any customary duties, and that he had no power of compulsion over them since the establishment of British rule, Lang agreed to set them free on payment of head money (kung-songo) - 66 dalasis for each person. (This is the same sum as is required<sup>r</sup> for marriage money.) This was paid and a religious ceremony arranged for the emancipation.

This was held outside the Mosque after the Friday afternoon service, with about 130-140 men present. The Imam announced the purpose of the meeting and asked their master to make the declaration. Lang Fonyi then said: "These people are my slaves. They belong to me. The Islamic faith has made them ask me to free them for the sake of God and Mohammed. I do not owe them any obligations. They have never worked for me. One of them is rich, but never gave me a penny. Now they fear God and want to enter his kingdom. I now declare them to be free men. From this hour onwards these people are free. They are no longer slaves. The rope which binds them is today loosened. They have paid for their heads, and I ask you, in the name of God, to bear witness. I regard them as my nephews, and their mother as my sister. They are free to marry my daughters if they wish to, for they are my nephews and I am their uncle. There is no longer any caste distinction. If I happen to die and none of my children survive me, these men shall have the right to inherit my property. I have made this vow before God and man at the house of God, and I shall never regret it."

A thanksgiving prayer was then said by the crowd, after which the district chief addressed a few words to the people. "As far as religion is concerned, these men are wise, I thank Lang Fonyi for his generous deed."

The Imam then preached a long sermon dealing with the position of slaves, their duties and obligations. Among other things he said: "This is a sign of true Islamic religion. You are very fortunate. God has given light. God made freemen and he made slaves. He also made his law. Everything can be altered and modified except the will of God. It was his will that you were slaves, now it is his will

that you become free men. As from today all your services are for God and not for anyone else. You are now bound by the five obligations - belief in the unity of God, the five daily prayers, the fast during Ramadan, the Zakat (alms-giving), and the pilgrimage to Mecca. You are now to regard Lang Donyi Saane as your uncle and to respect him. Karafa is a slave name, and I now change that name and call you 'Alkaali'. May Allah bless you and help you through life."

Soriba Kasama, a prominent religious teacher from Masembe, also spoke.

"This is really one of the five pillars of Islam. Dembo has reached a high standard in his studies, and has indeed benefitted from them. We thank God for his mercy."

Seen at Kaiaf, Eastern Kiang, March 1949.

This is of considerable interest for it shows how Islam is still spreading at the present day.

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A Fula youth, Alasan Jalo, had come from the Casamance and spent about a year in The Gambia, and for the last four months had lived in the District Chief's compound at Kaiaf. There he had fallen sick, and the chief had looked after him. Kaiaf is a strongly Muslim village, and Alasan felt ashamed at not praying when he saw everyone else doing so. In addition his illness, with the possibility of death, and the view that hell-fire awaited unbelievers, made a deep impression on his mind, and accordingly he stated that he wished to become a Muslim.

The ceremony was held at the bantabaa in front of the Mosque after the Friday afternoon service. It attracted considerable interest for Mandinka from Jomar, Kolior, and Masembe; and Fulbe (Torankoobe) from Njolofin, Samba Ya, Munkutala, Njamakuta, and Soma were also present. The audience consisted of about 50 men and 25 youths and boys. Many more would normally have been there, but a 'charity' was being held in the neighboring village of Jenyeri for a prominent and popular man who had recently died, and many hurried off to attend this immediately after the Mosque service.

Alasan came to the bantabaa, and was sent off to have his head shaved. (A ritual which marks a change of status). This was done close by. The shaver was rewarded with a gift of red and white kola nuts. Alasan returned to the bantabaa and sat down in the middle of the group of elders who were occupying it. The chief's younger brother laid his hands on Alasan's head and prayed. His new name was announced by one of the elderly men, but this was said out of turn. The almaamoo (Imam) of Kaiaf followed with prayers that he might be enabled to continue his Koranic studies, be granted long life, and protected from disease and Satan. Next Alasan turned to face Fode Lang Jaju, a prominent religious teacher who made him repeat in Arabic the Muslim doctrine "....la illah el allah, Mahamud rasoul allahi...." This was translated into Mandinka, which he again

repeated. The teacher then instructed him in his religious duties and privileges.

"There is one God. Mohammed is his Prophet. God created everything. Mohammed and the Koran were sent by God to man. Now he must carry out the five daily prayers. If he died today he would go to heaven. Now he had entered the right road. Everyone had witnessed it. Praise be to Allah. Now they would give him a new name - Ansumana. Everyone had witnessed it. There are both heaven and hell. Those who are Muslims go to heaven, the others to hell. Heaven does not end, hell does not end, but this world ends. His past was not gone. If he had done anything bad, it was forgiven. Praise be to Allah. He was now added to the faithful."

Everyone now joined in general prayers, and this concluded the ceremony.

FUNERAL PROCEDURE

D.P.G. &amp; A.K.R.

