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## Abstract

The present study seeks to examine attitudes to teaching and learning among jalis in the Gambia. Although this is the main focus, the horizon of which the study is carried out, analysed and discussed, is the development of music teacher education in Sweden during the last three decades, and of which I have been a participant.

The intention of the study is to expand current views on music teaching and learning so that teachers will be better equipped to work and function in a multicultural society. Specifically, the intention is to open the doors to the Mandinka approach to music education, in order to illuminate their philosophy of music teaching.

The research question is: What are the attitudes to music teaching and learning in the Gambia, and in what ways are the jalis experiences of, and attitudes towards music and music education expressed?

This study concerns cultural meetings on a number of levels: between people, between institutions and between literal and oral worlds of knowledge. The methodology chosen reflects these meetings: all results stem from the travels that I and my informant and co-researcher jali Alagi Mbye have made visiting musicians in the Gambia and, during a long period, moving in and out of each others cultures.

The core of the empirical data consists of observations and interviews with jalis and other Gambian musicians. The emic and the etic perspectives of these interviews are reflected in different ways. In one of the interviews my main informant, jali Alagi Mbye, acts as a co-researcher, thereby opening up new dimensions to the study. In this interview, it is the accompaniment of the 21-stringed kora that leads the conversation, just as much as the questions. Because of the multifaceted content of this interview, the full transcript and a CD-recording is attached in the appendix.

The results show that the oral jali tradition is in some respects both structured and formalised. Hence, it is described as 'the Oral University'. Delving deeper into the conversations with the musicians 'inside' and 'outside' the jali musical culture, the thematic outcome is differing. While the 'insiders' highlight the intellectual dimension of music education expressed in thoughts on culture and identity, and with references to the Sunjata orature, the 'outsiders' highlight the practical instrumental training dimension of music education, expressed, for example, by praising 'the art of not talking' as a way of teaching, and claiming that the master level and position is reached when people start to dance to your playing.

In conclusion, these differences in attitudes to music teaching and learning reflect different ways of expressing knowledge.

To Martin

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## Preface

‘Who is a lost elder?’

The question from the brave and curious child made all the elders of the village a little nervous. They were all sitting, as usual, under the Bantaba, the big tree. Normally, they considered themselves ready to give advice to all villagers.

After a while one of them tried: ‘A lost elder must be someone who lost his way in the forest’. The child shook his head, and said: ‘A lost elder is the one who never asked the elders when he was young. That is why I came to you today’.

This little extract from a much longer story was sung, played and told to us by the konting-player Pateh Nbenga in the Gambia, December 2002. We - the director of the Malmö Academy of Music, Sverker Svensson, my husband Max, jali Alagi Mbye and myself - had come to celebrate ten years of courses for Swedish music teacher students in the Gambia.

The story came as Pateh Nbenga was showing his instrument to us. From just giving examples, he soon started reciting a story, and we were invited to contemplate the qualities of leadership, brave women, the wisdom of a child, the importance of asking – all embedded in a beautiful melody.

The decision to start this book with lost elders was easy. Since I started the work on this study, I have heard numerous stories told by older men and women from the Mandinka culture. These stories form the foundation of the ‘invisible university’ that I have visited so many times, and since this is the place for saying thanks to all involved in the process, I want to start by thanking you – all the master musicians who shared your stories with me.

Writing a book, especially this book, involves a lot more than writing. To me, it involved learning how to dance questions, how to listen to the unsaid, and to travel in and out of different worlds of knowledge. This took time: thank you, Malmö Academy of Music, for giving me that time.

It also involved using all pre-understanding that came from playing with traditional masters of the Nordic fiddle tradition, thank you, all fellow fiddlers.

A special challenge has been to translate an oral context into a highly literal academic tradition: thank you, my supervisors Göran Folkestad and Gary McPherson, for inspiration and helpful discussions.

Thank you Jan-Olov Ståhl for the language editing.

Music has been my companion in the interviews as well as in the analyses. The attached CD made it possible to present some of jali Alagi Mbye’s ‘talking’ with the kora. Thank you, Anders Åhlin, for the field recordings.

In the long process of writing I also had help from Stig-Magnus Thorsén, Bengt Olsson, Håkan Lundström and Owe Ronström, who assisted in keeping focus, and not getting lost in the forest of unripe

thoughts. This help also came from all my colleagues in the department for Music Education Research at the Malmö Academy of Music.

Thank you, Max, for giving intercultural understanding an everyday dimension.

Of course, family life has suffered in periods. Thank you, Ellen, Aron and Fatou, for accepting my absence; thank you also for not always accepting it. Thank you, mother, for endless practical help, for support and involvement in the very heart of the research process.



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Twice a year the cafeteria at the Malmö Academy of Music is transformed into a meeting place for the passionate: When the fresh 'Gambia students' return after their three weeks of fieldwork they are welcomed by the veterans; those who have been there, and understand the wordless enthusiasm that the happy bodies radiate. It is not about the vitality caused by the sun, the colours and the adventure. No, this is about something invisible, deeper and more everlasting. Compared to their normal training in Sweden, the 'Gambia students' have experienced a very different approach to music teaching and learning

### 1.1 ANOTHER PATH AND ANOTHER EDUCATION

This thesis is about a new approach to teaching and learning music, different to the one which has pervaded Swedish institutions of music education. At a fundamental level it is about the type of experiences students at the Malmö Academy of Music have had as a result of living with, and learning from, great Gambian masters.

This approach to music has been the source of my inspiration and the focus of my studies since Easter 1986, when I visited Didago, a small village on the Ivory Coast. I was there as a consequence of my own search for my Nordic fiddle traditions in Oslo, Norway. This might seem fanciful, but it was a key event that made a lasting impression on my subsequent musical development. Analysing my initial ethnomusicological fieldwork, the meeting with the African musicians mirrored my own relationship to music in terms of the nature and scope of my understanding of the fiddle, folk music, masters and learning music; or more precisely - oral music.

Numerous questions emerged regarding the nature of learning, oral and written culture, body and intellect, the role of the musician and the music teacher, and these questions followed me, all the long way from Didago back to the Malmö Academy of Music. In an essay written after the experiences in Didago I said: 'It is a catastrophe not to be a poet. I have to go back' (Sæther, 1986).

The meeting with people and musicians in Didago has been followed by many other meetings, resulting in very much the same kind of impressions. When constructing the multicultural projects at the Malmö

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Academy of Music and the teacher training course in the Gambia we relied on the competence of immigrant musicians in Malmö, Swedish folk musicians and last, but not least, masters in the Gambia.

Working hand in hand with masters of an ancient oral tradition leads to instructive situations. Some of them are comic, while others are confusing, confronting or chaotic. With time the chaos has grown into a resource, and the cultural meetings into a teaching method.

To the Malmö Academy of Music the meetings have led to the development of music teacher education courses that recognise the consequences of a multicultural society.

Above all, these meetings have opened the door to jali Alagi Mbye's world of knowledge. Alagi Mbye is a jali, a musician by birth, who represents this different, passionate knowledge that the returning Gambia students radiate in the cafeteria. To him, the meetings with the Malmö Academy of Music have led to an understanding that his own culture is of profound value, even in a modern Gambia. In his view, if European universities want to 'buy' his knowledge it should be used at home as well. Therefore he is now building a music school, which aims at exposing Gambian children to their own traditional music. By opening this school in Nema Kunku, Alagi makes it clear that he seeks an alternative to what many West African musicians do, which is to emigrate to Europe or the United States.

### 1.2 JALI EDUCATION IN SHORT

These jali families are different. Some are drummers, kora players, balafon players...different families. But they are friends of people and peacemakers...They were fighting with the music. So, music is their gun and the music is their sword, music is their horse...( Sæther, Ed., 1993, p. 54)

Alagi Mbye is a jali, which means that he was born a musician according to an old caste system. He is a Mandinka and therefore a member of the largest ethnic group in the Gambia, which also is represented in major parts of West Africa. His own education to become a recognised jali has been long, and in periods very hard. Normally young male members of a jali family are sent away, far from home, to learn from a master. When Alagi Mbye talks about this he often refers to it as a kind of slavery. The girls have a better position than the boys – from a Western point of view - because they are allowed to stay at home and learn the songs of their culture from their mother and/or grandmother.

My meetings with Alagi Mbye have enabled me to access an oral tradition where the education is ritualised and institutionalised. Although the contrast to the Swedish education system is clear there are also many similarities. The purpose of the present study is to highlight attitudes to teaching and learning music in the context of a cultural

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exchange between two educational systems; the one that impregnates Swedish Academies of Music and the one that impregnates Gambian jalis. What then, is a jali? According to jali Alagi Mbye - and as expressed in his songs - jalis are:

- the collective memory of the society;
- the cement of the society;
- peacemakers;
- wandering libraries;
- mediators between the people and the leaders;
- a news service;
- entertainers, and
- musicians ( although this is not a Mandinka term)

As an introduction to the methods used in the jali music education we can imagine the following scene: The master is playing the kora<sup>1</sup>. We are in his compound in Serrekunda, the Gambia. The women are washing clothes, the children are playing and a marabout<sup>2</sup> is visiting the sick neighbour. A tired, dirty and hungry boy arrives from far away to ask the grand master if he can teach him to play the kora. The master says yes, as it is his duty to carry on the tradition.

'But I don't have any money to pay my lessons', the boy says.

'No problem', the master says. 'I will support you all the time you need to learn how to play' (That might take 10 years).

Immediately the first ceremony is executed. The master takes the boy's hands in his own, reads a magic formula over them and puts the kora in the boy's 'new' hands. Now lesson number one starts: the song about Kelefaba, the big warrior. It is not the easiest song, but it is always the first one to learn, as it contains the basis for many of the competencies that a jali must develop. It tells the story about the battle between the two kingdoms Jokadu and Niimi in the Kaabu empire (Sonko-Godwin, 1988). The first lesson might be long, maybe one year, but after that, the boy knows:

- the most common rhythmic pattern
- a good model for building a tune with ostinato, solo and singing
- the relation between ostinato and solo
- the history of the eminent warrior Kelefaba
- the importance of being loyal to the people and the group you belong to
- the danger of close relations to intelligent women – or alternatively that you always have to listen to the advice of intelligent women (depending on how you choose to interpret the text)

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<sup>1</sup> The kora is the 21-stringed West African harp-lute that is the main jali instrument.

