



# RESOUND

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## Senufo Balafon Music

*by Hugo Zemp*

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### Finding My Way Back to the Music of the Senufo

#### First encounters

Korhogo, summer 1958. Someone had told me that the Baptist mission had some sound recordings of Senufo music. So, one day, I found myself in the car of some American ministers who were going to take me to the mission, located about a dozen kilometers from Korhogo, the largest city in the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire. Along the road I noticed a crowd and heard music playing. I asked the missionaries to stop, which they did, though they stayed in the car so as not to legitimize by their presence a pagan funeral rite – as they explained it. I walked up to the crowd, and then I had the privilege of attending a musical event which was literally unheard of, at least in the experience of the young Western musician I was then: around an open grave, several ensembles, each one composed of two or three balafons and two or three timpani, were playing, all at the same time, but each independently of the others. The air was buzzing with an incredible mix of sounds, and as I walked around the outside of the circle of people, I was able to hear now this tune, now that other tune, as played by the different groups. I was flabbergasted by the vibrant sonority of the balafons, the sharp clatter of the small timpani, and the deep boom of the big ones. Never had I heard or seen such a

thing. I hated to leave, to go to the mission to listen to some poor-quality recordings of Christian songs made on a little tape recorder. I never forgot my first encounter with live Senufo music.

I was a jazz drummer and a conservatory student in percussion classes when I went to Côte d'Ivoire to listen to (and watch) the playing of African drums and xylophones. I had purchased a little 45 titled *Batteries Africaines* (African drums), recorded in part in Côte d'Ivoire and released by Gilbert Rouget, who would later direct my research at the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), something I didn't dream of at the time. At the museum in Abidjan I had been told that there was a musicologist and his ethnologist wife living in Daloa, a town in the western central region. I stopped off there and was cordially welcomed by André Schaeffner and Denise Paulme, who would also eventually direct my studies, another thing I could not have imagined at the time. Two months later, at the end of my Ivorian journey, I ran into the Schaeffners on the boat back to Europe. During the voyage, which lasted ten days, they gave me a reading list (up to then I had not even known that there was a discipline called ethnomusicology). They invited me to do an internship in the Department of Ethnomusicology at the Musée de l'Homme, which would eventually be my place of work for 35 years. Later, in the course of four field trips to Côte d'Ivoire I took

during the 1960's in order to study oral literature and musical life among the Dan, I spent several weeks at a time visiting other cultures: the Gere (We), the Baule, and above all the Senufo<sup>1</sup>.

### **Return to the land of the Senufo**

In 1998, forty years after my first visit, I decided to go back to Côte d'Ivoire to make a film about balafon music. In preparation, I delved into my old field notes and dug out my recordings from the sixties to listen to them once again.

I also listened again to a double album with excellent liner notes that had been published by Till Förster in 1987 [disc 4], and I read all his ethnological work, most of it written in the language of Goethe. Unfortunately this work is still not very well known among French Africanists and Ivorians (a book in English is in preparation). His 1997 work, which brought together the results of almost twenty years of research, is a monument of knowledge concerning the cultural representations, the daily life, and the ritual life of the Senufo, especially as concerns the Kafibele sub-group.

In addition, two unpublished writings by students, specifically focused on Senufo balafon music, attracted my very great interest. The first had the advantage of an inside viewpoint, since it was written by a Senufo (Coulibly 1982); the second, written in German, contributed the first in-depth analysis of the structure of this music (Ciompi 1989).

Back in Abidjan once more, I got in touch with Georges Niangoran-Bouah, like me a former student of Denise Paulme. He had already played host to me during my earlier missions in the '60's. He took me to see a show by an Ivorian dance troupe; the Ghanaian ethnomusicologist J. H. Nketia was also there. These two African researchers had studied the drum language of the Akan peoples neighboring the Senufo to the south and east; something closely related to balafon-playing, as we shall see. One young musician, Sikaman Soro, who was playing for that troupe, and who was a member of the Kafibele Senufo studied by Till Förster, became my research assistant. Thus, my cinematographic project began under the best possible conditions.

