



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
FOLK ARTS & HERITAGE PROGRAM

## AUDIO TAPE LOG

Accession No.: MH-13-01-DA Date(s): 1/10/13

Fieldworker(s): Maggie Holtzberg

Interviewee(s): Balla and Sekou Kouyate

Event: Site visit to Apprenticeship

Place of Recording: Living room of Kouyate home in Medford

Recording Equipment: Tascam DR-100 Microphone(s): built-in

Recorded in: stereo Tape Brand and Format: DAT, 65 minutes

Amount Tape Used: Cassette: \_\_\_\_\_ DAT: ABS time: \_\_\_\_\_

Related Accession Numbers: MH-01-21, MH-08-11, MH-09-17, MH-10-3

Brief summary of tape contents: Balla describes what he and Sekou have been working on during their apprenticeship. They four songs, also giving the story behind the songs and their significance to the Kouyate clan.

Counter/ABS	Contents
BK	My name is Balla Kouyate and I'm from Mali (mic handling noise - shame on you Maggie) The instrument I'm going to be playing today is called balafon, which is my family instrument, going back to the 13 <sup>th</sup> century. So it's been passed down from generation to generation. So even today, the very first one is still in my family and my father is the guardian of the very first one. So, that's the reason I am here today and thanks for the organization to making it happen and I'm here with my son.
MH	What's your name?
SK	Sekou Kouyate.
BK	Sekou is born here in Massachusetts, Boston but from Mali also, US and Mali. The tradition has been passing down, generation to generation. I believe they are in the next generation - he's six. He's almost seven so we're just going to show you what he's been learning.
MH	When is the first time you started to learn this instrument?
SK	Um, maybe I started when I was five.
BK	Well, he started like, if you go on my website, he was maybe not quite one year; he was still wearing a diaper and I had a little, tiny balafon for him, so all he would do is just banging on it back then.
SK	With a spoon.
BK	Exactly, but now, to be very engaged to it, that's been a few years. When he was three, maybe four. So the first piece we're going to play is called, "Kaida" which mean peace and happiness.
SK	Peace.

BK Even now , we need some sort of peace in our home country, Mali. So Kaida, enjoy it. (they play the song)

MH That's beautiful.

BK That was the Kaida. Because he has been learning a lot, before I even applied for this grant, I was studying with him some of this stuff. But this is a really great opportunity. I would say every day as soon he's out of school, we just go for half an hour or maybe an hour, it depends. He's been engaged in the music lately; all he want to do is play balafon. So this song, the next song we're going to play, is just for my, it's dedicated to my family. The family who has the balafon. There are so manhy type of griot today but we are in the first griot in the Mande Empire. So this song, it cannot be played by any other griot, just my family. So that's important, he is. We call Balla ye Awn[sp?] , which mean, we have the balafon. We own the balafon.

MH So does Sekou understand the incredible history that this instrument is in your family?

BK Oh, definitely, definitely. OK, Sekou, [in Mande language] (song is played, with Sekou starting out by himself before Balla joins in with the melody line.) Kouyate. So that was the song given to my family, my ancestors. Only us is allowed to play that song. The name of the song in my native language, the Bambara language is Balla Anw Fey. He's been enjoying playing that a lot. So the next song is a general song for all of the griot which would mean Djeli- French people call us griot. When we say Djeliya it mean all of the griot in general. So this song is about all of the Djeli. So we play Djeliya. (they play Djeliya, again with Sekou setting the pace.)

MH Oh that's great.

BK So we can play as many songs as you ask us to play. You'd like us to show you how much he's been learning.

MH He's very musical.

BK Yeah.

MH My questions is, o.k., it appears that you're doing melody and you're doing bass, is that right?

BK Yeah, he's playing an accompaniment.

MH You're playing an accompaniment. On the lower notes. Are these two balafons the same?

BK No, they're a little different. I mean the tun[ing] is the same. I have more key than he is.

MH Is it chromatic?

song for the hunters is called Koulandjan