<sup>2</sup> Marabout means both Muslim leader and/or medicine man. Sometimes, but not always, he is both.

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After 10 years, (if the boy has worked hard) he is still by his master, still without an instrument of his own – but with a tremendous capacity to listen, observe and remember. He is mature enough to make his own way in the world.

During the years he has been studying, the musician will come to know how to play Kelefababa both in the old and the new version, Kaira, Jarabi and all the other obligatory tunes. He will know the story about every King and warrior, he will know how to improvise a song of praise, and how to open people's hearts. At this time he will become tired of being the slave of the master. He may mutter that certainly he has been supported during his schooling, but Allah knows how many shoes he polished and how many errands he ran, for free. He wants to graduate now!

Patience - it's not time yet. First, he has to undertake a 'test-run' into the world. The young man has to borrow a kora, and then it's time to go. If he returns alive, with new clothes, money and a cow (skin for his own kora) and a goat (to eat at the examination) there will be a final assessment. The old masters arrive to form the jury, and the young man has to prove to them that he knows the art of jaliya, and has therefore mastered all the duties of a jali. If he passes the test he will be allowed to build his own kora. Then the new jali marries his kora and wanders out into the big world. Maybe, he will even reach the level equivalent to obtaining a doctorate in Western society. If so, the old masters will give him the wooden stick that proves it: the *mundiato*<sup>3</sup>.

This short story identifies some of the more important aspects of being a jali. As a traditional musician you are born into a 'music school'. At the first glance it is easy to focus on the differences between the jali apprenticeship model and the institutionalised training offered by the Malmö Academy of Music. But, as will be shown in the documentation of the following study, the gap may be an illusion. The intention of the study is to widen current views on music teaching and learning so that teachers might be better equipped to work and function in a multicultural society. Specifically, the intention is to open the doors to the Mandinka approach to music education, in order to illuminate their philosophy of music teaching.

### 1.3 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

The present study only deals with one African culture, according to one main informant and a few associates who contribute with their knowledge on teaching and learning music in the Mandinka culture in the Gambia. The first interview with the main informant, jali Alagi Mbye, was made in 1993, and has been followed by in-depth interviews, that

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<sup>3</sup> The *mundiato* was given to Alagi Mbye when we were visiting the Kanuteh brothers in Basse, February 1998, making interviews for this study.

with time made Alagi Mbye grow into a kind of co-researcher, which is most clearly demonstrated in the core interview with the Kanuteh brothers in Basse, 1998.

This way of working illustrates the type of researcher, the 'traveller' (Kvale, 1997) who constructs knowledge in an interplay with the co-travellers. This type of study also needs to draw on methodologies associated with music education and ethnomusicology.

The present study consists largely of a critical discussion of observations and interviews made from my contact with the informants. Equally important are my critical reflections of my own work as a music educator and musician, and the search to clarify my own work and to critically examine current teaching methods and music making in Sweden – not only in schools, but particularly at the Malmö Academy of Music.

## **1.4 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS**

The first chapter provides a background to the study, from the perspective of my first personal encounters with questions that have forced me to critically reflect on a number of issues confronting the way I have previously thought about and taught music. It also gives a brief introduction to the Mandinka culture, which is the focus of the study and presents the intention of the study.

The second chapter presents the horizon of the study. It is the development of music teacher education in Sweden and the multicultural projects of which I have been a participant that lead up to the mission statement that underpins my work as an educator. Chapter 2 also gives an overview of the relationship between music education and ethnomusicology, and the discussions within the field of multicultural education. Chapter 3 gives a deeper presentation of the Mandinka culture and widens the perspective to include more general African issues.

The fourth chapter provides the points of departure of the theoretical framework for the study: 'Ethnomusicology and music education research', 'Literacy and orality', and 'Other kinds of knowing'.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, the methodology adopted for the study is multifaceted, incorporating research techniques that reflect an eclectic approach. Chapter 5 outlines the method applied in the study and is organised according to six major sections: 'Methodology', 'Procedure', 'Sample', 'Techniques to be used', 'Development of key questions' and 'Data analysis.'

In the sixth chapter, the results are presented in four sections; 'Inside the jali culture', 'Outside the jali culture', 'the Oral University' and 'Inside and outside the Oral University – the multicultural jali'. The first two parts reflect the emic and the etic perspectives in different ways. The first part, 'Inside the jali culture' is clearly impregnated with the emic perspective as Alagi Mbye does this interview acting like an insider

## *Chapter 1*

within my research culture and at the same time using the kora to guide the conversation. The second part, 'Outside the jali culture', is more coloured by the etic perspective, since Alagi Mbye merely serves as a translator of my questions, even though I try to act like an insider within his culture by, for example, dancing when the music requires dance. The third part is the conclusion of the first two parts. The fourth part concentrates on jali Alagi Mbye, the multicultural jali, moving between the emic and etic perspectives respectively.

In the last chapter, 'Discussion and Conclusion', the findings presented in Chapter 6 are discussed according to key issues, and with two main foci: the Oral University in the Gambia, and music teacher education and multicultural music education in Sweden respectively.

The appendix contains the full transcript and the CD-recording of one of the interviews, the one made with the Kanuteh brothers, in which jali Alagi Mbye put the questions and played the kora throughout the interview. Reading the transcript and listening to the CD illustrates, among many other things, how the music leads the talking and vice versa.

## CHAPTER 2: THE HORIZON

As described in Chapter one, the present study seeks to examine attitudes to teaching and learning among jalis in the Gambia. Although this is the main focus of the empirical study of the research project, the horizon of which the study is carried out, analysed and discussed, is the development of music teacher education carried out in Sweden for the last three decades, and of which I have been a participant. In the following, a description is given of this development in general and the multicultural projects in particular, leading up to the formulation of the mission statement from which I operate as an educator. The horizon also includes current development in the relationship between music teaching and ethnomusicology, and discussions within the fields of multicultural education in general, and multicultural music education in particular. This more philosophical dimension of the horizon is described in the last sections of this chapter.

### 2.1 A NEW MUSIC TEACHER TRAINING - NEW GENRES

Since 1988 I have been a teacher of 'Music and Society' at the Malmö Academy of Music. Due to my background in Swedish folk music, I was expected to promote traditional Swedish music inside the Academy. This genre had earlier been neglected, but the doors were now open. The official document that created radical changes in Swedish music teacher training was OMUS, 'Organisation Committee for Higher Education in Music', (Olsson, 1993).

The ideas behind the OMUS were a result of a social debate in Sweden which criticised the institutionalised forms of the arts. There was a general need for a new cultural policy that would guarantee breadth, both in cultural content and environment.

This was interpreted by the OMUS by including six repertoire fields in music teacher training, including 'new' genres like the Afro-American tradition, Nordic folk music and music from 'other' ethnic groups (the term World Music had not yet come into use). The committee also emphasised creative music education and the communicative function of culture. The role of the authoritarian teacher was replaced by creative

## Chapter 2

teachers, where the emphasis was on the student rather than on the art (Olsson, 1993).

The basis for all these changes was what Olsson (1993) calls the 'anthropological' concept of culture. In Olsson's description the anthropological concept of culture is opposed to the 'aesthetic' concept of culture, also called the 'narrow' concept of culture which presupposes a special knowledge and also focuses on cultural artefacts. The 'anthropological' concept is also called the 'broad' concept, which includes a more social explanation of culture. In a footnote Olsson claims that although taking the risk of confusing terms, he still wants to keep the term 'anthropological' about this concept of culture.

But what is this concept? In *Cultural anthropology*, Keesing (1981) is thoroughly illustrating this. According to him, these are the most important philosophical thoughts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

Culture in the usage of anthropology does not, of course, mean cultivation in the arts and social graces. It refers, rather, to learned, accumulated experience. A culture – say, Japanese culture – refers to those socially transmitted patterns for behaviour characteristic of a particular group. (p. 68)

There tends to be some confusion between patterns *for* and *in* behaviour. It seems as if many of the writers who use the anthropological concept of culture have not paid attention to this confusion. In the original version there is a sharp distinction between sociocultural systems that reflect people's behaviour, and ideational systems that reflect people's thoughts.

We will restrict the term culture to an ideational system. Cultures in this sense comprise systems of shared ideas, systems of concepts and rule and meanings that underlie and are expressed in the ways that humans live. Culture, so defined, refers to what humans learn, not what they do and make (ibid, p. 68-69).

The relationship between the social and the cultural is described as two complementary ways of looking at the same reality. Keesing here refers to Geertz, 1957:

Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action; social structure is the form that action takes, the network of social relations. Culture and social structure are different abstractions from the same phenomena. (Keesing, 1981, p. 74)

American cultural anthropologists emphasise culture, shared ideas, in their analyses, while the English tend to build their theories on social structures (Keesing, 1981). French anthropologists have a position 'in

between' and study the connection between ideational and social structures (Keesing, 1981).

In the Swedish debate this distinction is not made. Here 'what people do' is represented both in the broad and the narrow concept of culture. Simplified, the broad or 'anthropological' concept represents what 'common' people do, while the narrow concept of culture reflects what 'upper class' people do. Looking at the origins of the concept it gets clearer: culture is an ideational concept, not a presentation of different activities.

## **2.2 THE GAMBIA COURSE - POSTULATES**

In 1990 the doors were open to more than new genres in music education. Sweden had changed, and the multicultural Sweden was a hot topic. In what ways did the Malmö Academy of Music respond to societal changes? In answering that question it showed that the 'multicultural projects' also gave way to Swedish folk music.