### **Balafon Terminology**

The balafon, as it is called in French and English, the signature instrument of the Senufo of Côte d'Ivoire, is a frame xylophone with calabash resonators. Not for nothing do Ivorians call their land "the country of the balafon". K. A. Gourlay and Lucy Duran (1984:117) wrote that the term *balafon* was probably introduced by European travelers, stemming "from the Greek root *phono*." But the most widely accepted etymology is in Mande language: *bala* "xylophone" plus *fo* "to speak, playing a musical instrument."

In his book, *Mande Music*, Eric Charry wrote: "The Maninka xylophone, called bala or balafon, is used wherever Maninka peoples have migrated..." (2000:135). He observes that the word balafon (or balafo) appeared at the end of the seventeenth century in publications by French travelers (De la Courbe, Froger) as referring to either the xylophone or the xylophonist (Charry 2000:363, 365).

The Senufo, who speak the Senari language (a language of the Voltaic family or Gur, and not Mandé), know the word "balafon" as a word in Jula (the Mande lingua franca of Côte d'Ivoire) and in French; but they have their own terms as well, that

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differ according to dialects and especially<sup>2</sup> according to the types of musical groups involved.

### *jègēlē, jègbáǵì, kpōyē*

During my visits in the 1960s to the Tiebara and Nafara Senufo sub-groups in the Korhogo region, I encountered *jegele* as the name of an instrument and as the name of the main ensemble-type of balafons and wooden-bottomed timpani. On a mission sponsored by INSAAC (Institut National Supérieure des Arts et de l'Action Culturelle) [disc 3] to collect examples from the Western Senufo of the Boundiali region, Pierre Augier, Paul Dagri and Adépo Yapo encountered the terms *jegele*, *jegbaa*, *jegara* and *jere* (the differences are dialectal). Among the Kafibele Senufo of the Sirasso region, as I noted in 1965 and again in 1997-98, *jègēlē* refers to the keys of the xylophone, *jègbáǵì* to the instrument, and *kpōyē* to the ensemble made up of xylophones and wooden-bottomed timpani.

Oumar Coulibaly, a native of Ferké and a researcher among the Tiebara and Nafara musicians of the Korhogo and Sinématiali regions, has written that *jegele* designates the keys of the xylophone, and *kpoy*, the timpani (1982:22). Since the ensemble is made up of two groups of instruments, idiophones and membranophones, the Senufo may refer to the whole formation by either name.

The dictionary of Tiebara speech in the Senari language (Mills 2004) gives *jělē* (within the nominal class *li*) for a balafon key, and the plural *jě'ēlē* or *jěgēlē* as referring equally to the keys and to the ensemble formed by both balafons and timpani. The term *kpō'ō* (nominal class *ki*) is given as referring to both large and small timpani, and its plural *kpō'yō* refers to the whole group including balafons. The nominal class *li* contains mostly the names of small objects: -l + vowel constitutes the characteristic suffix of the indefinite singular, and -*gēlē* that of the indefinite plural (Kienz 1979: 27, 32). So, it is clear that *jělē* (or *dyělē*) refers to the balafon's key, while *jègēlē* (indefinite plural) or *jéǵèlē* (definite plural) refers to the whole set of keys, and by extension to the entire instrument or even to the musical ensemble as a whole. The nouns belonging to the *ki* (or *ǵi*) class, by contrast,

“are for the most part inanimate objects tending to be large in size”; the indefinite singular suffix is -g + vowel, and for the indefinite plural, -y + vowel (Kienz 1979). Different authors write the word that means timpani sometimes as *kpōǵō* (indefinite singular), sometimes as *kpōǵì* (definite singular), and sometimes as *kpōyē* (indefinite plural) or *kpōyì* (definite plural), or even *kpōy*, inasmuch as the final vowel is often not pronounced.

