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THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY



ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4225

MUSIC FROM SARAMAKA

A DYNAMIC AFRO-AMERICAN TRADITION



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1977

Carved Saramaka wooden door, early twentieth century, Upper Surinam River, courtesy of UCLA Museum of Cultural History

MUSIC LP

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4225

SIDE 1

Band 1 Tree-Felling Songs
matjau baai
Band 2 Adunké Song
Band 3 History in Song
Band 4 Bëntá - instrumental
Band 5 Bëntá - instrumental
Band 6 Bëntá - instrumental
Band 7 Bëntá - instrumental

SIDE 2

Sékéti Songs
Band 1 Two Songs of despair
Band 2 A Song of Disaster,
A Song of Love
Band 3 Song of a quarrel
Band 4 Song of Rejection
Band 5 Song of Resignation
Band 6 Song for a maiden
Band 7 Song about a parrot
Band 8 Song of a Foreign Land
DRUMMING
Band 9 "the flight of the hummingbird"
Band 10 sékèti
Band 11 for bandámmba
Band 12 "talking drum"
apinti

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD OLYNE

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Music from Saramaka: A Dynamic Afro-American Tradition

Recorded and Annotated by Richard and Sally Price

The Johns Hopkins University

During the 17th and 18th centuries, many slaves escaped from the notoriously harsh conditions of plantation life in Suriname (Dutch Guiana), on the northeastern coast of South America. Mostly African-born, but representing a wide range of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, these runaway slaves joined together in small bands, living in the dense forests inland from the plantation area. Until peace treaties were signed with the colonial government in the mid-eighteenth century, these communities' existence was dominated by a fierce guerrilla struggle for freedom even as the former slaves were engaged in the process of creating a new society and culture. In everything from subsistence techniques and language to marriage patterns and religious beliefs, these people drew on their diverse African heritages and shared plantation experiences to create new Afro-American syntheses that were very much their own.

Although such "maroon" (runaway slave) communities sprang up throughout plantation America, it is only in the forests of Suriname that their special socio-cultural adaptations have continued to flourish to the present day. There, each of six politically and culturally distinguishable groups, with a total population of some 50,000, maintains a delicate balance between fidelity to their ancestral heritages and experimentation with new cultural forms. The Saramaka, who number about 15,000-20,000, are one of the two largest of these groups (see Figure 1). Although for more than a century

men have been spending long periods engaged in wage labor outside of tribal territory, and though material culture has always been partially dependent on imported manufactures, Saramaka cultural life retains a remarkable vitality in the midst of ongoing social change. Widespread polygyny, elaborate body ornamentation, swidden horticulture, numerous ritual complexes centering on ancestor worship and spirit possession, and a tone language used frequently in elegant oratory and subtle ellipsis are just a few of the many ways in which Saramaka life reflects its unique origins.

Music is one area of life in which Saramakas' African heritages and their unique New World experience are strikingly blended. The range of musical expression is extensive: songs sung in a number of esoteric languages are an important part of funerals, spirit possession rituals, the recounting of oral history, and so on; secular singing is a common and varied accompaniment to the daily round, an important vehicle for social commentary, and an essential ingredient in most large-scale public ceremonies; drums of different types are used to accompany dancing, summon gods and ancestors, and comment on the proceedings of tribal council meetings; the "hand piano" and, until recently, a gourd stringed instrument have well-developed and constantly changing repertoires; and during the 1970s a generator-powered electric band has added a new dimension to the music of the Tribal Chief's village. In music as in all other areas of their highly elaborated aesthetic life, Saramakas integrate tradition and innovation to create a rich and vital dimension which permeates their everyday experience.

For a general introduction to Saramaka and other Suriname maroon societies, see Richard Price, *The Guiana Maroons: a historical and bibliographical introduction* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) and on the Saramaka, Richard Price, *Saramaka Social Structure* (Rio Piedras: Institute of Caribbean Studies, 1975). For an overview of maroon societies elsewhere in the Americas, see Richard Price (ed.), *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Garden City: Doubleday/Anchor, 1973). Melville and Frances Herskovits' *Suriname Folk-Lore* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936) contains the only published analysis of Saramaka music. A heavily illustrated book by Richard and Sally Price, *Arts of the Suriname Maroons* (scheduled for publication in 1978 by the UCLA Museum of Cultural History), provides a comprehensive overview of the arts in their socio-cultural context.