During these years my function at the Malmö Academy of Music was not the lonely icebreaker. Although much of the practical work with implementing new courses and leading experimental projects involved my efforts, the support from the heads of the Academy was always present. Consequently, my work with training future music teachers is the horizon for the present study.

Just as the work at the Malmö Academy of Music had to relate to society, this study relates to broader issues. Fundamentally it rests on a number of postulates:

- *There is a need for more understanding between people of our world.*
- *This broadened understanding can be obtained through music teaching.*
- *To understand 'the other' also helps understanding 'at home'.*

These postulates had direct implications on the development of the Gambia course. In 1992, the first group of music teacher students left for three weeks of studies in the Gambia. Ever since, the course has been evaluated and developed. It is now a regular part of the courses offered at the Academy of Music, and two groups of nine students participate each year.

The students that choose to study a foreign culture in depth take part in a one-year course which consists of a body of literature, field work in the Gambia, writing of a reflective report and a concert. Before the departure of the first group, there was a number of hypotheses that waited to be tested. These hypotheses also reflect the time and context that shaped them:

- Being a foreigner in a foreign culture promotes the understanding of what it takes being a member of a minority culture, or not belonging to the majority.

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- Orally transmitted traditional music, can not be integrated into an institution without reflection. Some parts of the knowledge about that kind of music is only available through active participation in the environment where the music is a part of the whole.
- Orally transmitted cultures are in themselves carrying pedagogical and methodological treasures, which a music teacher might be able to use even in other contexts than the original.
- One short, but strong and intense meeting with a different music culture than one's own, might be the start of a process leading to bi-musicality.
- To study from a traditional master, with all that it includes, is a school for life. Some of the students might even discover that being a music teacher is not the only choice in life.
- To be able to deal with musics from other cultures, which a music teacher is confronted with, requires a strong personal identity. The experiences from taking part of and evaluating the course in the Gambia can be applied to other contexts, for example at home in Sweden, in one's own music teaching.
- On the institutional level, the contact with Gambian music, leading to changes in Swedish music teaching, might serve as a sort of reversed cultural development aid, (Sæther, 1993).

The testing of the above hypotheses led to the move from experiment to regular course, and also to a continued search for answers. The postulates that inspired the 'Gambia experiment' also have had direct implications on the empirical material of the present study. It was the reflections made by our students in the Gambia that initially inspired the mapping of the jali culture. It is the future Swedish music teachers that shape the horizon for the many journeys to jali Alagi Mbye's world of music.

The postulates also manifest themselves through the method chosen for this study. The data are obtained mainly with the help of conversations, a method that implies co-operation, interplay, co-travelling and recognition of the informant.

Finally the postulates serve as the mission statement underpinning my work as a music educator.

### 2.3 MULTICULTURAL MUSIC EDUCATION PROJECTS

The horizon of the research project also to a large extent consists of a number of educational projects carried out in Sweden that further adds to the understanding of my role as a researcher.

In Sweden, music teachers are trained at six different universities. As a city, Malmö provides one of the most multicultural school arenas in Sweden. Over 50 % of the children in the schools have a different cultural background than Swedish; some schools have very few immigrants while

others have up to 90%. In one of the schools in the multi-ethnic area called Rosengård, 36 different languages are spoken. This is one reason why the Malmö Academy of Music has developed programs for multicultural music teacher training. It cannot be said that multicultural teacher training is available to all future Swedish music teachers, although 20% of the Swedish population have a different cultural background than Swedish.

At the Malmö Academy of Music two larger projects have been carried out during the last decade: *Higher Music Education in a Multicultural Society* and *World Music School*. The first project, undertaken between 1992 and 1995, had as its underlying problem how music students meaningfully may experience purposeful intercultural communication within the rather compact music teacher curriculum. The hypothesis was that one experience may be enough, provided the confrontation with the 'foreign' music culture is sufficiently strong.

During the project time, two different courses were developed. One concerned all students and consisted of one intensive week of making music together with immigrant musicians from the region, inside the Academy. This is called the 'multicultural project'. The other was the 'Gambia course', mentioned above. Both courses survived after the project period and are now part of the regular curriculum. Swedish school children are normally confronted with music as a school subject in two different ways. The first one is classroom teaching in the ordinary school, obligatory for all. Most schools have music teachers for this task, but in some schools much of the music is taken care of by ordinary teachers, with no professional skill to teach music in classrooms. Since the 1930s, Sweden has developed a system of municipal music schools, where children can obtain instrumental training at a reasonable cost (Brändström & Wiklund, 1995). The tradition inside these schools has mainly been to teach piano and instruments suitable for a classical Western symphony orchestra. The trend has been to open up for other art forms, such as dance, theatre and picture in what is called 'culture schools'. Children who choose to come to these schools very often come from Swedish middle-class families. This is certainly true in Malmö. In many multiethnic schools the children do not even know of the existence of a culture school. Certainly the parents will have difficulties to pay the fees, but also they might not be attracted by the choice of instruments and activities.

It is against this background that the project 'World Music School: Music Teaching in a Multicultural School' was started. Between 1997 and 1999 thousands of school children in Malmö were involved, and the evaluation was overwhelmingly positive. According to the Swedish National Curriculum, the school has a duty to foster democratic members of the society, individuals who are able to communicate, co-operate, show respect to other people and show empathy (alt. be empathic). *World Music School* aimed to contribute to this on four different levels (Becker

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Gruvstedt, Olsson, & Sæther, 2000), which might be summarised as follows:

1. *Immigrant musicians in the school.* In the local community there are many immigrant musicians who are an important potential resource for the school children. Through their artistic competence they have the possibilities of providing all children, regardless of nationality, with strong aesthetic experiences. Their teaching may also shed light on questions such as cultural heritage, identity, cultural meetings and conflicts in the school.
2. *Methods for co-operation.* The methods of working that have developed during the WMS project have encouraged co-operation and teamwork. The performances at the music festivals in the schools demanded a division of tasks. All the teachers in the schools have planned the production, process and performance together with the children and the WMS-teachers.
3. *Role models.* It is important for young people to be surrounded by good role models. Some children who had the same cultural background as the teachers could strengthen their identity. Children from Africa, for example, have for the first time met a black man in a Swedish school. This has made a strong impact on the children.
4. *Reflecting the surrounding society.* The music and culture schools in Sweden do not generally reflect the surrounding society. The activities carried out by World Music School at different schools in Malmö have inspired some children to enter deeply into the music or instruments they met. It should be just as natural to be able to choose panflutes, djembe drums or African dance as it is to choose violin, electric guitar or tuba.

This project in action showed that music offers the possibility of not only reaching over many school subject areas, but also to establish contact between people, overlapping differences in age and opinions. Ten different schools with children from 6 to 15 years of age were involved. In total, seven musicians and artists from different cultural backgrounds have been employed as teachers, and the participating children have not paid any fees, as this might have prevented them from taking part. Through the large international network that grew over the project period, the ideas of World Music School have now been successfully adopted elsewhere.

### 2.4 MUSIC TEACHING AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

The courses and projects described in the previous section are strongly influenced by ethnomusicological concepts and theories. One of the underlying assumptions is that music reflects the values of society and this reflection is therefore the *raison d'être* of the field. One of the most

visible signs of Nettl's (1985) assumption is that virtually all societies use music as a way of teaching their own culture. Of course, societies pass on their own culture through different means, but especially through music. According to Nettl (1985) this is done to a much larger extent than we might often suspect.

Why music? Because, Nettl suggests, music has the capacity of being arbitrarily symbolic, because it is not really necessary for subsistence, shelter and reproduction but may serve as humans might wish it to. Following this argument, it is in the musical events, the exercises, the teaching methods and the institutions teaching music that we will find the aspects of culture that music teaches.

By citing specific examples, Nettl shows how the concept of 'radif' in Iran carries most of the central values in Iranian society: respect for authority, tempered relationships, the value of individualism and submission. The Blackfoot Indians learn through their music the skill of expanding one's property without taking from anybody else. One can dream the song, just like anyone else. Transmission by dreaming ensures that there is no need to 'take' or 'borrow' from others to expand the repertoire. They also learn the value of old age, since songs are dreamed throughout life, adding new knowledge until death. Homogeneity of the society is reflected in the music, which has no special repertoires for distinct parts of the population or no identifiably talented musicians.

When it comes to Western music education, Nettl (1985) stresses that we do in fact have many styles and repertoires, but choose to concentrate on classical art music. This is a hierarchic system. Classical music is 'good music', and students are taught the masterpieces of great masters. In the orchestras the conductor is the leader. Perceptively he states that: 'Does this perhaps mean that we like to think of our society, reflected in music, as a group of marionettes directed by a supreme puller of strings, that we are content to leave judgement to others, just as an orchestra does not vote on tempo?' (Nettl, 1985, p 74).

Nettl (1985) admits that the relationship between the kind of music teaching that we mostly use and the character of our society is 'a bit disturbing' (p 75). Disturbing, because music institutions do not always reflect the needs of society, and disturbing because a society with a 'group of marionettes' as the majority culture is an unpleasant thought. Perhaps, he says, if we wish to change some of the central values that we teach to younger members of our society, we might well start with music.

Reading the above comments might at first suggest that all music educators should start off with a strong theoretical understanding of cultural anthropology. But, as Robert Garfias (1985) points out, anthropology is largely a matter of attitude and common sense. Even if a background in ethnomusicology will possibly help to break down barriers that will prevent reception of different aesthetic concepts, there are probably other ways of developing this kind of perception. Garfias simply suggests that people should openly and sympathetically listen to

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each other's voices as an important means for eventually being able to understand each other's thoughts. A task not so simple, though, as linguistic patterns and the way we think follow the path that has been delineated for us by habit and custom in our culture.

This is exactly the dilemma that has been highlighted through the multicultural projects carried out by the Malmö Academy of Music. In the international networks that develop teaching methods for world music, much effort has been made to develop teaching materials. A good example is the *ISME Source Book* for music educators, which deals with world music (1998). A major part of the book deals with printed sources, video and audio recordings and models for compiling materials.