The Kafibele Senufo of the Sirasso region are more likely to use *kpōyē* to refer to the typical ensemble composed of from two to four balafons and two or three timpani, of two sizes, both with wooden bottoms. The balafon as a separate instrument, not the music played on it – and without regard to the ensemble it is a part of – is called *jègbáǵì*, literally “bed of the keys” [of the balafon]. In speaking of balafon music in general (not specifically of the ensemble *kpōyē*), the Kafibele also say *jègēlē*.

Förster gives the term *kpōyē* as meaning both the name of the instrument and the ensemble formation comprised of balafons and timpani (1987: 29). In the course of preparing this article, I reread all the transcription of filmed interviews that I have, and I was able to verify that Nahoua (who was one of Förster's two principal informants as regards music) sometimes used *kpōyē* to refer to the balafons of other types of ensembles, alternating use of this term with *jègēlē* or *jèǵèlē*. Nonetheless, musicians who play in other types of ensembles never call their instrument *kpōyē*, but rather *jègbáǵì*, and when they are talking about music, they say *jègēlē*.

When they refer specifically to the ensemble made up of balafons and wooden-bottomed timpani, the Kafibele use compound words containing the root *kpō-* :<sup>3</sup>

*kpōǵá*, singer (*ǵá*) of the type proper to an ensemble *kpōyē* on the occasion of funerals and collective labor;

*cēkpōyì*, balafon repertoire for women (*cē*, “women”);

*wōlεkpōyì*, balafon repertoire for older persons (*wōlε*, “old”).

Otherwise, the root *kpō-* refers, in compound words, to the timpani:

*kpōkmáù*, timpani player (*kúmá* or *kmá*, “to strike”);  
*kpōsúgū*, large timpani for accompaniment (*sú*, “to pound” ; lit. “timpani that pounds”);  
*kpōwólógū*, little solo timpani (*wóló*, “to take (i.e., the lead),” “to choose,” “to pick (out)” ; lit. “timpani that leads,” “that picks out”);  
*làkilékpōgō*, large timpani whose bottom or case is an actual gourd (and is not carved out of wood), and which forms part of the ensemble called “la clé” from French “the key” (cf. below, “Different types of ensembles”).

The Tiebara dictionary gives close to forty compound words and expressions using the root *kpō-* (Mills 2004, 616-617).

Compound words having to do with balafon music – whatever the form of the ensemble – begin with the root *je-*. Here are some examples:

*jènjúgō*, balafon tune (literally, “song of the balafon”);  
*jègbági*, the balafon as instrument, distinguished from a complete ensemble (*bági*, “bed,” and here “frame”);  
*jègmáù*, balafon player (*kmá*, “to strike”);  
*jèzyéxi*, balafon lyrics (*syéxi*, “speech,” “discourse”);  
*jèwólóù*, solo balafon player (*wóló*, “to take,” “to select,” “to pick”);  
*jèzúgù*, balafon accompanist (*sú*, “to pound”);  
*jébàlári*, name of ensemble also referred to in briefer form as *bàlári* after the name of the harp with two strings that characterizes this ensemble type;  
*jèkácéwà*, master balafon player (*kácéwà*, “expert”).

The Tiebara dictionary contains close to thirty compound words containing the root *je-* (Mills 2004:616-17)

### Different types of ensembles

The Kafibele, a sub-group of the larger conglomeration that is Senufo society, distinguish seven types of ensembles in which balafons are combined with various other musical instruments.

Each ensemble type has its own name, and plays under precisely defined circumstances. In each type, balafonists play tunes that have linguistic meanings.