Most of the selections on this disc were recorded during a 2-year ethnographic study conducted in 1967-68 on the Pikí-lío. Bands 2 and 3 on Side One were recorded in the same area during the summer of 1976. Because several of the Saramakas who contributed to our recordings expressed a wish to remain anonymous, we have not indicated the names of individual performers; we are, however, deeply indebted to them both for the performances themselves and for commentary and discussion which have guided our understandings of Saramaka music. In choosing the selections, we have tried not only to include pieces which will appeal to non-Saramaka ears, but also to reflect the evaluative judgments of Saramakas. We are grateful also to the African Studies Association for a

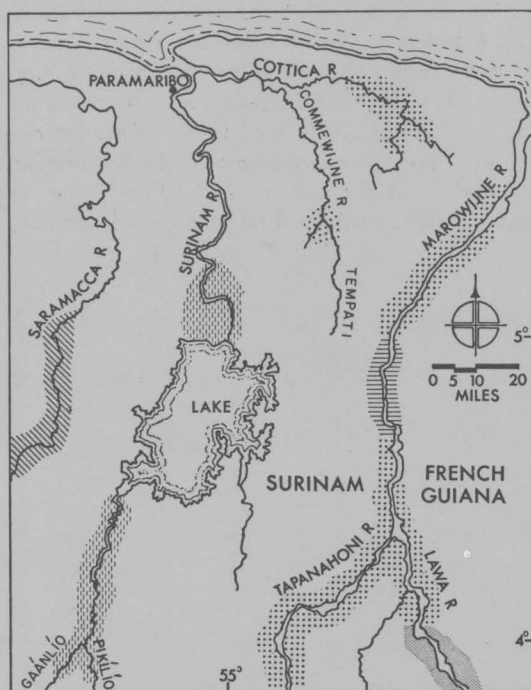


Figure 1

LEGEND

	SARAMAKA		ALUKU		MATAWAI
	DJUKA		PARAMAKA		KWINTI TO WEST OF MAP ON COPPENAM R

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grant to transcribe and annotate our full set of Saramaka recordings (117 5-inch reels), to Adiante Franszoon, a native speaker of Saramaccan, for the preliminary transcription of over 1000 typed pages of oral literature and song, and to the Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University, for storage of the original recordings and provision to us of a full set of working copies. Our transcriptions follow the Saramaccan orthography proposed by Jan Voorhoeve (see R. Price, Saramaka Social Structure, p. 7).

Side One, Band One

Tree-felling songs (matjáu baai—literally "axe calls") traditionally accompany this major yearly phase of the horticultural process. This is the most dangerous of subsistence tasks, requiring rhythmic cooperation by axe-men, who are often perched precariously on platforms high above the buttresses of giant tropical trees. Such songs are identifiable by region and often by village, in terms of specific content, the names of local gods and ancestors invoked, and verbal phrasing. Little of the text is in everyday Saramaccan; much is in apúku tǒngò (the language of apúku gods, or "forest spirits"), and the rest follows stylistic conventions proper to the genre of matjáu baai. In the course of a matjáu baai, the singer calls, often repeatedly, on a range of forest gods who have jurisdiction over the site, on other gods and ancestors to give strength to help the work go fast, on still others to bring wind to help blow the tree over, and on others to protect the workers from injury. There is a boastful, arrogant tone in parts of the performance; the men recount their strength, courage and skill, recite their praise names, quote appropriate proverbs, and command the women to fetch water and food.

The matjáu baai recorded here was performed at our request in 1968, by a Pikíífo man who learned it from his father in a village some distance downstream.

Side One, Band Two

Adunké is a style of song/dance/drumming which was popular from at least the mid-18th to the early-20th century. Its role as the major secular song-style—dealing with current events, local gossip, affairs of the heart—has today been taken over by sěkěti (see Side 2, Bands 1-8). Adúnke is now restricted to special ritual occasions, on which it is used to bring pleasure to those ancestors being invoked, for whom this was the everyday form of musical performance.