For the Malmö Academy of Music the focus has *not* been on teaching methods, but rather on exploring ways in which attitudes might be changed. In his article on 'World Music or Multiculturalism or...' Lundström (1993) stresses that music students cannot use the arsenal of methods available on world music without a pluralistic approach to music. This approach can only be realised when students are able to shift perspectives between on the one hand their own relation to their own musical background, and on the other hand their relations to other people's relations to their musical backgrounds (Lundström, 1993).

This is why the projects developed at the Malmö Academy of Music have focused on how students confront the unknown. The methods that are tested aim to develop a deeply experienced understanding of music as a culturally based expression.

These ideas relate to what Nettl says about music education. After a long career as an ethnomusicologist, doing fieldwork in Iran, among Blackfoot Indians and masters of carnatic music in India, Nettl turned to his own culture: Western classical music and its institutes for learning. In *Heartland Excursions* (1995), he uses his inside knowledge from other music cultures to examine his own culture as an outsider. Doing so, he joins the trend in ethnomusicology, turning to the last 'unstudied' field, Western classical music. Not to say that this is unstudied, but the vantage point of the ethnomusicologist has not been used very often. According to Nettl, this approach will contribute to the understanding of western culture in many ways:

1. to understand a musical culture through a microcosm;
2. to provide an even-handed appraisal without judgement;
3. to look as well as possible at the familiar as if one were an outsider;  
and
4. to see the world of music as a component of culture in the anthropological sense of that word, and to view one's own music from a world perspective.

This can also be said in other words. Nettl (1995) refers to the ethnomusicologist Daniel Neuman who writes that societies use music for three purposes:

1. to be a functioning part of culture that contributes to the culture complex;
2. to be a microcosm of the culture whose structures it reflects; and
3. to comment on culture.

When Nettl returns home to study his own culture, his home is schools of music in universities in the Midwest, the 'heartland' of America. He draws on his own personal experiences from teaching and studying over a period of 50 years inside some of these schools. The result of this long period as an insider and his competence to act as an outsider, is divided into four perspectives.

The first chapter describes music schools in America as a religious system, or a social system in which both the living and the deceased (i.e., the great composers) participate. In this model the music school is viewed as a society ruled by deities with sacred texts, rituals, ceremonial numbers and a priesthood.

The second chapter deals with the different opposing forces that the members of the musicians' society choose to group themselves in: Students/teachers, performers/academics, strings/wind, conductor/conducted and so on. These alliances reflect analogous characteristic in American society.

The third chapter shows that the music school has the potential of being a venue for a meeting of all musics. It discusses how this meeting is characterised, as a melting pot or as a mosaic where the different parts maintain their identities. Nettl draws a parallel to how the global mixing of cultures in most cases is a question of power. The American music schools most often have a central classical repertoire and satellite styles are deemed less significant.

The fourth chapter outlines how music schools use musical sounds and behaviour to define concepts such as power, art and musicianship.

Nettl (1995) concludes that while individuals today are frequently polymusical, the institutions and contexts for musical performance in which they participate may be unimusical, which is not a situation of balance. He continues:

The music school is the analogue of a factory, corporation and scientific establishment; it reflects the society of which it is a part. But if music came into existence, as some believe, as a special language with which humans could speak to God, or to the gods, then its institutions may also maintain a position of standing outside the culture, contradicting, approving, debating and commenting. (p. 145)

## 2.5 MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

This section sheds light on multicultural education as a concept of central value for the whole of society, an important issue for the majorities as well as the minorities.

Tesfahuney (1999) claims in his article on monocultural education, that the European education system is exclusively monocultural, as a result of the discourse from the Age of Enlightenment. The great philosophers of the Enlightenment made Europe the home of creativity, fantasy and innovation, while Africa and Asia completely lacked rationality and abstract thinking. In reality, the most important ideals of the Enlightenment - humanity and universalism - were not to be used universally. On the contrary, Europe had a mission to civilise the rest of the world, to free 'the others' from ignorance and barbarism.

According to Tesfahuney (1999), European education has a history in which 'Western education' is the only education that counts. The discursive system that followed this eurocentrism was constructed to create the self-identity of Europe. At the same time the relations to 'the others' were modelled in a way that made it very easy for racist ideologies to develop. Thoughts on the white race and its superiority can be traced back to the sixteenth century, but it was during the Enlightenment that these thoughts obtained scientific status. The biological racism as it was expressed by Hume, Kant and Hegel is rare today (few dare to talk about 'negroes' as an inferior race), but has been replaced by a more subtle discourse on identities and culture. Racism has been 'culturalized', as Tesfahuney puts it. When the multicultural school is made into a school for immigrants, the debate is already 'racified'. Tesfahuney argues that under the surface lies the silent norm which shows how 'racified' the situation in fact is: Swedish, Christian, white children are the norm for education in Sweden (Tefahuney, 1999).

### 2.5.1 THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

The most problematic question in many modern democracies is how and in what way different cultural groups should be recognised. Is there a way to combine the liberal and democratic claim of equal rights to each individual and the claim that every unique identity has the right to be recognised? Charles Taylor, professor at the University Centre for Human Values, Princeton University, provides an interesting perspective to this question in his essay on the politics of recognition (Taylor, 1994).

Taylor tries to distance himself from the politic struggles around the concept of multiculturalism and gives a historical and philosophical background to the idea of recognition. Today, he claims, there is a common belief that refusal of recognition can be a kind of discrimination. This is one of the corner stones in debates on feminism, racism and

multiculturalism. But when, he asks, and how, did this discourse on recognition start?

Again, the threads lead back to the Enlightenment. Jean-Jaques Rousseau introduced the thought that each individual has an intuitive feeling of what is wrong or right. It was no longer God alone who decided about moral norms, but each individual had both the capacity and the duty to use his or hers intuitive feeling. This was the first step towards an individualised identity and the problems that surround it.

As long as the identity was formed by social or religious hierarchies the concept was quite unproblematic. When the individual came into focus it was no longer as simple and static as before. The human being, no matter how individual, has a strong dialogical character. We define our individuality through languages of many kinds, music being one of them. To define ourselves we need to interact with 'others'. It is here where the problem emerges: an identity that is created in communication with 'others' can fail as a project, if recognition is not obtained (Taylor, 1995).

The politics of recognition, as Taylor describes it, is important on two different levels: the private and the official. In the official sphere there are two separate directions, and a strong tension between the two. The first direction fights for recognition of universal rights for all individuals, 'the same parcel for all'. The second direction fights for each individual to receive recognition for his or her unique identity.

While the first direction tries to avoid discrimination, it uses methods that are completely blind to how the citizens of a nation in reality are unlike and differ from each other. The second direction re-defines discrimination so that differences between groups become the reason for 'unequal' treatment, like the allocation of quotas. For example, in the Swedish job market some positions might be reserved for men or women in order to obtain a more even balance between the sexes. Defenders of this second direction claim that universal rights are very difficult to find, and that 'equality' in its worst form can be oppressive to groups that do not fit in under the labels 'equal' or 'universal'. Defenders of the first direction, on the other hand, claim that the allocation of quotas and other special acts to preserve unique identities, are forms of discrimination.

Taylor argues that there must be a compromise between the false demand of equal rights for all individuals and the life behind ethnocentric walls. There are other cultures, and we have to live together, both on a global scale and in each local community - schools being one good example. His solution is to strive for an attitude to be used when meeting 'the others'. This attitude should be based on the assumption that cultures that for centuries have articulated what is good or bad for the larger population, surely have something worth admiration and respect, even if it is combined with things that we would dismiss. The implication for schools and universities is that respectful, moral discrepancies can stimulate open and intense intellectual discussions,

both inside and outside the classroom. A multicultural school in Taylor's version is a school which defends freedom and equality through mutual respect for 'reasonable' intellectual, political and cultural differences.

### 2.5.2 NORTH AMERICAN APPROACHES TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

According to McCarthy (1990), mainstream research on education emphasises biology and culture as explanatory concepts when dealing with the poor results of minority groups in schools. The economic and political dynamics that constrain or help the chances in life of minority youth beyond the school seem to be forgotten. It is against this background that multicultural education grew in the USA during the 1960's and 1970's, in close relation to the strong black power movement, which pointed out that schools often are producing racial differences inside the educational system.

This is not the place for a long historical review on the educational system in the USA. In short, however, since multicultural education found its place in most educational programs, there has been a radical shift in the basic ideology of schooling. For more than a hundred years the model has been assimilation, in the sense that new immigrants should be amalgamated into the American society. Educational institutions should serve minorities by erasing ethnic traits, thus creating a democratic and equal society. The liberal assumption behind this policy was that if everyone was schooled to be an American, then there should be equal opportunities for all citizens in the job market. Clearly, as is evident with certain minorities, this was not the case (McCarthy, 1990).

The black radical demands for a new schooling gave birth to a pluralist model that embraced the notion of cultural diversity, where the variable of culture is the vehicle for resolution of racial inequality. From a Scandinavian perspective this background is rarely discussed. Many of the notions and concepts used in the Swedish debate on multicultural schooling are founded in the USA, where the whole issue was to counteract racism. In Sweden the word race hardly exists. The Swedish equivalent would be culture, minority or ethnic group.

However, much education research in the USA and in Scandinavia has focused on cultural deprivation, while as a contrast multicultural proponents emphasise the positive qualities of the cultural heritage of minority groups. Therefore, the curriculum models McCarthy (1990) provides are the following: Cultural understanding, cultural competence and cultural emancipation.