- (1) the *kpōyē*, the ensemble type considered the oldest and most prestigious, comprised of two to four balafons and two or three timpani with wooden cases [discs 1, 2, 4, 6, 7; films 1, 2, 4];
- (2) the *bàlári*, which includes two-stringed harps from which this type’s name is derived [disc 4; films 2, 4];
- (3) the *tisāá’á*, characterized by large, cylindrical rattles made of metal, *tisā*, shaken by women; this onomatopoeic name also designates the entire ensemble of this type;
- (4) the *làkiléù* (from French *la clé*, key) or *bàlàfāári*, an ensemble referred to as “jula,” that is, Mande, whose timpani have cases made from a calabash gourd, not wood; the first designation comes from a song in the Jula language in which a young woman gives her lover “the key” [disc 1];
- (5) the *cà’ámà*, music with accompanying dance, performed at a feast which is celebrated two or three years before boys of the group go into the sacred woods to undergo their initiation into the poro (*pārā*), the initiatory society for men: this ensemble is comprised of transverse flutes, hour-glass drums held under one arm, and a large standing drum [film 2];
- (6) the *ngārā*, also music with accompanying dance, performed at the feast which celebrates the end of a six-year initiatory period within the poro ; this ensemble includes vertical end-blown flutes, hour-glass drums, and calyx-shaped drums [discs 1, 4 ; film 2];
- (7) the *jīnāgārā*, trance-inducing music in which dancers handle burning bunches of straw without getting burned themselves, something I did not have the opportunity to see.

Other Senufo sub-groups do not practice so many different kinds of balafon music. The Nafara, for example, have no dance equivalent either to the *cà’ámà* nor to the *ngārā*; the music for the poro initiates who are completing their initiation is

made with harps and not with balafons (personal communication from Andras Zempleni). As for the Fodonon of Lataha village, they did not appear to have balafon ensembles when I first visited them in 1961 and 1962. In fact, according to Lannoy (1985:51 and also disc 5), they only formed an ensemble called by the name of *jegele* at the end of the 1960s, borrowing the form from their powerful neighbors, the Tiebara.

### Talking Balafons<sup>4</sup>

Oumar Coulibaly, with regard to the Tiebara and Nafara sub-groups of the Senufo, and Till Förster for the Kafibele sub-group of the Senufo, were the first authors to draw attention to the relationship between natural language and balafon music.

A piece of *jegele* music is first of all some words translated into music on the instrument; there aren't any pieces of music like that without texts. That is why, when you want to compose a piece of *jegele* you have to start by finding the literary part of it : the text, meaning, *the message you want to deliver* putting the words into music is based on the tones and the rhythmic structure of the language (Coulibaly 1982:43).

Playing the xylophone, in the Senufo language, is expressed by saying “making a speech” (*syēējō*). A phenomenon that is characteristic of all xylophone ensembles is this expression of a text through the music, and it consists in following the tones of the spoken language, which among the Senufo are meaningful. By this means, *it is possible to transmit, up to a certain point, the message of texts which are not actually sung* [emphasis added] (Förster 1987:29).

Learning from these two authors that Senufo balafons also ‘talked’ strengthened my desire to return. During my earlier, short visits, the link between the music and an underlying language didn't seem obvious. At any rate, as a drummer myself, I have always been interested in talking drums, and even made a study of two such systems in Oceania (Zemp and Kaufmann 1969; Zemp 1997). So I immediately went looking through the literature for examples of talking xylophones.

In their major, two-volume work on speech surrogates (1976), Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok bring together 74 articles, 41 of which are entirely

concerned with Africa, while five general articles mention it. As far as I can see, though, only three authors mention the xylophone, and then only in passing: Herzog (566) with regard to the Jabo of Liberia, Armstrong (868, 875) on the Idoma of Nigeria, and Nketia (826), who did not name a region: “Xylophones have also been found in limited use in this context...” It is true that the sub-title of the work is *Drum and Whistle Systems*, but other instruments such as bells, horns, flutes, and also chordophones are often mentioned. The absence of explicit references to the xylophone can be explained undoubtedly by the fact that the use of the xylophone as a speech surrogate is less frequent. It is less spectacular than the ‘bush telegraph’ of the talking drums, and its possible relation to natural language has not often been examined.