Immediately after a death the mosquedrum (taabuloo) is beaten to signify a death, the women of the compound raise a death cry, and if men are out in their farms, they return home.

The body is taken to the back yard and laid on a mat still in ordinary clothes. The compound or kaabiloo head then sends men to dig the grave, generally young men or people of slave origin, and then invites certain elderly men to wash the body. There are a few elderly women who may also perform this task. Warm water is used and often a few drops of perfume are added. No soap is used as custom forbids it. Pieces of cloth round the washer's hand are generally buried afterwards, but the actual cloth with which the body is rubbed is retained, washed, and may be used again.

They start by praying: "In the name of Allah the Merciful and Most High, we beseech thee to clear thy poor servant of worldly sins and receive him into thy kingdom. He is thy slave and servant, born at thy will, died at they will. We pray in the name of Mohammed thy most faithful and beloved servant on whose path this man followed. May thy salvation and benediction be upon Mohammed, his disciples, wives and followers."

They begin by washing the palms of the hands three times, the mouth three times, the face three times, the lower arm three times, the head once, the feet once, the right side of the body, then the left, the front, and finally the back. The shroud is then put on. It is generally about six yards of white shirting-one yard as aloincloth, half a yard for a cap, the rest being wrapped round the body and sewn up.

Messengers are sent to announce the death in neighboring villages, and the custom is to send sons-in-law or brothers-in-law. Quick and sensible men are chosen because the messengers leave a village as soon as they have told the news. Delay is believed to cause a further death in the home village.

While the body is being washed sympathisers collect in the compound. Each

visitor hands some kola, or a few coins to the kaabiloo or compound head as charity. Women mourners gather in the women's house.

When the body is ready and the grave dug the men rise and accompany it to the Mosque. It is rolled in a mat and carried on men's shoulders. It is a work of merit to help in carrying a corpse, no special kinship ties being involved. Again people of slave origin often help. As the men move out of the compound the women begin crying, the women in each compound that they pass also join in raising the cry. Women do not accompany the corpse to the Mosque, though a few elderly women sometimes follow the procession, and remain some distance away during the prayers.

When the body reaches the Mosque it is laid outside on its right side facing east. The dead man's name is announced, and the almaamoo asks the people to say what they know about him. Relatives and friends state that they knew him to be a good Muslim and praise him. The elders line up in front of the Mosque and pray, though the younger men remain seated.

When this prayer is finished everyone rises and the body is carried to the burial ground, often by new carriers. Here a grave has been dug about six feet long, three feet deep, and two feet wide, running north and south, so that the dead man lying on his right side faces east. All those present squat and bow down as the body is slowly lowered into the grave. The mat is unrolled from the body, and leaves of the maamakung-koyoo plant and sticks, gathered by the young men, are placed over it. Earth is then heaped on top. Water is brought for those concerned to wash their hands.

If a threat from hyenas is feared fencing may be placed round the grave.

Further prayers are said: , Kul kowa alahu ahad ..... is recited twelve times after which the mourners rise and return to the Mosque. They do not look back, for angels are believed to visit the grave immediately after people have turned their backs.

A charity of kola nuts and munkoo (rice flour and sugar, made into cakes) is

then distributed. A large share is taken and given to the grave diggers. Next the smiths receive their share, then the alkaaloo and almaami, the kaabiloo (ward) heads, and other elderly men present, as well as representaives from other villages.

A.K. Rahman

Almost all the women in Jenyeri gathered in H yard early this morning to pound millet and rice for the 'charity'. By 12.00 p.m. the kitchens produced 18 calabashes of rice, 8 of futoo (steamed millet), and 4 tentengs (winnowing baskets) of munkoo (made from rice flour and sugar). One of Tabora's sheep was killed by his brother, and was cooked in palm oil.

All these were taken to the Mosque where they received the almaami's blessing. After prayer the food was taken back to the compound, and the munkoo and kola nuts were distributed to the crowd at the Mosque. There were 728 kola nuts. Faalifoo from five different compounds did the sharing.

The crowd gathered at the Mosque and comprised men from Kaiaf, Jifin, Toniataba, Sikunda, Soma, Jenoi, Sankwia, and Japeni; Masembe, Kolior, Jomar, Jasabo, Mandina, Numukunda, Kunong, Bambako, Kwinella, Bateling, Dumbuto, Jataba and Bumari. From the south came Fula men from Njolofen, Sibito, and Njamakuta. More than a hundred men and about one hundred and eighty women from these villages attended. After the distribution of munkoo and kola, people moved to the compound where the food was eaten. At this stage many of the visitors began to go home. Only about forty women were spending the night here.

After the meal the almaami addressed the gathering, praising Tabora, and telling the people that he did not remember seeing so large a crowd at any funeral or charity. Indeed every one agreed that Tabora was liked by all his relatives in Jenyer and elsewhere.