The idea of cultural understanding could be expressed as 'we are different but we are all the same'. In this stance of cultural relativism differences are 'human' and 'natural', as expressed in teaching kits with titles like 'The Wonderful world of Difference...' This tendency to focus on the acceptance of cultural differences has led to curious effects: cultural white ethnic groups like Swedes have started their own

movement to counterbalance the study of black and Hispanic cultures. The emphasis in the curriculum model of cultural understanding is a change of attitude and the goal is to reduce prejudices. In the strong version of these programs the target is white students and teachers. However, evaluations of some of these programs show that they might have negative effects. Some students' attitudes towards blacks even worsened during the 'Wisconsin program' for human relationships (McCarthy, 1990, p.46). This, combined with the fact that cultural understanding programs tend to discuss all ethnic groups as monolithic entities, neglecting differences within the groups, have led to the development of the second model: cultural competence.

Multicultural schools using the cultural competence approach put cultural pluralism at a central place in the curriculum. Various forms for bicultural, bilingual and ethnic studies are based on pluralist values aiming to preserve cultural diversity. Teachers should help the students to develop competence in more than one cultural system. The main target in this model is minority groups who by this multicultural model will hopefully develop skills in the mainstream culture – without the expense of their own ethnic heritage. Preservation of minority culture and language is important for advocates of this model. The challenge for this direction is that teaching minority students to cross over to mainstream America might lead to assimilation, which in itself is antithetical to the preservation of minority culture. Weak points in the implementation of both cultural understanding and cultural competence has resulted in development of the third model: cultural emancipation.

In the model of cultural emancipation the argument is that multicultural education can promote cultural emancipation and social amelioration in two ways. Firstly, a positive self-concept will help to boost achievements of minority youth. Secondly, improved academic achievement will help minority youth to get better jobs and thereby break the cycle of poverty and cultural deprivation. This, however, is criticised by radical school theorists like McLaren who point out that there is no linear connection between good school results and good jobs. Multicultural education does not necessarily change racial attitudes in the job market.

In common for all the three above mentioned models of multicultural education is, according to McLaren (1995), that they put an enormous burden on the shoulders of the school teachers to transform structures of the whole society. McLaren is one of the strongest advocates of critical multiculturalism. In his version, multiculturalism is not just 'diversity' in the liberal version, but 'difference'. It is the understanding of 'difference' that is the challenge for the teacher.

According to McLaren, one of the most important questions in teacher training, and in education, is how to develop an understanding of difference that avoids strengthening the concept of 'otherness' (Mc Laren, 1998). The first thing needed is the distinction between 'difference' and

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'diversity'. With 'diversity' comes a transparent norm, constructed by the host society that creates a consensus. The problem is that the universalism that permits 'diversity' at the same time masks ethnocentric norms. For McLaren, this is what assimilation is all about, in the sense that it involves having to prove oneself according to rules and standards that have already been set by others, or committing 'racial suicide' to be accepted as a citizen (McLaren, 1998, p. 258).

'Differences', on the other hand, are often incommensurable. Culture, as a system of difference, as a symbol-forming activity, should be seen as a process of translations. In this view cultures never really exist fully formed and identities in this sense are always arbitrary, contingent and temporary. 'Difference', in McLaren's view, situates groups in relation to, not in binary opposition to, other groups and thereby avoids the translation of difference to mean exclusion or dominance (McLaren, 1998, p.255). Multiculturalism as a meeting of cultures is neither a melting pot that eradicates all differences nor a juxtaposition of several intact cultures, but an intercultural acceptance of risks and unexpected detours (McLaren, 1998).

To teach in a multicultural way, teachers need to understand democracy as a paradox. McLaren's point is that the foundations and norms of democracy are made by the majority groups or group in society, not necessarily including 'minority norms'. 'What is the implication of speaking as a teacher from the citadels of the centre, when your students live out their lives in the margins, in the barrios of hope?' (McLaren, 1998, p. 258).

The notion of the citizen is a clear example of this phenomenon or paradox. The citizen has been constructed by blending the diversity of social subjects in the 'melting pot', McLaren argues: 'It is in the citizen we find the most uncommon of all people - the common people' (McLaren, 1998, p. 259). Underlying McLaren's, as well as many educator's work, is the problematic encounter with differences. It is these meetings that have forced him to ask for a completely new educator - the reinvented one:

I believe that our understanding of the meaning of difference will largely determine the future of our educational projects. Our approach to multiculturalism and democracy is inextricably tied to understanding how difference signifies, and what role it plays in the politics of representation. It is my belief that the themes of multiculturalism and democracy need to be at the heart of all our present and future endeavors if we are to successfully defeat domination and oppression. It is my conviction that we need to forge new identities as educators. To construct an identity is to negotiate among a polyvalent assemblage of competing discourses that vie for allegiance. To what discourse do you wish as a teacher to become allied? Imperialist discourse of the Anglo, Eurocentric, and patriarchal metropolitan center? Or do we wish to deterritorialize such discourses and occupy identities in what I

call a 'border culture' - a culture that is multicultural, multilingual, and multiconceptual. We need to become familiar with multiple sets of referential codes from other languages, histories and cultures. In this way we can become border educators as well as border intellectuals. Ultimately we need to reinvent ourselves. (McLaren, 1998, p. 260-261)

### **2.5.3 MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN SWEDEN**

'You teach as if all pupils are still purely Swedish'

This comment was made by one of the school leaders in Malmö who was interviewed in a research project on the multicultural society and its consequences for teacher training education (Rubinstein Reich & Tallberg Broman, 2000). The project provides a critique raised against teacher education of today in Sweden. According to the researchers, it does not correspond to the demands that school reality makes on the teachers and it gives too little attention to ethnicity and gender perspectives. The student teachers also do not receive sufficient training to develop their competence to translate their theoretical knowledge into pedagogical considerations and actions.

Future teachers are trained for a changing society, which also means that their task is becoming more diffuse. The aim of the Swedish school is to be a school for all, where everybody should reach an approved level of knowledge at the end of the obligatory schooling. This aim is challenged in today's society with increasing segregation.

The quick changes in the schools are a global phenomenon, which has been described by Hargreaves (1994). According to Hargreaves our postmodern world is described by an increasing tempo of changes, cultural pluralism, national insecurity and scientific uncertainty. Against this postmodern world stands a modernistic school system, which often continues to work according to strongly inadequate aims within structures that are not very flexible.

The demand for equality has long been central in the development of the Swedish school (Skolverkets Rapport nr 110, 96). During the 1980s the focus was on erasing social inequalities, but during the 1990s other themes such as productivity and privatisation became dominant. But obvious problems with the school as an institution has led back to the question of one school for all. It is recommended by a governmental report that the inner life of the schools has to be studied from the perspectives of gender, class, ethnic and cultural belonging (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1997).

In an official report it is recommended that the Swedish government should invest 500 million Swedish kronor per year during five years to develop social and ethnic pluralism in academic studies

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(Utbildningsdepartementet, 2000). The report suggests that intercultural competence is a requirement for the university teachers to be able to fulfil their tasks. The student groups are multicultural, not only due to the increasing number of exchange students, but also because of the pluralism in the Swedish society. Among other things recommended are:

- more flexible rules for entrance to university studies, combined with active recruiting for social and ethnic pluralism;
- action plans for social and ethnic pluralism in academic institutions, and
- pluralism as a criterion for quality.

The terms multicultural and intercultural were introduced in Sweden in the beginning of 1980 (Rubinstein Reich & Tallberg Broman, 2000). They are often used as synonyms, related to teaching and education without standardised definitions. Their difference was described in the report 'Different origins – community in Sweden': Intercultural is a process aiming at increased understanding and respect for differences in cultural expressions, while multicultural is a state of condition in society (SOU 1983:57).

The trend is to regard multiculturalism not only as a matter of immigrants in the schools, but to make the definitions broad enough to include all schools as multicultural. The multicultural then becomes a dimension affecting all individual and social life. Rubinstein Reich and Tallberg Broman (2000) defines multicultural like this: 'All classrooms, nursery schools and schools are multicultural, which means a variation related to factors like ethnicity, gender and social class' (p. 11, My translation). The term multi-ethnic is used for schools which were earlier called 'immigrant schools'.

Research on multicultural teacher training often points at components that are needed in the education to give teachers competence to work in a multicultural school. Some of the most important ingredients, according to Rubinstein Reich and Tallberg Broman (2000) are:

*Knowledge:* For example facts about immigration, cultural differences and languages.

*Consciousness of one's own set of values and cultural identity:* For example, knowing why and how attitudes towards 'the others' can occur and knowledge on the expressions of one's own culture.

*Attitudes towards 'the others':* For example, knowledge on cultural meetings.

*Pedagogic, didactic knowledge:* For example how to teach in a very multi-ethnic group.

The school leaders interviewed in Malmö notice that fresh teachers are not adequately prepared for what they meet. They ask for more knowledge in the teacher training education in many areas, for example:

- knowledge on the importance of language;

- knowledge on value systems of different cultures, and
- knowledge on social conditions in different cultures.

Most importantly, they stress that knowledge can be expressed in other terms, like to be aware of, have an insight, be prepared for, and the like. They focus more on personal-social areas than knowledge on structural and social conditions. The overall theme in the answers is that more social and communicative knowledge and competence is needed.

## **2.6 MULTICULTURAL MUSIC EDUCATION**

Multicultural music education generally refers to the teaching of a broad spectrum of music cultures, primarily focusing on ethnocultural characteristics. The rationales for multicultural music education are many, and many of them are inspired by the larger definition of multiculturalism in education. Volk (1988) refers to the American context when she points at some of the most important arguments for multicultural music education, but they are general enough to apply to Scandinavia as well:

- Most countries have a multiplicity of cultures within the nation. Children should learn and respect music from these different cultures and also have access to them, to be able to study them if they choose to.
- The argument above is also used from a worldwide perspective. To study music is a way of learning to understand people, because of the nature of its subject matter.
- By studying others you learn about yourself.
- To study a foreign music culture will lead to bi- or multimusicality, the ability to function effectively in two or more musical cultures.
- To learn about many musics gives a wider palette of compositional and improvisational devices.