This particular adunké song dates from the last quarter of the 19th century, and was composed by the classificatory grandmother of the elderly woman who sings it here. In the song, a married woman calls out audaciously to her lover (called affectionately "Disěni-góútu," or "Gold coin") in the midst of a large "play" (song/dance/drumming performance), for which he was one of the drummers. In defiantly announcing her affair to the community, she enlists the support of her sister, Joujaai. It is said that as a result of this song, the woman's husband—who was also present—grabbed angrily at her, holding fast to her skirt, and leaving her running naked through the crowd.

Disěni-góútu, ju, Disěni-góútu,

Akaínja fu líba wójo, ju, Disěni-góútu,

Alála táta wěnsè ju, Disěni-góútu

Mi nángó kái Disěni-ee a víolóo tǒngò

Baáa, mbé a tá píki, nõò mi tá jeei.

Maa Joujaai-éé, so fu dě

Mi nángó kái Disěni-ee a víolóo tǒngò,

Baáa, é án dě a duumí a kó a mi-ee.

Disěni-góútu, you, Disěni-góútu,

You with the bony forehead, Disěni-góútu,

[...?...], Disěni-góútu,

I'm going to call Disěni in violin language.

Brother, have him answer and I'll listen.

But Joujaai, so be it.

I'm going to call Disěni in violin language.

Brother, if he's not asleep, have him come to me.

Side One, Band Three

The encapsulation of history in song is one of the characteristic modes in which Saramakas preserve their memory of the past. This selection is a fragment of a narrative in which an elder, widely respected for his historical knowledge, recounts the events that celebrated the signing of the peace treaty with the whites in 1762. After songs of prayer and thanks (not included here), he performs a song originally sung by the men to mark the peace. He next describes the aléle, a dance which, with its accompanying singing and drumming, is still remembered as the climax of the treaty-signing celebration. The final song, in the adunké style (see Side 1, Band 2) commemorates the frustration of a woman whose jealous husband locked her in her house to prevent her from participating in the aléle dance, in 1762.

Dí de táki so kabá, déé mujěè táa wè fuu baijá.

Wómi táa bó baijá, bó wái. Fií kó.

Hěn de baai:

Fií kó, kó, dénde, fií-oo

Kó dénde, fií kó

Kó dénde fií-oo

Kó dénde, fií-ee

Kó dénde fií-oo

Kó dénde.

Fii kó. Báka f'én, nòò hèn déé mujèè baijá aléle.

Hèn de baijá:

Kalíkatí, tuléle, kalíkatí, tuléle.

Nòò déé mujèè baijá gilin gilin gilin. Déé wómi baijá, tá nján a gogó tééé... dí wósu tá mbéi, dí kòndè tá mbéi zzzz.... Dí de kó njá kabá, de tá njá tá lóntu, hèn dí mujèè, nòò hèn wè dí óto wán a fiká

"Mííí, dí bígi dí u pèè, a Baáka Wáta f'aléle bígi móò híi soní. Andí mbéi i, i án kó?" Táa: "Ón! Dí wómi sòòtò mi disá a ósu. Hèn wè mbéi m'án kó. Dí gbèlè kisi gbáda Kwasi án kè mi kó." Hèn dí mujèè mindí:

Diítawëndjèmanu,

Andí mbéi i án kó na aléleee? Hóóóóóó....

Gbèlè kisi gbáda Kwasi án kè mi kó, Hóóóóóó.

When they had finished talking [praying], the women said it was time to dance. The men said "Let's dance, let's celebrate, peace [freedom] has come. Then they called:

Peace has come, kó dénde, freedom,

Kó dénde, freedom's come.

Peace had come. After that, well the women danced aléle.

They danced:

Kalíkatí, tuléle; kalíkatí, tuléle.

Then the women danced gilin gilin gilin [intensifiers].

The men danced, moving their hips ...

The house ... the village was going "zzzz...."