SHARING TABORA'S PROPERTY

The second duty of the almaamoo was to share Tabora's property according to custom. Strict Muslim law was not followed. The second eldest brother, Karamo Fana, was given charge of all Tabora's property - a small sum of money, his clothing, animals (sheep), millet, and his children. It is likely that he will marry his brother's widows after the mourning period of 4 months and 10 days is over. Afang Ansu, the eldest brother, could not be heir to Tabora. According to local custom the next/<sup>youngest</sup> is heir to a brother. But Karamo Fana was expected to give some of the property to the eldest brother and to others.

Karamo then paid for mourning mats for Tabora's widows, while Tabora's sisters provided the mourning clothes for the widows, and left their own houses to stay with the widows. Male second cousins occupy the deceased's house, and Langbati Saane was chosen. He would sleep in the house for two nights. (This appears to be a local custom).

The widows have to be provided with charms to keep the ghost and spirit co-partner away. These were made free of charge by a religious teacher.

It is not yet known whether the widows would continue staying in the compound throughout their mourning period, or return to their original homes. This would be decided on the 40th. day.

The villagers then paid tribute to the Nutrition Field Working Party for their assistance and cooperation.

A further charity - the concluding rite - is held on the fortieth day after burial.

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Ahmadou Kourouma in his novel "The Suns of Independence", translated by Adrian Adams, (1981 ) provides useful comparative material.

p.96 "Why do the Malinke hold funeral rites forty days after a burial ? Because exactly forty days after a burial, the dead receive the new-comer into their company, but they will only make him welcome and give him room if they are drunk on blood. Nothing therefore can be more beneficial to the departed than to kill many beasts on the fortieth day..... Fama, Balla, and Jamuru had decided to ensure a roomy afterlife for the deceased cousin; to that end they renewed the great traditions, and in the Dumbuya courtyard, on the morning of the fortieth-day funeral rites, they tethered four head of cattle.... One young bull had been donated by Balla, the old sorcerer, to honour the Dumbuya, and because a sacrifice is never wasted. A cow had been presented by a son-in-law of the deceased; he owed it, because he had not finished paying for his wife.....two oxen were the cousin's own property. The cattle belonging to the inheritance had been kept hidden; other people wanted to appropriate them at Fama's expense....but Fama found out...and orderdd that two of them be fetched.

Strangers came from all horizons of the village, Malinke from villages nearby. Nothing was missing on the march: drums, hunters, elders, praise-singers, women, girls and young boys. The bush shook as if trampled by compact herds of elephants....

Preparations for the ceremony began after the second prayer....the seated throng spread to the neighbouring compounds. Then the women arrived, bearing calabashes of cooked food and pots full of sauce, which they lined up near the four tethered cattle. Grain and condiments had been distributed among the village housewives, and since early morning they had been pounding, tending hearth-fires, lifting pots on and off: the dishes covered half the little courtyard, and the mingled aromas: toh, futo, fonio, pepper, onion prompted the general sniffing that precedes great feasts...

The marabouts....squatting in the middle of the courtyard..

Everything was ready for the opening of a great funeral ceremony, worthy of a Dumbuya ; four head of cattle in the middle, all shiny and bellowing, countless calabashes and pots of cooked food, and men seated all around as far as neighbouring compound, with children and a pack of mangy dogs at the far edge.

The head marabout had the praise singer call for silence, then uttered a loud 'bisimilahi' and began chanting verses. (Some read aloud portions of the Koran) But all raised their clasped hands to their foreheads, gleaming in the light of the setting sun ; all communed in a single prayer, asking for mercy from God and the shades of the ancestors.. (A whirlwind expressing the anger of the spirits cut through the ceremony.) To everyone's satisfaction, the head marabout cut short the prayer and called on the praise singers to speak. They all, even the sorriest of them, made long flowing speeches, for each knew the genealogy and feats of arms of the Dumbuya... Then came the time for gifts; each great family gave something.

Then, at a shout and a signal from the marabout, all the strong young men rose and cast off their robes. Stripped to the waist they fell upon the cattle. ...they overpowered them, tied them up, pinned them down and cut their throats. Great glittering knives thrust, cut and chopped. All amidst blood. But blood - you do not know this, because you are not Malinke - blood is stupendous, loud, gaudy, intoxicating. From far, very far away, birds see it blazing, the dead hear it, and it makes the wild beasts drunk. Blood that flows is a life, a double escaping, and its sigh that we cannot hear fills the universe and wakes the dead.

(The men had to defend the blood against the dogs and drove them off, then the birds attacked - the eagles and hawks - but were driven off...)

..the calabashes and basins of food were quickly redistributed and removed. But when it came time to divide up the red meat, the sharing was done with care, equity and refinement, in accordance with the customs that allotted such-and-such a portion or cut to such-and-such a village or family, and in a short time it was all over....and the men moved off.

(The children then rushed to seize the entrails....then the dogs rushed in....  
the birds came back...)