The philosophy of multiculturalism and multicultural music education has undergone changes through time. The first stage was assimilation, which meant that the minorities in the end should try to adapt the majority culture, or at least function in it. The next step was amalgamation, or the meltingpot, where it was thought that all cultures could make a beautiful mixed sauce, or salsa. The third and last step is a cry for a total reformation of the current educational system that would enable students to function in multicultural contexts. In the development of the multicultural programs at the Academy of Music in Malmö, both the idea of amalgamation and the last step, the cry for total reformation of the curriculum, have been in use.

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One of the most important advocates of multicultural music education is David Elliot, who suggests: 'If music consists in a diversity of music cultures, then music is inherently multicultural, then music education ought to be multicultural in essence' (Elliot, 1995, p. 207). Elliot believes that music, by its subject matter, has the potential to lead the educational profession in incorporating a multicultural approach in the classrooms. He identifies six different concepts of multicultural music education of which he rejects the first four as being either ethnocentric or not truly multicultural (Elliot, 1989).

1. *Assimilation* is rejected because of its concern with the cultivation of Western European 'good taste'.

2. *Amalgamation* is rejected because it deals only with a limited amount of ethnic music, often in the way it has been incorporated by Western composers.

3. *Open society* is rejected because of its tendency to neglect cultural heritage and musical traditions.

4. *Insular multiculturalism*, because it normally adds one or two cultures from the local community to the original curriculum, without changing it in any other way.

For David Elliot it is the remaining two concepts that come closest to his multicultural ideal, and he recommends the last one:

5. *Modified multiculturalism* includes several musics in the curriculum. The musics are frequently compared and contrasted in their approaches to musical elements, or roles in society, and are taught through the accepted teaching methodology of that culture.

6. *Dynamic multiculturalism* resembles modified multiculturalism, but musical concepts original to the culture replace a strictly Western aesthetic perspective.

There has been much debate on how to best – if at all – implement multicultural music teaching, both on a teacher training level and on a classroom level. Volk (1998) summarises the most critical arguments against different forms of multiculturalism like this:

- If culture is defined as something static there is a risk that a museum mentality sneaks into multicultural music education, if it simply means providing a broad, superficial coverage of many different cultures in a classroom format.
- Multicultural education will splinter the national feeling. Swedish music teachers might ask what will happen to 'the Swedish' if the children are forced to meet so many 'others'.
- Multicultural education is just a politically correct expedient. It has no or very little substance.
- Multicultural education reinforces the sense of distinctiveness rather than fostering mindfulness of the value of cultural diversity.
- It doesn't go far enough to break systems of oppression. There is a need for anti racist multiculturalism.

- There is not enough time for Western art music.
- Inauthentic presentations of other musics may confirm stereotypical ideas about those people.

The music educator Malcolm Floyd who has experience from teaching both in England and in Kenya adds to the critical list in his book *World Musics in Education* (1996). He warns of bad quality presentations of musical cultures, where, for example, a teacher does not have enough competence to teach. The music educator's central aim should be to enrich the students' understanding, not to evoke disapproval or confusion. Floyd argues that the teacher's job is to provide positive peak experiences, which should lead to understanding, in the form of 'respectful awareness' (Floyd, 1996, p. 40).

To reach this 'respectful awareness' teachers have to reflect on what their own competence entails. It is the teacher's duty to widen his or her own horizon by learning more about musical cultures, but there are also ways of teaching even in areas where one's own skills are limited. For example one can use local expertise found outside the school. The children should, in Floyd's ideal model, have a teacher who provides command of skills, musical challenges, authentic modes of expression, selected appropriate abilities and understanding.

It is not likely that one single school or teacher can provide all that is needed. Floyd recommends that schools or teachers specialise in order to give the needed peak experiences and that the schools and teachers share the competence between them, for example, by guest teaching.

The many changes in societies of today have forced music teachers all over the world to expand their teaching areas. Teachers used to teaching with Western art music as the basis for the curriculum are facing students who outside the school are exposed to a wider range of music than before. One reaction to this might be to defend the old structure, with the argument mentioned above that there is not enough time for the 'real culture' if too many others have to be included. Another reaction might be to include pop, rock and music from non-Western cultures - but using technical and aesthetic criteria from the Western tradition.

McPherson (1998) and Folkestad (2002), show how important it is to use criteria related to those who create and appreciate these forms. Very often the social fabric around music is ignored, which leads to serious misrepresentations. In the Sydney Olympics 2000 the images cabled over the world were filled with didgeridoo-playing Aborigines. In reality, however, only three of more than two hundred Aboriginal societies have a tradition of playing the didgeridoo. During the Olympics, however, very little concern was given to whether these groups wanted their tradition presented in this tokenistic way, and whether the didgeridoo used to identify Aboriginal culture was indeed correct.

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McPherson (1998) also argues that we cannot expand the repertoire in schools without acknowledging that many styles of ethnic and popular musics need to be dealt with in ways that are different from Western music. 'In my way of thinking there is no point in introducing Aboriginal music to Australian students unless we also make a genuine attempt to help them understand the traditions and values of Aboriginal culture' (p. 2).

The challenge for the music educator of today, according to McPherson, is to evolve a 'philosophy of action' that can help music to maintain its central place in the school curriculum. This, however, implies finding new ways of teaching, revisiting past practices, learning from other societies where music is practised and taught in ways that are quite different from our own (McPherson, 1998). Western art music can never, in McPherson's view, be more worthy of study than any other form of music. His view is that we should study both our own and other music cultures, based on a philosophy that music can communicate both within and between cultures.

### 2.7 RESEARCH QUESTION

The previous sections have pointed at the many dimensions of the horizon of the present study. Chapter 1 also gave a short introduction to the Gambian jali culture. In the following, the multifaceted background melts down to the final research question.

My work at the Malmö Academy of Music has in different ways, both practically and theoretically, evolved from my earliest fieldwork in the Ivory Coast. It has focused around oral music, multicultural music teacher training and Africa as an inspiration and as a data bank in a number of distinct ways. The two most important directions previously described may be called the 'Gambia path' and the 'multicultural music teacher's path' respectively.

Along the Gambia path the first component was to develop the Gambia course and it was in this effort that the first encounters with music traditions of the Gambia were made.

Path 2, 'the multicultural music teacher' involves the consequences at home. Societal changes in Sweden combined with inspiration from findings along the 'Gambia path' led logically to the need to develop new methods for music teacher education and the training of musicians with an immigrant background. It was also along this direction that the Malmö Academy of Music started the World Music School project.

In the initial phase of this study, I found it hard to separate the two paths because they are inextricably intertwined. Walking along the Gambia path brought into focus the following questions: What philosophy underpins jali Alagi Mbye's oral tradition of making and sharing music? Why is the impact of this philosophy on the returning

Gambia students so strong that it creates a new climate in the Malmö Academy of Music?

In contrast, walking along the 'multicultural path' resulted in the following questions: How can immigrant musicians function as music teachers in the Swedish schools? What tools (skills, knowledge and attitudes) does a Swedish music teacher need in order to work in a multicultural classroom?

Delving deeper into existing literature demonstrates that although quite a lot of research has been undertaken on the Mandinka culture (e.g. Charry, 2000), there is presently a dearth of information on Mandinka teaching methods and philosophies. Travelling, working and interviewing jali Alagi Mbye over the years also showed that he himself was the tool, or gave me the tools, needed to access these philosophies. And, at a deeper level, in order to understand what happens with the Gambia students, I need to understand what it is they meet. Consequently, the final decision was that the overarching research question that would provide the scaffolding for the present thesis had to be formulated along the 'Gambia path': What are the attitudes to music teaching and learning in the Gambia, and in what ways are the jali experiences of, and attitudes towards music and music education expressed?



## CHAPTER 3: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES

In order to understand the culture examined in the present study, it is necessary to highlight the Sunjata story and its connection to Mande music. This chapter describes important aspects of both the epic and the music. It also touches on the situation of music education in West Africa.

### 3.1 THE SUNJATA STORY

When Gambian masters are asked to answer complex questions they often lead back to the epic story of the hero Sunjata Keita. This epic is the very heart of the culture that I am focusing on, and therefore a tool for further analysis of the various aspects of what is being said and sung. The story of Sunjata Keita can be described as history, or even as literature or performance - these three aspects being equally important and valid, and with no sharp borders in between.

Before going into the story itself, there are some common terms and words that need to be defined. I will here use the terminology suggested by Ralph A. Austen, the editor of *In Search of Sunjata* (1999).

*Orature*: Oral literature, or even better, verbal art.

*Mande*: The entire population and the area where the Sunjata epic is spread, which includes Gambia, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Burkina Faso and close surroundings.

*Manden*: The historical centre of Mali, which includes northeastern Guinea Conakry (in its present form), to Bamako, the capital of present Mali.

*Maninka*: The language of Manden

*Mandinka*: People who trace themselves to military conquerors from Manden. Mandinka is also the name of Mande language spoken in the Gambia.

*Jali*: The indigenous term for 'bard' (earlier described in Chapter 1). Sometimes the term griot is used. The etymology of this term is not precisely known, it might be portuguese, arabic or even mande.

The orature of Sunjata is a key to the understanding of the relationship between power and authority in the Mande society. In marked contrast to the Western societies, Mande societies are not ruled by written legal structures, but with 'government by parable' (Johnson, 1999, p. 11). It is in

the lineage of royalty that we find the pinnacle of traditional authority, represented by old men, often so old that they are easy to manipulate; and here starts the Mande use of power reflected and propagated in the Sunjata orature.

The Mande caste society is a gerontocracy, where age decides authority. It is also strictly patrilineal. At the bottom level of the society are the slaves, called *jon*. At the top we find the Kings and the commoners, the free men, called *horon*. And in the middle the craftsmen, called *nyamakala*, where the *jali* is at the bottom, under the blacksmith. The interesting thing is that all these people rely on and need their occult power, the *nyama*.