When they finished this celebration, doing it all around [the village], then the woman ... well, then ... that other one who had not stayed behind [said]: "Child [term of affection], with the size of our celebration, at Baaka Wata [the village], with that fantastic aléle, how come you didn't show up?" [She] said: "Oh! The man [my husband] locked me up and left me in the house. That's why I didn't come. That [untranslated pejorative expletive] Kwasi [husband's name] didn't want me to come." Then the woman sang out:

Diítawëndjèmanu [the woman's name],

Why didn't you come to the aléle? Hóóóóóó....

[Expletive] Kwasi didn't want me to come. Hóóóóóó...

Side One, Bands Four-Seven

Bèntá refers to two Saramaka instruments—the recently-obsolete gólú-bèntá (gourd benta or agbadó), consisting of three "musical bows" inserted through a gourd, and the papái bèntá (split-reed bèntá or "hand piano"), made from 4-5 split reeds fastened tightly over two wooden bridges to a flat board (see Figure 2). Both instruments are held between the knees; the first is plucked and the second played with the index fingers. The bèntá is a young man's instrument, played for individual pleasure and occasionally to entertain others.

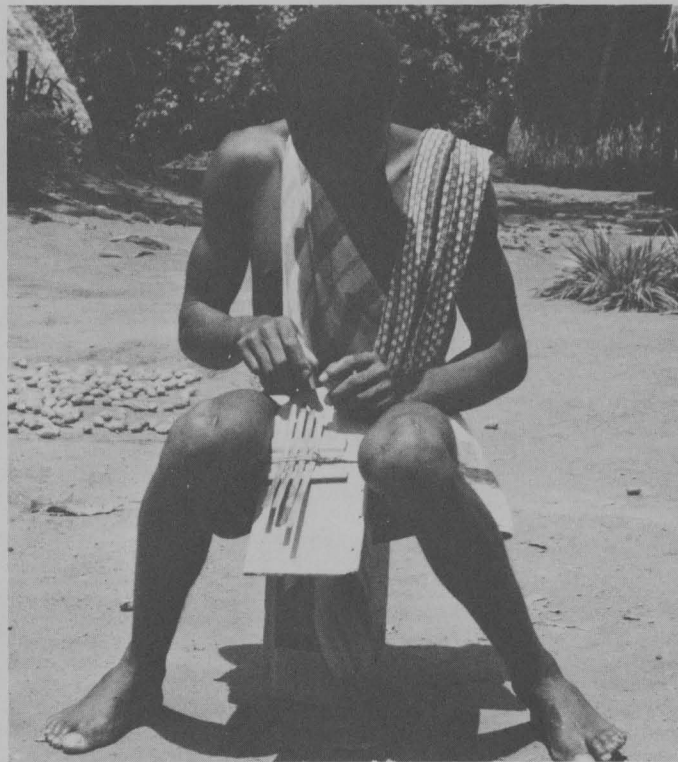


Figure 2

The gift of bèntá virtuosity is held to demonstrate an affinity with apúku gods ("forest spirits"), and it is said that some legendary players were able to walk on water across the river while playing. Like the rhythms played on the apínti and some other Saramaka drums (see Side 2, Band 12), the bèntá plays rhythms that are "transformable" or "translatable" into verbal sounds. Some pieces imitate bird or animal calls, others comment on personalities or current events (much in the manner of adunké or sèkèti songs—see Side 1, Band 2 and Side 2, Bands 1-8), others imitate rhythms played on drums, and still others are used in children's games (to indicate, for example, whether the seeker of a hidden object is "hot" or "cold"). For example, the second selection on band 4 is a satiric comment on an event in the village of Bófokulé. We have several different verbal transformations of this particular bèntá rhythm, one of which follows:

Djebikese kulé butá dí kánda

Adombokui kulé butá dí kánda

Djebikese kulé tí kangóti

Djebikesi tungi mi túngi

Djebikesi tá séti bõ.

Djebikese runs to place the 'protective charm.'

Adombokui " " " " " "

Djebikese runs tí kangóti [sound of his running].

" " tungi mi túngi [" " " "].

Djebikese sets up the bow [a particular type of 'protective charm' in the form of a bow].