The Senufo balafonist who wants to compose a new tune generally has some certain text in mind. Making up songs on the balafon is called *kājènjō*, that is, “carve out a balafon song.” When you ask a musician what a particular balafon song means, he tells a story. In order to communicate to spectators [film 1] that this tune follows the tonal contour of the language, I asked Nahoua to please say the words first, and then sing them. He did this at my urging, but not spontaneously.

Marianne Lemaire (1999) published an annotated translation containing some 60 work songs that were recorded “outside their normal context,” inasmuch as the Tiebara had ceased to do collective labor of the type that was spurred on in friendly competition by such songs. She observes that “every farmer knows the short phrases that go with each phrase of the music the xylophonists play” (Lemaire 1999:36). “It is actually enough for the farmers to hear the verbal phrase spoken once for them to be able to hear it in the musical phrase that follows the same tonal arrangement.” In reality, during performance “in context,” the musicians do not sing the words they are beating out on the xylophone, and when there is a singer, he often sings words that have nothing to do with the phrases of the balafon.

Some tunes linked with funeral ceremonies (announcement of a death, enshrouding of

a body, burial proper) are considered very old, though this does not keep the musicians from playing variations when they play them. Each village, and even different neighborhoods in a large village, have their own versions. Thus a well known tune from the funeral repertoire still has several possible interpretations within the same tonemic arrangement: <sup>5</sup>

*Here someone is falling to the ground.*

(One of ours is dead)

*Someone is given for the catafalque.*

(Someone has died and must be laid out on the death bed.)

*The dead, was he only for others?*

(The answer is understood to be no, because everyone must die.)

*We are coming to sacrifice a chicken.*

(The time has come for us to sacrifice a chicken.)

Spontaneously, Nahoua volunteered a humorous interpretation. He explained it this way [film 1]:

On the subject of deaths I can quote a number of verses because we balafonists, we joke a lot, and we fit words to the songs. When a death has to be announced and they fire guns, if it's an old person and the drums of the poro are sounding, then we say that the dead are talking and saying:

*Here comes someone to join us!*

Unlike the traditional tunes (*wōlekpōyi*, “balafon for the old ones”), the tunes that women and young girls dance to at wakes or at informal dance parties are subject to the vagaries of fashion. Till Förster (1987:26-28) described how many round-songs (*dā'ári*) sung by young girls end up in the repertoire of balafon and harp ensembles (*bàlári*), as a result of balafonists borrowing from the rounds certain melodies they happen to like, or by young girls asking a soloist to learn a song from the *dā'ári* and put it in their repertoire. In that case, a “song of the balafon” is really based on a song that is sung, though here it is the young girls who transfer tones of the language onto a sung melody.

A good soloist is not satisfied with repeating a

musical phrase in a tune without varying the words – if he did, he would quickly lose the dancers, especially the women, who would simply follow another ensemble. Competition is lively, and the best balafonist at any given moment draws the biggest crowd of women to dance to his ensemble's music. In fact, the repertoire for informal dance parties as well as that of the tunes played at wakes all come under the heading of “balafon for women” (*cēkpōyi*)!

### Repertoires: Diversity of themes

Oumar Coulibaly (1982) transcribed, translated, and annotated twenty texts which he classed according to their degree of diffusion (village or regional level), their intended audience (old people, young people), their context (funeral, work, entertainment), and theme (death, praise, moral lessons, historical events, love). He writes that during the 1977 independence day celebrations in Korhogo, a contest was organized between twenty *jegele* ensembles. The winner succeeded in segueing through 82 pieces without a break, each of which could only last for two minutes. Obviously such a situation does not allow the extent of a particular ensemble to be evaluated, still less the complete repertoire of a type of music that is far richer still. In fact, many pieces are tied to a particular place, and certain tunes leap to the memory of musicians because they are playing in familiar circumstances. Certain tunes about funerals, above all those concerning the death of a balafonist, must not be performed except during ceremonies.

