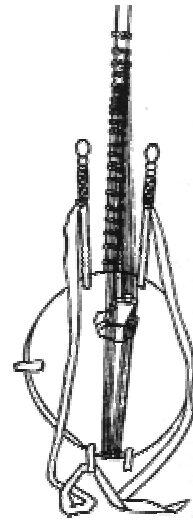


Pitched Instruments of African Music

Most instruments of African music have a definite **pitch** to the sound they produce. Instruments like bells and drums are usually carefully tuned so they can 'talk' to other instruments. Such instruments like the **kora** and **xylophone** can play more notes than others.

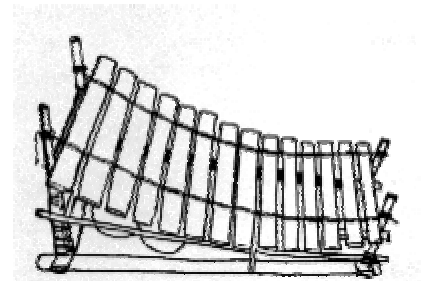
The Kora

- ◆ Played by group of male musicians called **jali** of the **Manding** people.
- ◆ The kora is made for a **gourd** that is cut in half, with an animal skin stretched tightly across it. At the top of the gourd is a heavy stick. The strings are attached to the top and stretched down fitting into slots on either side of a bridge which is supported by the skin.
- ◆ The kora is used mainly to accompany praise songs, which are usually about great Manding heroes or kings.



The Xylophone

- ◆ Also played by the Manding people, particularly in The Gambia.
- ◆ These xylophones are smaller and flatter than those used in Ghana and Burkina and usually have 19 bars.



Both the Kora and the Xylophone have seven notes to the octave, but the tuning does not fit with the Western scale. There are different tunings, which are slightly different.

The basic starting point for the kora and xylophone is the **kumbengo**. This is a basic pattern, which contains all the main ideas of the music, and it can be added to and varied according to the ability of the player. Small changes to the kumbengo are made to give the music interest, but more extensive ornamentation and improvisation is called **birimintingo**, and this usually happens when there is no vocal part. When playing a duet, usually one musician will play the birimintingo while the less experienced person keeps the kumbengo going. The kumbengo accompanies a style of singing called **donkilo** that means 'call to dance'. The songs are usually quite short and often have two main phrases.

Glossary

Kora	a stringed instrument made from a large gourd, with 21 strings.
Jali	Mandinka word for a griot.
Griot	a word used outside Africa to describe families of hereditary musicians.
Manding	people who, toady, live in Mali, Gunea, Gunea-Bissau, senegal, Gambia and north west Ivory Coast.
Gourd	medium to large vegetable like a pumpkin, which has been hollowed, out and dried and used as an amplifier.
Kumbengo	basic pattern which contains all the main themes of a piece of music.
Birimintingo	extensive improvisation and ornamentation of instrumental music.
Donkilo	singing which the Kora accompanies, literally 'call to dance'.