The performer of the four papái bëntá pieces presented here was considered in 1968 to be the finest player in the Pikíílo region. The title of the piece on band 5 is Apuku djombo ("the forest spirit jumps up") and Djebikese kulé butá dí kánda ("Djebikese runs to place the 'protective charm'"), on band 6, Gadu tumáo ("drumming for the forest spirits" (in imitation of the rhythms played by the apínti-playing member of the apúku drum ensemble)), and on band 7, Komantí tumáo ("drumming for the komantí gods" (in imitation of the rhythms played by the apínti-playing member of the komantí drum ensemble)).

Side Two, Bands One-Eight

Sěkěti songs are Saramaka popular music par excellence. Often cryptic, drawing on heavily poetic, metaphorical language, they are composed by both men and women as expressions of love, despair, admiration or derision, and constitute a major form of social commentary. Many refer to ongoing social relations involving spouses or lovers (co-wife relations, adultery, divorce, and unrequited love) but others sing the praises of a new outboard motor or a particularly handsome cooking pot, commemorate a trip to Paramaribo by the Tribal Chief, lament the flooding of a number of Saramaka villages by a hydroelectric project, and so on. At any one time, a large number of sěkěti songs are popular in the Pikíílo villages (many of them originally from other regions of Saramaka), and the stories behind them are generally known. The most popular sěkěti songs remain in vogue for no more than a few years, giving way to the best of the new and more relevant songs constantly being created in every village. (Of 156 songs that we transcribed in the Pikíílo region in 1967-68, not a single one was still being sung there in 1976, though the lyrics were well remembered.) The public performance of sěkěti songs accompanies almost all large-scale celebrations, from funeral rites to the installation of public officials; in such settings, sěkěti manifests the classic Afro-American "call and response" pattern, with an alternation between soloist and chorus. Standard posture for a female chorus is bent-at-the-hips, with hands clapping close to the ground, while the soloist both sings and does graceful tjěke dancing (see Figure 3). Sěkěti songs are also enjoyed in informal or even solitary settings—paddling alone

on the river, harvesting rice, sewing in a doorstep, and so on. Since the mid-60s, when tape recorders became a common prestige item, young men have been recording sěkěti performances at public gatherings, and playing them back at their leisure for entertainment.

In the following transcriptions, the chorus is indicated by parentheses.



Figure 3

Band 1. A renowned female singer made up the following song in 1968, after a local "madman" set fire to a Saramaka village and destroyed many houses:

- Gaán gádu-jéé! goón líba-oo! Goón líba téki mi butá
a pikí kujěè bóto, mi ku déé bēè u mi, hěn a butá a míndi
wáta. Un jéi wán a dú mǒò a lío; un sí wán a dú mǒò a
múndu. (Múndu a soní-éé.) Múndu a soní-óó, kǒndè, un jéi
wán a dú mǒò a lío.

Great god! Oh world! They've put me in a little calabash
boat, me and my kinsmen, and set it out in midstream.
Listen to another thing that's happened on the river;
look at what else has happened in the world. (Things aren't

right in the world.) Things aren't right in the world,
villagers, listen to what else has happened on the river.

There follows a song of despair originally sung by a woman
whose husband had left for several years of wage labor in
coastal Suriname:

- Má ó láfu mǒò-jéé; m má ó láfu mǒò nǒò-éé; m má ó láfu mǒò.
(Dí ómi dě a lëndema lío-éé, má ó láfu mǒò.)
- I'll laugh no more; I'll laugh no more now; I'll laugh no
more. (The man's at the "Lendema River" [the artificial
lake, i.e., on the way to the coast], I'll laugh no more.)

Band 2. A woman made up this song in the mid-1960s, after
a dam was built on the Suriname River and the northern vil-
lages of Saramaka began to be flooded:

- Salamáka toónbe-oo, Salamáka toónbe, lúku.
Salamáka toónbe-ee, Salamáka toónbe-ee, gádu.
(Lëndema-ee, Lëndema-ee, Salamáka toónbe.)
- Saramaka's fallen, Saramaka's fallen, look.
" " , " " , gods.
(Lendema [the manager of the hydro-electric project],
Lendema, Saramaka's fallen.)