In Mande cosmology, power is not perceived as a process, but rather as an entity that can be stockpiled. When enough is stockpiled it can enable the possessor to exercise social and political control over others, but only if he knows how and when to use this occult power, the *nyama*. *Nyama* is delivered from the mother, which guarantees that all mothers are highly respected and loved. *Nyama* is also related to the Muslim concept of *barakah*, which means grace loaded with power (Johnson, 1999).

Because of the many restrictions in the patrilineal system, large numbers are excluded from power. But, most importantly, a man of importance and power can rise to his position by completely circumventing the hierarchical structure. This, though, calls for a very dangerous and antisocial behaviour, where optimal use of *nyama* is necessary. The culture hero Sunjata Keita came to power by refusing to adapt to the system - thereby becoming the prime model for successful use of *nyama* (*ibid.*).

Cosmologically, the art of violating norms is expected to release vast amounts of *nyama* into the atmosphere. If the hero is strong enough he will gain control over the released power and thus increase his stockpile of power. If he is not strong enough - if his already accumulated *nyama* is not enough - he will be destroyed by the power he has released. It is believed that a child with a destiny to be a leader must be held back by the elders not to be destroyed by his own power before the right time has come.

Understanding this heroic behaviour is necessary for the understanding of how power and authority is perceived today in the Gambia and other parts of the Mande region. In the nuclear polygamy family there is much rivalry between the father's children, called *fadenya*, and great affection between the mother's children, called *badenya*. In the Sunjata orature this is expressed in the struggle between Sunjata, with the help of his full siblings, and his half-brothers.

Sunjata's father and mother also represent *fadenya* and *badenya* in themselves. The father, *Naré Magan* (the handsome), is the youngest son of *Bilal*, a black slave who is thought to be the second convert to Islam. He has enough occult power to reach the King's position, in spite of his two elder brothers. This episode in the Sunjata orature establishes Sunjata's inheritance of *barakah*, the Muslim concept of grace laden with

occult power, which is the equivalent to the local concept of nyama. The mother, Sugulun of the Warts, is the ugliest woman in her village, and she is brought to Naré Magan by the hunters who kill the magic buffalo. This animal is the transformation of the local ruler's disgruntled aunt. Both the buffalo and Sugulun are filled with nyama, and by the marriage between Naré Magan and Sugulun, Sunjata is destined to inherit a vast stockpile of occult powers, through male and female lines, from Muslim and local sources (ibid.).

The persistent returns to the Sunjata story when talking with jali Alagi Mbye and other oral historians and musicians of Gambia today is a perfect illustration of how orature, in contrast to written literature, is not frozen in time and space. It is constantly reshaped to its contemporary period.

Whatever the original function, in the Mande world of today these poems reflect contemporary concerns and influence modern audiences. The bard, not being a part of the authority structure, is licensed to comment on it and to act as a mediator between past and present. He is, at the same time, the conservative and the radical. He acts as 'oral historian' and 'keeper of the traditional worldview' a sort of oral archive. But he may also attempt to stir lazy youths into action, because along the fadenya axis, however dangerous to the individual and to the stability of society, is an important part of the tradition the bard is protecting and preserving. At the center of that fadenya and badenya action is the struggle between the authority structure of the group status quo and the search for power by the individual seeking to make a name for himself both in the oral annals of the bard, and in the modern world of realpolitik. (Johnson, 1999, p. 21)

The old kingdom of Mali was occupied by the Suso King Sumanguru (from present Guinea Conakry) and the people were suffering under his oppression. In 1235 Sumanguru was defeated by Sunjata, who then became the first hero of Manden. The story about Sunjata has been preserved in oral tradition, and also transcribed in many versions, the most used one being distilled from the words of jali Mamodou Kouyate by D.T. Niane (2000), of which the first English version was printed in 1965.

The skeleton of the Sunjata story is quite simple, and can even be told as a fairy-tale for children. In fact this has also been done, by David Wisniewski (1992), who wrote the beautifully illustrated children's book *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali*.

In summary, the story is as follows:

One day, there came two hunters to visit the king Naré Magan, ruler of Mali. Between them the king could see a young maiden, hunchbacked,

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ugly and full of warts. Such a visit had been foretold... The hunters told the king that this was a gift from the King of Do, where the hunters had conquered a terrible buffalo who ravaged the countryside. Sogolon Kedjou, the ugly bride, was said to possess the very spirit of the buffalo.

The king's jali whispered to him that of such spirits Kings are born. This child would be the son of the lion and the buffalo, mighty indeed. Naré Magan followed the advice from his jali, and made Sogolon his wife. When Sogolon gave birth to a boy, the King's first wife was furious. This was a terrible threat to her son who was waiting to take over the throne. She asked all the best witches to help her destroy and kill this child.

In the beginning she was successful. At the age of three Sundiata could neither talk nor walk, and people around the court started to ridicule him and his mother. For seven years Sogolon tried in vain to cure him. But Naré Magan's jali was not worried. He assured the King that Sundiata would grow in his time. When the King was about to die, he gave the son of the jali to Sundiata. With this jali, Balla Fasséké, Sundiata's destiny would be fulfilled. Sundiata was prepared to rule, but when the father died, it was the son of the first wife who took the throne. Sogolon was told that it would be better to have a walking boy than a crawling lion. Sundiata was so furious when he heard this, that he asked his jali to fetch an iron rod for him and pulled himself to his feet. The jali started singing: 'The lion is walking!'

Sassouma Bérété, the first wife, now called on all the witches once again to help her, but Sundiata could not be hurt, since his heart was full of kindness. Sassouma continued her efforts to stop Sundiata's power, and sent away his jali to the court of Suso, where the evil King Sumanguru ruled. Sumanguru liked Balla Fasséké's singing so much that he decided to keep him forever. At this point, Sogolon understood that she had to leave Mali with all her children, to save them from Sassouma's witchcraft. This is when Sundiata's exile started.

During seven years Sundiata grew in mind and spirit, always thinking of his jali. The exile ended at Mema where the King taught Sundiata the ways of war and government. Impressed by his courage he treated him as his own son.

One day, messengers from Sundiata's homeland came to Mema to beg for help. Sumanguru had invaded Mali, the king and his mother fled, and the people had consulted the seers who said that only Sundiata could save Mali. The King of Mema gave him half of his army, and more troops were gathered on the way. The two armies clashed on the plain of Kirini. While the battle raged, Sundiata searched for Sumanguru. On his way he found the jali, Balla, who had pretended allegiance with the sorcerer, the King. This way he knew his weakness and could help Sundiata to victory. Using an arrow tipped with the spur of a white rooster, Sundiata drew his bow.

The arrow only cut through Sumanguru's cape, but Sumanguru was so frightened at the sight of the spur that he fled into a dark cave, where he

became one with the stone. Sundiata could return in glory and start the golden era of Manden.

During the golden era, the capital Timbuktu had three universities. The King who succeeded Sunjata, Mansa Musa, was a gifted leader and continued to expand Mali. It is told that on his pilgrimage to Kairo he carried so much gold, that the currency in Kairo had to be devaluated. The golden era lasted until approximately 1500, when Songhai took over power (Wisniewski, 1992).

According to the myth there was only one house still standing after the conflict in 1235, and this was the sanctuary called Kamabolon in the town of Kangaba, close to the village Kela. During the re-roofing ceremony made every seven years (the next will be in 2004), the authoritative version of the Sunjata epic is recited in the Kamabolon by the Diabate jali family. The 'master of the word' is chosen among the adult Diabate and appointed for life. The official version is forbidden to record, (the recordings that exist of the Sunjata orature are made at other occasions) and the audience is kept at a distance of 20 metres, which makes most of it inaudible (Jansen, 1998). Still all of it is widely known and spread through oral transmission, and every jali should at some point in his career visit Kela, which is a centre of knowledge. For jali Alagi Mbye this pilgrimage is still a dream.

Even if he has still not visited the Kamabolon, he knows the Sunjata story well enough to be the owner of the *mundiato*, the wooden stick, that is handed down from the master to the apprentice as a kind of doctoral exam. And he expects all his audiences to understand his references to Sunjata. Of course this is problematic when performing abroad. Alagi Mbye's grandfather even warned him before his first journey outside Africa. 'Who are you going to sing for?' (see Chapter 5.3.1).

### **3.2 MANDE MUSIC**

This section will deal with the concept of *jaliya* – what a jali does. The music that a jali performs, carries, more than other forms, the whole society by virtue of its functions and symbolic value. Forms that will not be described here are music related to hunter societies, drumming related to agricultural and recreational events and modern urban groups.

Mande societies are marked by a class of hereditary professional artisans, called *nyamakala*. Above them, in the social pyramid are the *horon*, the freeborn, and under them the *jon*, slaves. The hierarchy between the different *nyamakala* varies from region to region, but in Gambia it is:

*numu*, blacksmiths,  
*karanke*, leatherworkers and potters,  
*jali*, musical-verbal artisans and,  
*fina*, orators, experts in the Koran.

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It might appear as if jalis have a low social ranking, and many foreign observers have given them almost the status of beggars. This is probably due to the way a jali earns his living: by praising the *horon*. When a member of the noble families listens to a praise-song, it is his duty to give as much as he can to the jali. This is not looked upon as payment, but rather an obligation, which also has a very deep function of maintaining the balance in society.

What the *horon*, or the *patron*, does when he gives money, clothes, food, cars or houses to his jali is similar to paying for the nations libraries, museums and universities. But under this level there is also a more profound relationship between the men of power, the rulers, and the jalis. Neither can exist without the other.

The jalis have by birth the exclusive right to play instruments that others are not allowed to touch. They also have by birth the protection against its consequences: A freeman, or *horon*, might do the art of a jali, but as he does not have the powers required to perform - the *dalilu* - he might be destroyed by the dangerous forces, the *nyama*, that is released. The jalis have some of the needed *dalilu* from birth, but can also get extra amount of *dalilu* through fetishes and talismans, often made by other *nyamakala*.

