Slide show with captions

to accompany the DVD

Music of West Africa

The Mandinka and their Neighbors

by Roderic Knight

Notes by the author

In today's cyber-world, where every need for audio, video, and still images can be met by pulling material from thin air—the internet—I believe there is still room for a unified body of material such as presented in this DVD package. The idea to include a slide show came from the search for cover photos. In the process, I was obligated to skip over many that I had come to regard as favorites—slides that I had repeatedly included in classroom presentations over the decades. Instead of returning them to the slide tray, perhaps never to be seen again, I compiled them into this collection of 59 slides for use in conjunction with the videos. In addition, I have included several slides contributed by David Gamble, cameraman for two of the video clips, and two from David Sapir for the Jola work song.

The slides are in jpeg format, and each includes an on-screen caption, making the slide show self-narrating, to a limited extent. But some pictures have bigger stories behind them than others. Those stories are included here. The full list of slides is shown below, identified by their number and title. The right column includes the on-screen caption and additional commentary.

INTRODUCTORY SCENES

Slide number and title		**On-screen caption / further commentary**
01	Title page map	Hammond Scholastic New Headline World Atlas, 2004
02	Looking S from Bintimani	Looking south from Loma Mansa in Sierra Leone, at 6391 ft., the highest point in Africa west of Cameroon. The Koranko people live in this region.
03	Mt Bintimani	Mt. Bintimani, or Loma Mansa, Sierra Leone
04	Sokurela	The Koranko village of Sokurela at the foot of Mt. Bintimani
05	Koranko hunter	A Koranko hunter in traditional garb
06	Kenema mosque	The mosque at Kenema, Sierra Leone
07	Freetown fish market	Fish market, Freetown, Sierra Leone

The title slide is a map of West Africa from the Hammond World Atlas. I have added four small "blazes" in blue or yellow to pinpoint the recording locations—Banjul, Conakry, and Bamako—and a particular mountain in Sierra Leone called "Loma Mansa." Slide 2 is the view from Loma Mansa ("King of the Loma Mountains"), or as it is also known, Mt. Bintimani. As the caption notes, Mt. Bintimani, at 6,391 feet, is the highest point in Africa west of Cameroon, and in the forest below is the source of the Niger River.

Even though there are no video clips from Sierra Leone in this collection, the next five slides are from Sierra Leone. There is a connection: Selection 5, filmed in Conakry, is a group of Koranko musicians whose homeland is the Loma Mountains of Sierra Leone. But beyond this connection, the scenes from Sierra Leone represent some of those favorite images referred to above. They stem from my first trip to Africa, a two-year assignment with the Peace Corps to teach western music and marching band at the Government Secondary School in the city of Bo.*

*Point of interest for the camera historians: the slides were taken with a Yashica 44, a small-format twin-lens reflex camera that produced a square picture that could be projected in an ordinary 35mm slide projector.

Mt. Bintimani is in the far north of Sierra Leone. The view from there (Slide 2) and the next three slides were taken on Christmas Day, 1965 after a short trek from the Koranko village of Sokurela. The hunter in traditional garb happened along as we hiked. Although hunting was important for the procurement of food in an earlier day, today it has largely disappeared as a lifestyle in this part of Africa.

The other two scenes from Sierra Leone show a particularly beautiful small mosque in the mid-sized town of Kenema, and the busy fish market in the capital, Freetown.

The next scenes are from Gambia, with one exception—the calabash market in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. They depict some rural and urban scenes from the 1970s and 1980s.

Slide number and title			**Commentary**
08	Malian fishing boat		The boat, of traditional dugout design, most likely belongs to a Malian immigrant to Gambia, since it has the Malian flag on the bow.
09	Boat in Banjul		This photo was taken from the ferry that takes passengers across the Gambia River between Banjul and Barra Point on the north bank.
10	Shore birds Gambia River		Banjul, the capital of The Gambia, sits on a sand bar at the mouth of the Gambia River. These are egrets and other shorebirds at an estuary outside the city.
11	Mosque at Nibras		Nibras is a small town on the main Gambian highway along the south bank of the river. Here, a man drives his flock of sheep past the local mosque.
12	Sunset grasslands		Gambia is mostly grasslands and farm fields. Some farming activities are shown in Selections 7 and 8.
13	Shops Banjul	(D Gamble)	Shops for dry goods and textiles near the Banjul outdoor market.
14	Old house new office	(D Gamble)	There are many historic old wooden houses in Banjul such as the one seen here, but new buildings are going up as well.

15	Vegetable seller		Many women tend vegetable plots to provide food for their families and to sell at the market.
16	Calabash market		The hard-shell gourd or calabash (*Lagenaria siceraria*) grows in many shapes and has innumerable uses in West Africa. Every open market has its calabash section. This one in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, is particularly large.
17	Groundnut trucks		The groundnut (peanut) harvest awaiting processing into oil near Banjul. In this scene from 1970, trucks are lined up at the oil processing plant outside of Banjul. The aroma of roasting peanuts always wafted across the road at this point.
18	Catholic church	(D Gamble)	The Catholic church in Banjul
19	Street scene	(D Gamble)	A street scene on the outskirts of Banjul, 1984.
20	Quadrangle Banjul	(D Gamble)	Originally built as an army barracks, the Quadrangle now houses government offices.
21	State House	(D Gamble)	The State House or Government House is the residence of the president. David Gamble reports that this view is no longer possible, since a large wall has been put up around the building.