The performer goes on to sing a love song, composed by a
woman married to one man, but still in love with a former
husband:

- Soní mi lóbi-éé, soní mi lóbi-óó, soní mi lóbi wè án tá
gaándi-óó. (Soní mi lóbi-éé, soní mi lóbi-óó, soní mi lóbi
án tá gaándi-éé.)
- The thing I love [the love I have] never grows old.

Band 3. This song is performed by the woman who composed
it after a physical fight with one of her co-wives.

- Kabitén-baáa-óó! Kéé! Dí soní míti mi un tá jéi-óó.
Dí gaamá-dě-jéé, dí soní míti mi un tá jéi nǒ, téé u mi
jéi dí gaán gádu baai. Mi kái gaán gádu-éé, m baai goón
líba u mi. (U dí jajóó u mi édi mi kái ěn-éé.)
Headman, brother! Ah! Have you heard what's happened to me?
Tribal chief, have you heard what's happened to me, to make
thunder roar in my ears? I call out to god in heaven, I call
out to the earth. (It's because of that whore of mine [co-wife]
that I'm calling for help.)

Band 4. The man performing this and the following two songs
is one of the most admired singers in the Upper River region,
in part because of the special "raspy" texture of his voice—
a quality highly appreciated for male *sékéti* singing. We
have no information on the circumstances surrounding the
original composition of these particular songs.

- Buusé mi, buusé, buusé baáa; mi i buusé.
Dí mi tjiká n'ěn dóó búka mi baai deěn
ódi. Kandě a píki jéndolee.
- I've been jilted, jilted; I'm the one who's jilted.
As I approach her doorstep, I call out to greet her.
Perhaps she'll answer ...

Band 5.

- Mbéi mi dě-oo, lánti, ná sěmbè dú-ee.
Tíó fu m-dě, lánti, ná sěmbè dú-ee.
(Mbéi mi dě-ee, mbéi mi dě, lánti, ná sěmbè dú-ee.)
- Occurring just once in the song:
- Dée díí baáa-ómi dí mi ábi dě,
de gó fiká a bakáa kǒndè lío aa-ee.
Dí máma bée zónu án kě; mi dé a fuká-éé.

- Let me be, everyone, it's no one's fault.
Uncle of mine, everyone, it's no one's fault.
(Let me be; let me be, everyone; it's no one's fault.)
- The three brothers I have went off to the coast to stay
forever. The avenging spirit of my lineage is against
me; I'm in a bad way.

Band 6.

- Gandá mujěé, andí dú i so? I mánu túwè i kaa, no?
(Mujěé, ná kái dǎdè, dǎdè; é sěmbè bi dě, de bi sa téi i
nóómo-ee.)

Occurring just once in the song:

- A dí sáta mánmaté, dí mi náki téé mi dóóu a lanpéési-dě,
ěn mi sí mi lóbi. Maíngè, a béndi édi píí. A dí sǒnde
mánmaté, dí mi náki téé mi dóóu a lanpéési-dě, ěn mi
sí mi lóbi-oo. Maíngè, a béndi édi píí. M baai hééi-oo.

- woman,
- Unattached \ what's the matter with you?
Has your husband left you now? (Woman, don't die of despair.
Someone's sure to come along who will want to marry you.)

Figure 4 represents three Saramaka drums: *agidá* (left, used exclusively in snake-god ceremonies), *apínti* (center), and *deindein* (right).



Figure 4

performance contexts—rites for *apúku* ("forest spirits"), *vodú* ("snake-gods"), and *komantí* ("warrior/curing gods"), various stages of funeral rites, a variety of secular settings, and others. The recordings included here were performed at our request in 1968; the drum choir was composed of two *apínti* and one *deindein* (see Figure 4).

Bands 9 and 10 illustrate *sekéti* drumming from two periods (the 1960s and the early 20th century), both recorded in 1968. The degree of stylistic change between these two parallels that between late *adunké* (see Side 1, Band 2) and modern *sekéti* singing (see Side 2, Bands 1-8), as well as contemporaneous stylistic development in woodcarving and the other graphic arts.