Every type of ensemble has its own repertoire. There can be borrowing, especially by *bàlári* ensembles, featuring two-stringed harps; these are usually avid to borrow popular tunes from the *kpōyē* ensembles. The reverse is possible, but not often admitted, since the latter ensembles are considered senior and more prestigious.

In order to give an idea concerning the themes of the texts that get played by *kpōyē* ensembles, we will reproduce here translations of the pieces performed in our film devoted to funeral festivities [film 1].

In Kanaroba, on the morning of the burial, while older men present gifts of money and cloths for wrapping the corpse, an ensemble plays in front of the house of the dead man. Fonidjolohe Tuo, the soloist, links dance tunes together that have nothing directly to do with funerals:

*You should wash the clothes of your husbands!*

*Since the devaluation we no longer eat good things!*

*Roundheels, lie down, I'll caress you!*

*There is no dignity in our life today.*

In Nafoun, during the enshrouding of the body, Nahoua Silué began playing with a first song concerning what was then happening, but then moved into a song containing an anecdote about a case of adultery, with words that a husband might say to a young rival, and followed with an evocation of Gbon Coulibaly, the chief of the Senufo during the war against the Samori at the end of the nineteenth century, a version heard everywhere, and after that a song of praise for the champion farm workers. It should be noted that the dead person in this case was a woman, and that the last phrase can be considered, at first glance, rather far afield ; but since it concludes a series of phrases in which the singer praises the sons of the woman, we understand in this context that honor is also being paid to them.

*Come, we are going to shroud the body!*

*Son of Bombori, don't you know that I am older than you?*

*Gbon has said that he will strike the strangers.*

*It is time for me to act before leaving.*

*Man, you're really a strong man!*

When the singer sings the praise of the dead woman's sons, Nahoua adds exclamations on the balafon:

*No, no, no! that's right! that's so!*

At another burial of a woman in Sirasso, a singer praised the sons of the dead woman while the ensemble was playing work tunes,

which corresponded to the effort of the young people in closing the tomb with their great hoes. Lyrics for sung texts and the words of the balafon were independent of each other. Among the instrumental-only tunes, a single text was identifiable :

*We have learned that you have large rice fields.*

In Kolokaha, at the commemorative funeral for a woman and a balafonist who had been buried far from his village, one could hear during the wake, at the moment when a chicken was sacrificed to the spirits of the balafon, the classic funeral song. Then the ensemble played a song from the church, even though the dead persons were not Christians (no religious connotation was understood ; the song was used to get young people up and dancing), and then a dance tune related to the funerary context:

*Here comes someone to join us!*

*No-one can defy Jesus.*

*If you see a novice dance to the balafon, it's because of a death.*

Later during the night, boys wearing *kādāli* masks come and perform acrobatic dances, and the musicians then play a tune whose words are unknown (or secret ?), but which is part of the repertoire for the poro novices. In the morning, after having danced all night with only a few breaks, a group of young girls sings a song with a double meaning, accompanied by an ensemble of balafons:

*Sweetheart, do you have backache?*

As if to prove that the worry of the girls is without foundation, the two timbalists answer by performing a dance with their instruments that I had never seen before [film 1]. Another ensemble (whose solo balafonist, Nanfonna Koné, would show his virtuosity by setting his balafon on the ground and continuing to play it while turning around it) played a phrase concerning the imminent end of the festivities, including a request for permission to depart, and finally two songs then quite current, concerning funerals:

*Open the way!*

*Here comes someone to join us!*

*If you are sick, do you have to die?*

During the ceremony devoted to the balafonist who had died, the ensemble played tunes whose words I was not able to collect, because the balafonists were afraid they would call down bad luck upon themselves if they discussed them, the songs themselves being considered as “bad,” that is, dangerous.