....the men devoted themselves to making merry. Right after the last prayers the  
drumming began in the Dumbuya courtyard. It lasted all night long. (It included  
special hunter's ngoni (magic).)

These were highly successful funeral ceremonies. One sign was the throng  
of Malinke in attendance...but not all were men. Balla thought that at least  
eighteen of the people who passed by him smelled like spirits, shades, animals  
or devils. Another undeniable sign was the universal turmoil....the scuffling  
of beasts and men for the blood shed at the ceremony....

The sacrifice had been accepted, its purpose fulfilled. All the dead were happy,  
especially Fama's ancestors. Already the deceased Lasina had joined them. Now  
his double would never wander about behind the compounds, nor haunt men's dreams  
in search of the resting place that would grant him peace. "

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Mark Hudson in Our Grandmothers' Drums (1989) describes a death and burial,  
pp. 248-253. The mourning period for widows: p. 254.

## Religious Ceremonies

- (1) Islamic
- (2) Traditional

Kitimoo is the 27th night of Ramadan (The Fast Month). It is said to be "better than one thousand months; on it angels descended from heaven with life by the grace of their Lord.. Peace and mercy for everything, it is until dawn." (Koran). The Koran also came down on this night, i.e. the Archangel Gabriel began communicating with the Prophet Mohamed on this night.

Muslim everywhere make it a feast...Muslims gather at the Mosque or a suitable place reciting the Koran and praying and thanking God from sunset to dawn. As angels are present among them throughout the night, people should spend the night in devotion. All sins are forgiven on this night and new accounts begin the next day. Charities are accepted by God, and the angels bless those who offer them to the poor. For this reason rich people kill cows or bulls and distribute the meat to the poor. Villagers subscribe and buy a cow. In Kaiaf, Ansuba Sane, a rich trader, has killed a castrated bull costing him 100 dalasis. Yaya Kasama, a compound head, killed one costing 110. The people of Alkalikunda (Kaiaf) bought and killed one costing D90, and one D50. Badume (Kaiaf) bought and killed one costing them D100, making a total of five animals for Kaiaf. (The people of Jenyeeri were still bargaining at the time of writing, the first animal obtained being too small.)

Young boys and girls go round from compound to compound begging for charity and singing and shouting "Who wants to enter the kingdom of God." Usually the day following Kitimoo, people spend sleeping. Very little work is done.

a Lailatu el kadri. 'Night of power, night of destiny.'

SUNKARE SALOO<sup>a</sup> - End of Fast Month Feast. 27 July 1949. A.K.Rahman.

The appearance of the new moon on the eve of the 27th was marked by the village drum being beaten. The Fast was ended, and the young people could again enjoy their songs and dances, which were not allowing during the month.

On the morning of the 27th July- the Feast Day, the drum was again beaten to warn the villagers to prepare themselves for the religious service. Compound heads were busy, buying oil, chickens, etc. for the day's meal, while the women and girls cleaned the compounds, and decorated themselves. Young men gathered at the bantabaa.

At about ten thirty the drum gave the final call to prayer. All the male population, old and young, assembled at the bantaba waiting for the almaami. When he arrived the people walked in procession to the praying ground.

On arrival at the praying ground the almaami gave the privilege of leading the prayer to Arafang Braima Darame. Prayers were followed by a sermon.

Among other things he urged the people to give the sakat-el-fitr (Ramadan charity) according to Mohamed's doctrine. For every person, male or female, old or young, free and slave, one sa (An Arabic measure equivalent to seven cigarette tins) of the people's staple food. This, he said, would be collected by the almaami who will afterwards distribute the cereal to the needy. Finally he emphasised the factor of education. He said that there is no religion without education...every religion has its own book of laws. To know these you must be educated. They are not customs which you can inherit and finally become like an instinct in you. God said 'Serve me as if you are seeing me, and know me as you know yourself.' He said that to serve God you must know him first, and to know God you must be educated. It is no good copying what educated people do in religious services without knowing what it is done for. All the prophets from Adam to Mohamed were teachers. They taught their people the Book of God. It is one of the commandments of God that we educate our children. Educating them is helping them towards the path of God. Without education nothing good can be achieved. Therefore if we are not educated we are less human.

Finally he said that religion must be pure, free from custom and unnecessary exaggerations. The religion is merely a law, but not a law invented by people which is liable to amendment. It is a divine law; no person is capable of changing it, and to know this Divine Law one must be educated. An uneducated man cannot be a good Muslim. It is just like putting a blind man on the road and saying "Go". Education is the light of everything. "

After saying this he took his seat among the crowd.

The leader of the Farmer's Committee then raised the topic about weeding the communal farm.....and a suitable time was agreed upon.

a.Id al fitr. Korite in Wolof.