The dancing (*djómbo sekéti*) that accompanies *sekéti* drumming is the most prestigious, highly stylized of male dance forms. This virtuosic dancing permits the soloist to display remarkable creativity within a highly intense, mannered style. Dances are named and mimetic; as in other Saramaka art forms, a premium is placed on the creation of new pieces, and the total repertoire is in constant flux. During the 1960s, dancers depicted scenes from the forest (e.g., the *kòkòni* (a rodent) digging up sweet potatoes in someone's garden, and the jaguar killing the turtle) as well as from the world outside (e.g., a steamship leaving the pier, and the capping machine at the Coca Cola Bottling Company in the capital).

Band 9 is the drumming for "the flight of the hummingbird" dance, and Band 10 is *sekéti* drumming in the old-fashioned, now obsolete style of 5-6 decades ago.

Band 11 illustrates drumming for *bandámmba*, an old dance form that is now only rarely performed. Traditionally the secular dance of celebration, it was used until recently to welcome a man returning to his village from wage labor on the coast. *Bandámmba* is associated with fertility and is used also in rites relating to twins. Performed either by women or, more rarely, by men, it is characterized by sexually suggestive movement of the lower torso, with hands held on the hips. Like *adunké* (see Side 1, Bands 2 and 3), *bandámmba* is performed also at certain rites honoring 18th-century ancestors, to give them pleasure in the manner to which they were accustomed during their lifetimes.

- On Saturday morning, I went along till I reached the landing-place, and there I saw her. My goodness, she hung down her head. On Sunday morning, ... [same].

Band 7. The 10-year-old boy performing this song claimed to have made it up, inspired by a folktale. In the tale, several birds try to carry a message about a certain tree from the sky god back to earth, but each in turn is distracted by loud bursts of thunder made by the god; the parrot is finally successful.

- A baai f'én kaléng-kaléng. Hén gaán gádu baai f'a tooná fèèkètè ěn. Hen we an fèèkètè ěn. (Nòò, papakái kisi dí páu ně, papakái kisi dí páu ně.) Gaán gádu jé -éé, Gaán gádu-oo. Papakái kisi dí páu ně .

- The parrot sang "kaléng-kaléng." Then god made thunder so he would forget the message. But he didn't forget it. (The parrot got the name of the tree.)

Great god, listen! Great god! Parrot got the name of the tree.

Band 8. This song, sung by a child, was originally made up by a man imitating the Portuguese he had heard while engaged in wage labor in French Guiana. The "translation" into Portuguese was made after returning from the field (with the assistance of Beatriz Lavandera), without the help of informants.

- Sinjonlu, njénlele míí Sinjonlu, un jéi ně.

(Sinjonlu bondia-oo, wè m'án ó jéi mǒò-ee.

- Dí mi náki téé m dóóu a Degáá kǒndè, Pootugéi bakáa kó tá baai dá'm ódi u sǐmbè-ee. Wè, ně ně. W'a baai dá m'ódi u sǐmbè. A kó tá baai, O sinjonlu. Kumá tá váiwe. O katé o katé plaatígó. Kutu kutu sinjóó-kónu.

- Senhor, Senhor, you hear now? (Senhor, bom dia; well, I don't understand any more.)

- I travelled till I arrived at Degáákǒndè. A Portuguese [Brazilian] man came to bring me greetings from someone. He brought me someone's greeting. He called out, "O Senhor, como te vai, o que te pratico escuta, escuta senhor." ["Oh, sir, how are you? Listen, listen to what I say."]

Side Two, Bands Nine-Eleven

Drums are far and away the most important musical instruments in Saramaka. Different drum ensembles and particular styles of drumming mark each of a large number of specialized

The apínti is a Saramaka "talking drum" used at major council meetings, at certain important rituals, and as part of the drum battery in a number of musical contexts. When played as a solo talking drum at council meetings (kuútu), its rhythms officially open the proceedings, summon and greet particular gods, ancestors and public officials, comment on current events, help set the tone for the meeting through the imaginative use of proverbs, dismiss people at the end, and so forth. Each drum phrase can be transposed into a rhythmically similar verbal form (either in one of several ritual languages or in special apínti language), which is translatable into Saramaccan. For example, the apínti rendering of the proverb "Smoke has no feet, yet it makes its way to heaven" (Saramaccan "Simóko án a fútu ma a nāngo a gádu") is