At the ceremony that took place the morning after the wake and the burial, musicians marched to the edge of the village, tracing the path that the dead man had walked to reach the fields. In Kolokaha, four *kpōyē* ensembles march one behind the other, each one playing something different, and only the first, played by the ensemble of the host village, has a direct relationship to the funeral:

*If you see an old person behind the balafons, there's a reason for it. (A funeral).*

*No stranger working in the fields can out-do Kalfa! (Kalfa was a champion cultivator).*

*Sorcerers, lay down your equipment! Are you going to save us?*

*I saw you in Kanoroba, I shall never leave you.*

At the same ceremony held in Kanoroba, two singers began songs that the balafonists immediately picked up. This time, the songs were either praise for the sons of the dead person, or words addressed to the dead :

(The singer:) “The hyena (a hunter) left yesterday evening, and came back during the night.”

(The balafonist replies:) *Left yesterday evening. Left yesterday evening.*

(The singer:) “Don't go in the water, the panther gave birth in the water!”

(The balafonist:) *The panther gave birth in the water!*

(The singer:) “Ah! Chiefs of the cemeteries (= the dead), you have carried off a young man.

Our champion cultivator has fallen into the tomb. You dead ones, you have taken him from us.”

(The balafonist:) *You, chiefs of the cemeteries, you have taken him for the cemetery, cemetery, cemetery.*

Once the last gifts of money have been given and the last speeches ended, everyone returns to the village, with the ensemble playing the longest text I have recorded. It is the song of a young girl who complains that her boyfriend wants to go live in a rural area where good food is scarce: <sup>6</sup>

*Boys who have earned money live in the town of Korhogo,  
and you, you want to go into the cotton fields!  
Darling, I don't want to cook mealy porridge!*

At an event such as a funeral, one might have expected a stricter separation of repertoires according to the place, the event, the ceremonial activity during the enshrouding of the dead person and the burial, or the entertainment at the vigil after the burial. Nothing of the kind. It is true that some songs are only played during precise sets of circumstances, such as the beginning of wrapping the body for burial or the funeral of a balafonist, but most other songs can be played at the most unexpected moments during funerary festivities.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Other than the sound recordings and photos of musicians from 12 archived sub-groups at the ATM, four articles and two LPs, devoted entirely or partially to the Senufo, are the results of these missions (Zemp 1967, 1969, 1970, 1976 ; discs [1] and [2]).

<sup>2</sup> Senari, the language of the Senufo, has three semantic and grammatical tones, in addition to *glides*. Some of the authors who transcribe them note all tones, using a horizontal dash for the middle tone ; others only mark the low (*grave*) or high (*aigu*) tones with the accents (in French) of the same name. Mills' dictionary (2004) does not place accents on syllables that have the same tone as the preceding one, nor on the first if it is middle-tone. A three-syllable word all in middle tone has thus no mark, and a word whose first syllable is in middle tone with the second and third in high tone gets only an accent *aigu* on the second syllable. In order to avoid confusion regarding words whose tones I do not know or which are



not indicated in the literature, I have adopted a uniform notation, indicating middle tone by a dash over the vowel.

<sup>3</sup> In composite words, if the initial consonant is voiced, the initial consonant of the second word is often changed from unvoiced to voiced.

<sup>4</sup> I return here to certain elements of my 2004 article, which included comparisons of sonagrams that illustrate intonation (tone and rhythm) in spoken and sung words, also including graphic notation that follows the polyphonic interplay of balafons.

<sup>5</sup> For a Senari transcription of balafon words together with tones, see Zemp 2004.

<sup>6</sup> A variant of these lyrics appears on disc 4, C 1.

<sup>7</sup> Different authors propose different tone notations and different translations of lyrics, and this does not have to be because of an error. Tones (and sometimes vowels) vary by aspect and mood of the verb, and by nominal form; the addition of a suffix can modify the tones of the root. Also, dialects and local parlance can produce not only variations in prosody, but also variations in segmentation of semantic units. Among for example the Dan of Côte d'Ivoire the dialect of the south (as also that of the Kafibele Senufo) includes a term which indicates such things as "amusement, (danceable) music, and dance," *tloo*, while northern dialects separate "amusement," *tloo*, from "(danceable) music and dance," *tā* (Zemp 1971: 69).

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