Mohamed was born on the 12th night of Anabisukuo. Every year and in every Muslim country this night is devoted to prayers, charity and preaching. In Mandinka societies and particularly Jenyeeri, the celebration takes place on the first Monday of the month. On that day they hoist a white flag at the Mosque, normally two yards of white shirting. At about five p.m., the fodeewolu or clergy take the flag and go round the village shouting "Blessings and peace be upon our Master Mahomed." They go from compound to compound collecting rice, millet, cash, kola nuts etc. which is given to them as charity. After that they return the flag to the mosque. Thereafter they make special prayers every evening until the following Sunday night - the day when Mohamed was born. Every kitchen in the village will bring to the Mosque a large calabash of munkoo. Men will bring kola, and food of various kinds. After sunset the whole village meets at the Mosque - men and women, to pray and to listen to the Imam reciting the Koran and repeating the history of Mohamed. The whole Koran must be read that night. They will continue in their devotions until the morning prayer. After morning prayer they eat the food brought by the offerers and share the money, the Imam getting a considerable proportion. The crowd will lead the Imam from the Mosque to his house, singing hymns (in which they beg God to pour his blessings and benediction upon Mohamed, and at the same time praising the prophet, describing his position in relation to God and among the other prophets. Such hymns are called sukuwo. (Hence Ababi = prophet sukuwo = hymn.) The flag will remain flying over the Imam's house until the next new moon appears.

(Sukuwo can be sung on other occasions, e.g. on Fridays. When they are sung people gather around, giving money etc. to those singing....)

a. Mawlid al-nabi. Gammu.

Id-el-Kabir (Tobaksi) Banna Saloo in Mandinka. (10th day of the 12th month).

I can't find any description of this event in A.K.Rahman's notes, but it is one of the most important festivals in the Muslim year.

This feast began in the time of the prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) when on instructions from the Almighty in the form of a dream he was ordered to sacrifice his own son, Ismael, as a test of his faith in God. As he was about to do so, God sent him a ram from heaven through the Angel Gabriel, which he slaughtered instead. Hence the sacrifice of a ram became a prominent feature in the annual celebration, which keeps fresh the memory of a great and unique event signifying faithfulness and devotion. In Muslim belief the vision occurred near Mecca.

For the sacrifice a ram is recommended, free from defects. Failing this a castrated ram, next in preference a ewe, then a goat, a cow, or a camel. The color of choice is white, then yellow, or brown. A person can slaughter his own sacrifice or delegate someone else. The animal must face east and the pronouncement of Allah's name over the sacrifice is essential.

Generally after the two o'clock prayers, the Imam leads the way by slaughtering his ram first, this is followed by similar activities in other households. After this elders generally make visits from house to house.

If a sacrifice is not made on the correct day, it may still be done on either of the following two days.

After a period of food shortage the women of Jenyeeri decided to harvest the early rice from their upland (banta-faro) rice fields on the 10th day of October to relieve the situation. The ngansimbaa, hearing of this, issued an order that harvesting should not be done until Musukoto Salo, in order to give the crop time to mature, and enable them to celebrate accordingly. The women, as a rule, obey her orders, for she is the supreme head of the women, and her words in matters of domestic affairs are law.

However, though no woman dared bring rice into the village, many spent the day harvesting. They carried mortars and pestles and cooking utensils to the banta faroo, and enjoyed themselves. The men could do nothing about it, except grumble that the ngansimbaa is now too old, and had lost her wits.

On Musukoto Salo, October 21st, baskets of rice were brought into the village in large quantities. Much bartering took place straight away, as women wanted palm oil, salt, etc. for their festive meal. Thus the petty traders exchanged all their stocks of oil for rice, which only one trader possessed (44 gallons). All was taken by the women of Jenyeeri and Kaiaf before sunset. Others had to send to Masembe where they bartered with traders there.

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Crowds of men were seen going from yard to yard, wishing each other good fortune in the New Year, and at the same time doing 'fita kanningo' - that is cousins on the mother's side go to their opposite cousins with little gifts, usually kola, saying "I came to ask you for 'leaf' (fitoo). The others on accepting must give something greater in return, and the demanding cousin has the option of making a request. Very often they choose senoo - ridging, in which case their farms will be ridged by their cousins when the time comes.

While the men are engaged in fita kanningo, the women are busy steaming their rice (As the crop is still fresh it has to be steamed to facilitate pounding of the grain). Cooking and fita kanningo ended at evening prayer time.

Eating followed. There was plenty of cooked rice for every one. In every compound the kitchens produced many calabashes of rice and placed them in the center of the yard for all to eat. It is generally believed that on Musukoto saloo angels come at midnight to weigh people, and if any one is found light in weight, he or she will die before the end of the new year. It is on this night also that God decided all that is to happen in the New Year. To escape death and misfortune in the coming year everyone overfed, Young girls and boys were seen racing in the streets with calabashes of rice....Dogs also had their share. All this being a sign of fullness.

From this day on rice harvesting was permitted. (However harvesting was not yet in full swing, as Jenyeeri had very little early rice this year...having planted later ripening swamp rice.)

a. Ashura. Tamxarit.