Ting; tjêkele gín din gín din ... gilíng

A santí kotoko bu a dú okāng, kobuá,

o sá si watera dján de, djantanási,

dum de dum; kediamá kédiampon ódu a

sáisi ódu a kêemponu sasi naná bêtîè

Opête nján opête;

sêmbè sindó gêde gêde gêde,

sêmbè sindó gêde hía

Gídi gídi kúndu bi a kúndu;

opête nján opête;

kokôti báí batí

Kásikási tégètégèdé

Keí keí dí día, kêtekeí dí día,

kilinkilíng, kidíng tjêkele ding,

tjêkeledíng, ding ding ...; kilíbe

tente, odú akásambile fu wán pandási;

sekúinja ti sekúinja kata kái na

tí sekúinja; [bégi]

Kediamá kédiampon ódu a sáisi ódu

a kêemponu sasi naná bêtîè

based on the version used by Komantí gods ("Dabikúku misí améusu"); the drum's "good morning," glossed in Saramaccan as "wéki," is verbalized in apínti language as "Keí keí dí día, kêtekeí dí día, kilinkilíng kidíng tjêkele ding tjêkeledíng ding ding ding..."

The apínti selection included here was recorded at the beginning of a large tribal council meeting on October 20, 1968. The following provisional transcription was later elicited from the performer, a man then in his forties who served as the Tribal Chief's customary apínti player for such occasions. Dashes indicate pauses between phrases, during which one of two simple "holding" rhythms is played; brackets indicate Saramaccan translations for which we have no apínti equivalent. As in the song transcriptions, we do not indicate consecutive repetition of phrases.

"Listen"; opening call

Recital of the drum's "name,"

including words for its parts (wooden

body, pegs, ties, head); call to

supreme god and the earth

Call to junior assistant headmen;

remark that "many people have

sat down"

Call to senior assistant headmen;

call to junior assistant headmen;

call to headmen

Call to senior women

Good morning; call to the

Tribal Chief; proverb ("However

great the problem, the Tribal

Chief can take care of it");

prayer

Call to supreme god

and the earth

Kilíbe tente, odú akásambile
fu wán pandási; alíbēte benté,
bébetiēbenté a falí; otíbilíbití
tja ko béedjò; kilíng king dia
keng dia keng eti; kásikási
tégètégèdé; fébe tutú máfiakata
bánta nási beté; [piimísi];
atupetezú atuá petee zú ahuun
wásikan djáni bobo; [piimísi]

Kokóti bai batí; asákpa a
pēde, makáija pēde; gídi gídi
bú a fò

Ahála ba tatá gánda volabutan;
dabikúku misí améusu; [bégi];
[piimísi]; kokóti bai batí;
kilíbe tente, odú akásambile fu
wán pandási; ma in tēnè, ma in
tēnè búa

Tjaketeke [...]; [piimísi];
[gaamá ku mása gaán gádu];
ding ding ding, kokóti
bai batí; ding ding ding,
gídi gídi kúndu bi a kúndu;
gidi gidi bēejò; ding ding
ding ...

Call to the Tribal Chief; proverb
("The water hyacinth floats
downstream with the ebb tide, but
the tide will bring it back up as
well."); call for liquor;
apologies to the elders; call to
senior women; proverb ("When the
mouth starts moving, hunger is
afraid"); apologies (for anything
bad that might have inadvertently
been drummed); call to the
"headmen of the river" (gods);
apologies

Call to headmen; call to two
important ancestors

Call to city officials; proverb
("Smoke has no feet, but it makes
its way to heaven"); prayer;
apologies; call to headmen; call
to the Tribal Chief; proverb ("When
a leaf falls in the water, it's not
the same day that it starts to rot")

Proverb ("You can't measure your
foot against the Tribal Chief's");
apologies; call to the Tribal Chief
and supreme god; "The Tribal Chief
is walking [coming]"; call to
headmen; "The Tribal Chief is
walking"; call to senior assistant
headmen; call for food to be brought;
"The Tribal Chief is walking"