SCENE 1: A GAMBIAN STATE KULLIO

	Slide label	**On-screen caption / further commentary**
22	State House kullio	People assembled at the State House *kullio*, or child-naming. In this view from the rear of the mansion, President Jawara has just thanked the musicians and is going back inside.
23	Mandinka koras	*Koras* in the Mandinka ensemble.
24	Kontingos and singers	*Kontingos* and singers in the ensemble
25	The lead singers	The lead singers: Kani Kuntu, Alhaji Tamba Suso, Kunye Saho, Amadu Kanuteh
26	Fula flutes	The Fula ensemble of *serndu* flutes and *horde* calabash
27	Fula bollo ensemble	The Fula *bollo* ensemble
28	Fula horde	A Fula acrobat with *horde*

SCENE 2: FULA MUSICIANS

(The photos of the musicians are preceded by some scenes along the road.)

29	On the road	On the road to a village in Gambia. This is the author's car, a Renault L4—basic, reliable, and ubiquitous in 1970.
30	Taking a break Nagra in view	Taking a break at a recording session, Nagra III in foreground. The sound for all of the 1970 movies was recorded with this machine, the industry choice for high quality remote recording.
31	Fula musicians	Fula musicians with *serndu*, *horde*, and *laala*
32	Fula musicians and singers	Fula musicians and singers, Boraba

SCENE 3: MUSICIANS AT A POLITICAL RALLY

33	Fula horde & nyaanyooru	Fula musicians with *horde* and *nyaanyooru*
34	Mandinka ensemble	Mandinka ensemble with *balo*, guitar, many *koras*, and the *bolon* (deep-toned arched harp at right).
35	Balo and guitar	Fabala Kanuteh leads the Gambia Griots Unity Society on the *balo*. The GGUS was a voluntary musicians' union formed in Banjul in 1970.
36	Super Eagles	The Super Eagles band at rest before performing in Brikama
37	President Jawara	President Jawara speaks to the crowd. This and the next photo were actually taken at the first Republic Day celebration, April 28, 1970.
38	President's Chrysler Imperial	The President departs in his Chrysler Imperial. Note the musicians sending him off.

SCENE 4: THE BALANTA XYLOPHONE

39	Balanta kadj	The Balanta *balo* or *kadj*. It is a gourd-resonated frame xylophone with 26 keys spanning three and a half octaves of a 7-tone scale.
40	Balanta group	Another Balanta *kadj* group. This photo was taken in Gambia in 1987.

SCENE 5: MANYO DEBERO (BRIDE'S HAIR BRAIDING)

(The photos of the event are preceded by some scenes from Conakry.)

41	Conakry market	The large covered market in Conakry.
42	Kola seller	Kola nuts for sale, Conakry. Kola nuts are produced by a forest tree of the family *Malvaceae* native to Africa (*Cola acuminata* nuts seen here). The texture is similar to a carrot, but not juicy. The taste is bitter (from high caffeine content). A small chip is chewed and held in the mouth, eventually turning sweet in flavor. The nuts are used throughout West Africa as a stimulant, to curb hunger pangs, and as gifts in ceremonies.
43	Novotel Conakry	Novotel Conakry. An attractive hotel for diplomats and businessmen. The author took some respite in the air-conditioned lobby one day, but did not stay there.
44	Le Grillon	Le Grillon, a more cozy place for the budget traveler. Picture Graham Greene or Ernest Hemingway having a beef steak in the restaurant. This was the author's home base in Conakry.
45	Koranko ensemble	The Koranko *balo* and drum ensemble. Following this event, filmed on the spur of the moment by fieldwork serendipity, the author was able to take a few lessons on the balo with the amiable leader, Modulai Syllah, who, with sunglasses removed, bore an uncanny resemblance to Bill Cosby.
46	Kunang Nenge players	The *kunang / nenge* players. The players strike the *kunang* with a hooked stick while clanging the *nenge* with rings on thumb and little finger.
47	Women request	The women request the songs. As seen in the video, women come up to the *balo* players and sing a snippet of a song for them to play.

SCENE 6: THE TAMA HOURGLASS DRUM

48	Tama	Hamadi Kone getting his son started on *tama*. This photo was taken during a break in the rehearsal of the Mali National Ensemble in Bamako.
49	Tama in Banjul	A drum troupe led by the *tama* in Gambia. This group was one of many celebrants in the streets on Gambia's first Republic Day, April 28, 1970.

SCENE 7: MANDINKA WORK SONG

50	Women hoeing	Mandinka women hoeing a field. Photo and video by David Gamble.

SCENE 8: JOLA WORK SONG Video by David Gamble

51	Jola farmers	Jola farmers working a field together. This photo and the next were taken by David Sapir in Casamance, the portion of Senegal south of The Gambia.
52	Jola kajando	Jola men with *kajando*. This large shovel, unique to the Jola, is always held low to the ground and rotated sideways, functioning like a manual plow.

SCENE 9: THE JOLA KUMPO

53	Kumpo	The Jola *kumpo* dancer. Behind him are the drummers and a chorus of singers.
54	Kumpo crouches	The *kumpo* crouches, listening to his attendant. The man in the checked outfit is the dancer's guide, giving him cues during the performance.
55	Kumpo and whistles	A *kumpo* and his whistle players in Banjul. This was on Boxing Day, a British holiday the day after Christmas, December 26, 1970.

SCENE 10: THE JOLA BUGAARABO

56	Musa Gujabi on bugaar	Musa Gujabi on the *bugaar* drums. The young boys were especially interested in his technique.
57	Bugaar drums at fire	Bringing the drums up to pitch in front of a fire
58	Singers for bugaarabo	The singers and drummer constituted a troupe, hired to perform for celebratory events.
59	The End	The Fireball Lily (*Haemanthus multiflorus*) puts on a display in July, at the beginning of the rainy season.