Dimba Tulungo - The mother's play . Kwinella (No date)  
(Possibly April 1950)

A.K.Rahman

There are two reasons for this festival (1) when there is an outbreak of diarrhoea among children under two. They attribute the disease to the neglect of mothers who allow their bamburango - the cloth used to carry their infants on their back - to be burnt by fire.

(2) to help young women who are sterile, or those who have never conceived... It is alleged that such sterility is due to some spirits being angry, the spirits that their great grandfathers used to worship, or to the spirit which owns the village. This particular feast was for the latter.

At Kwinella the old women found that the young woman who had married since 1940 up to now bore no children, or at least 75% have never dreamed of pregnancy. (?) So they desired to revive the old custom- a feast to entertain the spirit. Having decided this, the women collected rice from various individuals. No meat or oil is needed for this feast. All they prepare is clean rice cooked alone. This is served in large calabashes. On this occasion twenty one very large calabashes were served. The old women, middle aged women and young married women who have had children all dressed in very dirty rags, some in sacks, and wearing beads of empty tomato tins etc. Others, especially those of slave descent and nyamaalos came half naked. They assembled at the bantaba and the older women blessed the food, not in the name of God, but in the name of the spirit. They spoke as if they were seeing the spirit and actually handing him food. After this the drumming began and they danced round the food covering it with dust as they dance, The leader who was the senior midwife started. She shoveled some of the rice with both her hands and pointed it to the sky, and then touched her belly with it, and finally ate it. The rest of the women followed suit, and ate the whole in about twenty minutes. Some of them spat on the food or dusted it with sand before they devoured it. It is a common belief that suckling mothers are naturally dirty. Nothing upsets their minds because the infants defecate, vomit, and urinate on

them, so a mother or a suckling woman cannot be upset or sick over any dirty or offensive thing. It is a common saying in Mandinka "May God make your bed dirty." This means may God give you children. To them a woman must be dirty to get children. Hence the act of adding sputum and sand to the food. After finishing eating their food, they continued dancing and singing:

"We gave you our food and joy,  
To get in our belly a seed  
That will eventually become man  
And live to maintain this custom,  
As you gave Adam children,  
So make us bear children.  
Yours is the power and might  
Ours is the love and respect  
We beg you as our fathers did before us  
And you are too good to send us away empty handed."

They depart from Islamic rules in performing this feast, behaving rudely, dancing in such a way that they uncover themselves, are bare-headed...

Before making this feast the woman concerned warn their husbands, for they must not have intercourse with them for one week before the ceremony. If they do the spirit will be annoyed, and will not respond. They also refrain from intercourse for three days after the feast.

According to one of the old women more than three quarters of the allegedly sterile women became pregnant before the end of the year....

Having finished dancing they proceeded to the well where they drank water in a special way...They fought over the water (in pretence), and drank greedily... some choked, and some washed their faces in the bucket before drinking....

Another feast concerned with the fertility spirit was postponed until May. This will be held in the bush, probably in the banta-faroo area. This is to give time for special preparations to be made for it.

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DPG This seems to have been superceded by the kanyelango organisation, which is derived from an old Jola custom.

See: Weil, Peter M.

"The staff of life: food and female fertility in a West African Society,"  
Africa (London: International African Institute), 46(2), 1976, 182-195.

Fassin, Didier & Badji, Ibrahima

"Ritual Buffoonery: A social preventive Measures against childhood  
mortality in Senegal,"

The Lancet, i, 18 January 1986, 142-143.

Fassin, Didier

"Rituels villageois, rituels urbains: la reproduction sociale chez  
les femmes joola du Senegal,"

L'Homme, 27(4), 1987, 54-75.

A.K.Rahman

A preliminary meeting of the kankurang society was held by the elders of Kwinella to consider the arrangements for the forthcoming ceremony which the society proposed to hold in mid May. "The object of this ceremony," said the leader, "is to pay respect to the father spirit, who from time immemorial has been our protector. The yearly appearance of the kankurang, at the early part of the farming season is not a new practice. Most of you have heard that long ago Kwinella used to suffer terribly from want of rain, and you have heard how God, through the kankurang rendered his mercy on us. That is why every year we must hold a thanksgiving ceremony for the father spirit. Now the ngansimba and her followers will tell us what will be required for this ceremony."

Kwinella's ngansimba rose and ~~th~~anked the leader. Among other things she said: "This year the ceremony should last at least a week, besides the usual dance, the kankurang will be required to help in forcing the young men and middle aged men to re-dig our wells. As you all know the women always suffer from lack of water, and great difficulties in getting what little is available. All the wells in Kwinella fail at this time of year except one." The society have earned D60, four bags of rice and four he-goats for this occasion. We still need some more goats or sheep, as visitors from related villages are bound to attend. Therefore the five kabilos of Kwinella should subscribe to this. I also suggest that the festivals during the week be undertaken by the kabilos respectively. That is, the collected money and cereals and animals be divided equally among the kabilos so that each kabilo would entertain the kankurang for one day. "

All the people agreed to this, and then the matter was referred to the Jenyeeri assistant ngansimba who conferred with the Kwinella ngansimba. After presenting D15 and two baskets of paddy rice to the Kwinella ngansimba, she gave a short speech stressing the close relationship of the two villages, and promised full co-operation during the ceremonies.



Kwinella kankurang ceremony

To please the 'rain maker spirit' the people of Kwinella, Bumari, and Bambako have to hold a kankurang ceremony every year, just at the beginning of the rainy season. Though the kankurang is a men's organisation, nevertheless women have a strong hold over it. The whole organisation is controlled by the Ngansim̄ba (the woman leader of social activities in the village). She has to approve of all the functions in this ceremony. Yet women still believe that a kankurang is more than a human being. They still don't know exactly how men clad in kankurang costume acquire super-human vision and powers.

No woman is capable of recognising a man in a kankurang costume, because of the fear of looking closely...Men also believe that people who are to be kankurangs should have second sight, that is, capable of seeing things which ordinary men cannot see, such as spirits, witches, devils, etc. and hear their voices, and so is able to discuss with any jinn, spirit, or devil whatever business he may need.

On this particular occasion the object of the kankurang is to please the 'rain maker' and ask him for his mercies, so that they may have a good season and abundant water on the fields and swamps. It is said that Kwinella used to suffer from acute shortage of rain, and there used to be famine until hundreds of years ago a man with special powers came from Kaabu and made friends with the elder jinn who owns Kwinella (every village, town, large tree, well, etc. has a jinn owner - invisible to ordinary men.) It was through friendship that the jinn advised him to produce a kankurang and make a big feast inviting all the surrounding villages. But they must be generous to the people or else the spirit will not be generous to them, and they will have no rain. This fear is what urges Kwinella to this expensive ceremony every year.

It is only Soninke villages that hold such beliefs, the neighbouring Muslim villages used to shun them for such foolishness. They say that the people of Kwinella and their sister villages used to suffer hunger early in the year because they consume whatever foodstuffs they have before the time of need.

The main feast will take place today 30th May 1950 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. according to the ngansimba. Many people from Kiang East and Kiang West will take part. Jenyeeri is taking a very active part this year, because the ngansimbaa in Jenyeeri received an invitation, and the women of Jenyeer have subscribed and collected a large quantity of foodstuffs for the ceremony. At the same time they were preparing to ask for the transfer of Karamoring Sane's wife from Kwinella to Jenyeeri.

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#### The Ceremony of the 30th May.

The management of the ceremony was undertaken by the six kabilos forming the village of Kwinella - Sansang-tilibo, Teema Su, Sansang-duumaa, Si-tabā, Jali-tabā and Diba-kunda, under the leadership of the ngansimbaa, a middle aged woman who inherited the office from her mother. Each kaabiloo played its own part separately. The first to act were the Nyakunda kabilos, where the kankurang belongs: Si-tabā, Jali-tabā and Diba-Kunda. For this reason the ceremony was made to last six days. On each occasion the ngansimbaa and her staff bearer and followers must attend, for she makes the distribution of food to the kaabilos and orders whatever type of food she wants to be cooked. She also attends the kankurang dance, keeping a keen eye on the kankurang's movements, in case he happens to break a rule. There are very strong rules binding the kankurang and the men to keep strict secrecy, that is keeping the kankurang from being identified by unauthorised people, such as women and uncircumcised men; and unnecessary strife between men and women. Any of the above breaches of the rules will result in a kadewo on the party at fault.

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The following is an account of one kabilo's entertainment. Women in the kabiloo had three bags of rice which they collected from individual members and kafoo harvesting. (At harvest time kafoo groups are usually employed to harvest rice. There is no standard pay for this, the workers are only fed, given kola and tobacco, and at the end of the day's work they are given rice on the head. This rice is usually

kept in the kafu-tiyoo's house, to be used for festivals, etc.), two goats which were bought at D14, from sales of communal rice, oil, and other ingredients to the value of D5, the proceeds of a subscription by members. The bulk was taken to the senior woman of the kaabiloo who called the ngansimbaa with whom she discussed what to cook and who was to cook. Having done that, the kaabila-tiyoo (the male head of the ward) and the kankurang faa (father of the kankurang), and joobi keeba (the senior attendant of the kankurang) were called and shown the cereals. Middle aged women were the cooks, and the uncircumcised boys of the ward provided firewood. Cooking began about 2.30 p.m. in the ngansimbaa's yard, while the kankurang and other women and girls, and men of the whole village flocked to the bantabaa, dancing, and making merry. Occasionally a man would, after dancing, throw coppers to the clapping women, saying: "Take these to the cooks for their kola." Such gifts amounted to D8. It is understood that this collection would be saved for the forthcoming circumcision ceremony.

Uncircumcised boys made a collection of D4, also saved for the future circumcision ceremony. Elderly men in the kaabiloo contributed five bundles of millet which were included in the day's food. Gifts to the drummer amounted to D6.

About eight o'clock the ngansimbaa sent word that the food was ready. A large calabash of food was sent to each kaabiloo, and a little one for the head of each, one to the kankurang and joboolu, one to the kankurang faa, one to the ngansimbaa and her staff bearers, one to the drummers, one to the chief, one to the almaami, two to strangers. Large quantities of kola nuts, tobacco and cigarettes accompanied each calabash.

After the meal the ngansimbaa addressed the people and named the kaabiloo which was to entertain the kankurang the next day. Thereafter the dance resumed.

#### Kadewo

It happened that a young woman was crossing the ring to the other side and a young jooboo met her and ordered her to return to her place. The young woman refused, saying she had to go to the other side to talk to someone. The jooboo

pushed her and she resisted. The jooboo then used his five foot whip, whipping her severely on the shoulders, neck and sides, and later used his fists tearing her dress and beads. Other women appealed to the ngansimbaa, saying that it was a fight. The kankurang joined in flogging all the women and men who were trying to release the girl from the jooboo. The ngaansimbaa's staff bearer rose and ordered the crowd to be quiet. After a while everyone was silent listening to what the ngansimbaa had to say. She called the kankurang faa and j̄obi keeba and asked them to explain why the young jooboo flogged the girl so bitterly for merely crossing the ring. They replied that the girl was at fault because she disobeyed the jooboo - no one should disobey or be rude to a jooboo according to customary behavior. The ngansimbaa agreed that it was so, but the act was done with malice. That the jooboo had the full support of the village and should have done so to a man who tried to resist him, but not to a girl. Secondly a jooboo has full right to beat anyone with his whip but not to use his fist as long as no one dares to retaliate. (The girl's husband, brothers, father, and mother were all present when she was flogged, but they dared not say a word. Taking a jooboo to the chief is meaningless - if you do you may be charged for encouraging a riot by breaking custom !) Finally the ngansimbaa said that the kankurang dropped his hat the other day (which is also a kadewo), and she is now proclaiming that all the men and women of Kwinella, including the chief should assemble at Munju-Munjo (outside the village) tomorrow (Friday) at the hottest time of the day. Every one will sit on the ground, men barefooted, and a kankurang will be present. The ngansimbaa who will decide the case will sit with her staff bearers on a mat under a tree. Though the men pleaded not guilty, they have very little chance of escaping a kadewo.

(Alas Rahman's notes finish at this point, and do not indicate what happened later.)

### CONCLUSIONS

From the descriptions presented one can see a number of factors affecting the ceremonies.

(a) Variation according to the season of the year.

A naming ceremony held during the hungry period, or during the farming season will be a slight affair compared with one taking place in January, when money is still plentiful after the sale of groundnuts, when there is little work to be done, and the weather cool enough to enable one to walk to other villages in the daytime in relative comfort.

Other ceremonies, e.g. circumcisions, are geared to a certain season of the year.

(b) Secondly the general economic factor is crucial.

Large ceremonies such as circumcision ceremonies are expensive. In the smaller and poorer villages they are curtailed, and only carried out in full in the larger and richer villages. Mandina, a small and poor village, went through all of its circumcision ceremonies in a week.

(c) Highly important is the factor of inter-village rivalry.

This can be seen in the account of a naming ceremony when the husband and wife are in different villages (Jenyeeri and Kwinela), and in the display put up by Jenyeeri at the Mandina celebrations.

Jenyeeri at this time had become relatively prosperous through the presence of the Nutrition Field Working Party, and the people were striving to regain its former lead position, which had been taken from it by Kaiaf, where the district chief lived.

(d) Fourthly there is a general contrast between those areas which were Muslim at an early date, and those which converted more recently, where many of the pre-islamic beliefs and customs are still in people's memories. Many of the non Muslim elements have been played down in the Muslim villages, the ceremonies are more austere, prayers and the giving of charity occupying a prominent place, while in the Soninke areas drumming, dancing, and lavish entertainment

are the things most particularly emphasised, and attention is still paid to a variety of spirits, devils, witches, etc.

Kerewan was originally a Jaxanke town, and so an early Muslim one, but is now scarcely distinguishable from other Mandinka villages in the area. Yet the tradition of a body of slaves who play an important role in ceremonies still remains powerful. Many of the non Islamic items like the bullroarer and the masked figure (the kankurang) had disappeared, but were re-introduced briefly by men from other communities, but lacked something of the great respect towards them that are to be found in traditional areas.

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#### Future Research

One aspect of 'sacrifice' about which I have inadequate information is the significance of the sex, color, and characteristics of the animal sacrificed. What substitutions are acceptable, if economic or other conditions prevent the use of a prescribed animal. Are such beliefs still significant or do people now merely use whatever they happen to have ?

Similarly what significance is attached to different colors and shapes of kola nuts ?