When a jali performs, he releases a great deal of *nyama*. If it is in a praise-song, the person's energy to act is stimulated. This energy must be controlled in order not to be destructive, and the way to control it is by providing a sacrifice to the jali. The jali himself has protection against the *nyama* his music releases. The Sunjata story shows how powerful this *nyama* can be: if it was not for Sunjata's jali, he would not become the hero. The whole identity of the rulers is defined and decided by the jalis. Nothing can be worse for an African than the bad word from a jali. Especially if the jali is a *ngara*, a master of words.

To be called a *ngara* by one's peers is one of the greatest signs of respect and aspiration of all jalis. The *ngara*, whose field of play is speech and music, has a complement in the *ngana*, a hero whose field of play is action. The complementary relationship between speech and action – between the *ngara* and the *ngana* – and the similar social forces that motivate them are fundamental aspects of Maninka social and creative thought and practice. (Charry, 2000, p. 54)

Of prime importance for the understanding of Mandinka societies and their musicians is also the relationship between *fadenya*, competition with the paternal lineage to distinguish oneself, and *badenya*, obligations to the family and the community, ruled by the maternal lineage.

*Fadenya* can also be described as the motivating force of competitive behaviour (the one motivating jali Alagi Mbye to start Maali's Music School), and *badenya* is its contrast, the integrating force that encourages submission to authority and cooperation (the one bringing jali Alagi

Mbye to the Kanuteh brothers to ask for authorisation). The conflict between fadenya and badenya is also reflected in the relationship between *so*, the home, which stands for security, and *wula*, the bush, which stands for innovation and creativity.

For Alagi Mbye the *wula* is represented in his many travels to *tubabodo*, the white man's country.

Jaliya in itself is not for dancing. It is primarily there to inspire the listeners to act. In many aspects jaliya is classic, in the same way as we talk about Western classical music. Jaliya has its canon, its great masters, its aesthetics and centres of knowledge.

There are three different ways of making jaliya, normally the jalis specialise in one or two of them:

*Kuma*: speech

*Donkili*: singing

*Kosiri*: playing an instrument.

Female jalis, *jali muso*, are normally masters of *kuma* and *donkili*, while the men master *kosiri* and maybe *kuma* or *donkili*. By marriage the jaliya becomes full and complete. My observations from jali families are that there is no difference in status between the two complementary parts. Jali musos can have a very high reputation, and if men sing well it is said that they can sing 'like a woman'.

*Donkili* requires ability to be *inside* the music; *kuma*, on the other hand, requires historical knowledge. However, a good singer is judged not by the beauty of the voice, but by the use of words. Alagi Mbye is a master of *kosiri*, while his wife Mariama Saho makes their jaliya perfect by her brave *kuma* and powerful *donkili*.

The origin of the jali is a matter of discussion among the jalis. Some claim that the first jali was Mohammed's companion Surakata. Others claim that the origin was Gnankowan Duwa, the jali of Sunjata's father, who gave his son, Bala Faseke Kouyate, to Sunjata. Some claim that Surakata and Gnankowan are the same person, disregarding the missing centuries. What is important in the oral versions seems to be the connection with both Muslim and local heroes. One story tells that the first jali was one of the two hunter brothers who killed the buffalo. The brave one who killed the buffalo was praised with the words 'Brother, if you were a jali, you could not be refused'. The words in mandinka for 'not be refused' sound like 'diabate', thus being the origin of the jali family name Diabate. The highest ranking jali family is Kouyate, claiming their origin from Bala Faseke Kouyate, the jali of Sunjata.

The origin of the kora is also much discussed. Oral tradition says that it originated with the Kabu empire, covering present Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. It was Sunjata's general Tiramakan Traore who led the migration westwards to found the Kabu, and the capital Kansala. The first jali to play the kora, Jali Madi Wuleng learnt the art from a jinn according to oral history. It was Jali Madi Wuleng who composed the song Kuruntu

Kelefa about the big hero Kelefa Sane. The earliest written reference is from Mungo Park in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the kora was probably not spread outside the Kabu area until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The widespread jali song Chedo tells about the fall of Kansala in 1865, when Janke Wali, the last king was defeated by the fula (Charry, 2000).

### 3.3 MUSIC EDUCATION IN WEST AFRICA

Jali Alagi Mbye always uses hard or ironic words when describing the situation in the Gambian schools: 'It's only bah, bah, black sheep and other songs we have learnt from the colonisation'. The highest education available in Gambia is the teacher training at the Gambia College. Music is one of the subjects, but there is no formal music teacher training at the tertiary level. The University building is under construction, and Gambia has requested international help to start the courses. Therefore, this section on formal music education uses literature on Ghana, the most advanced country in West Africa in this field.

Even if there was a formal music teacher training in the Gambia, the content would most probably be built on European models, and adapted to the British exam system, as is the case in other former British colonies. The African music teacher and researcher Nicholas Kofie (1995) comments on this, after having worked with music education in many African countries:

It seems there is no co-ordination between what is taught at the extreme ends of music education, vis-a-vis the musical aspiration of society at large (p. 1)...In many African universities, therefore, music is still a research department in African studies. Unfortunately the research findings in African music are yet to influence the teaching of theory and performance in music departments. In fact, it looks like most African teachers and students have forgotten what research into African music is meant to lead to, or else they seem not to be aware of the objectives of such research findings. (p. 5)

In Ghana the situation is different, thanks to Emeritus Professor Kwabena Nketia, founder of the International Centre for African Music and Dance at the University of Ghana, Legon, and a prominent researcher on African music. Due to his strong efforts and many international contacts, the music department at the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana has been quite successful in placing music on the national agenda (Flolu, 1994). But still there are many questions left unanswered. As Flolu (1994) asserts:

It is the imbalance between the oral traditional system and formal education's reliance on reading and writing that African educators have been grappling with. (p. 30)

Another complicating factor is the fight against the imaginary enemy of Western classical music theory. This fight has been going on in many African countries since the liberation. James Flolu argues in his *Retuning Music Education in Ghana* that it is a mistake to reduce music to be only a cultural symbol, as has often been the case when introducing traditional Ghanaian music in the schools. He asks for ethno music-education, which in his version would maximise the use of locally available resources, but he does not want to exclude music or methods that are not 'purely African'. The crucial question is, he says, whether music in Ghana can be based on purely African resources, 'without necessarily continuing to be western-prototypical and still share uniformity with the education systems of other countries? If not, why? If yes, how?' (Flolu, 1994, p.110).

African education, he says, is practical, aural-oral and informal. This practical orality is still vigorous and cannot simply be dismissed. When it comes to music education in Africa, in most societies people are not educated in music. It is the music itself that is the basis for education of the members of a community – as in the jali-system of the Gambia.

Formal education exists, like in the circumcision rites that may last from a few days to a couple of months. It also exists in the formal apprenticeship, which is practised among artisans, musicians and religious leaders. In Ghana there is a proverb saying 'To go back to fetch what you have forgotten is not stealing and is no shame either' (Flolu, 1994, p. 30).

This proverb has been used in official politics to inspire the use of local methods and resources in schools. In other areas in society the modern western or Christian influences are mixed with local traditions. For example in the hospitals, modern medicine is accompanied by local herbal medicines. And in some Christian churches polygamy is accepted.

In the 1960's the educational systems in Ghana were restructured, and since then there has been a lively debate on the role of music and music education. The discussions have, according to Flolu, only widened the gap between African music and Western classical music in schools. 'In fact, the absence of a truly musical music education programme is at the root of the present dilemma, and this is the challenge' (Flolu, 1994, p. 110). The situation in Ghana is not exclusively Ghanaian. It is shared all over the continent, and therefore it is one of the aims of the International Centre for African Music and Dance to 'foster an intellectual tradition of musicology and dance studies in Africa that respond to creative, educational and development needs as well as the challenge of international scholarship' (Nketia, 1992).



## CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

By its nature, interdisciplinary work needs to draw on theoretical perspectives that reflect the complexity of this type of research. This is especially true of the present study. Drawing on literature in ethnomusicology, general education, anthropology, ethnology and music education research, this chapter deals with the main references that are relevant to the topical themes. It also provides the points of departure for the theoretical framework of the study. The different parts of the chapter focus on 'Ethnomusicology and music education research', 'Literacy and orality' and 'Other kinds of knowing'.

### 4.1 ETHNOMUSICOLOGY AND MUSIC EDUCATION RESEARCH

Farrell (2003) suggests that in order to observe music education from an ethnomusicological viewpoint there are certain perspectives required: (a) a cross-cultural approach to teaching materials, and (b) a broader definition of the term 'music education', including all of the world's music learning in formal and informal settings. He continues by stating that although ethnomusicology may appear to the outsider as the study of strangely exotic musical systems, it is primarily the study of music in culture and as culture. As such, it is often the detailed study of music learning, or to put it another way, of music education in the broadest sense of the term.

According to Nettl, one of the most prominent authors in the field, ethnomusicology's most important contribution is that it helps the process of intercultural understanding through music (Nettl, Solbu & Lundqvist, 1998). To Nettl, being a competent ethnomusicologist implies that the researcher has the necessary skill, knowledge and understanding of the relevant techniques for undertaking fieldwork, which in most cases comes as a result of in-depth training in a foreign culture's music. He also believes that the inner conflict that an ethnomusicologist learns to live with involves the dilemma of being a scientist as opposed to being an artist. This training is an appropriate tool for examining the 'emic', or the insider perspective of other cultures. To work in the field is a kind of art demanding certain skills such as empathy, patience, linguistic habit, body language and creative communication.

### 4.1.1 EMIC AND ETIC/ THE INSIDER AND THE OUTSIDER

The concepts of ‘emics’ and ‘etics’ have been developed and debated in anthropology for many years. For example, Pike, Harris and Headland published their landmark book entitled *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate* in 1990. This book defines the background of the concepts and describes how they have been used. Briefly, the ‘emic’ and the ‘etic’ represent two contrasting descriptions of a phenomenon. The ‘etic’ description is the outsider’s or the researcher’s perspective, which assumes concepts, categories and discourses from the researcher’s own culture. The ‘emic’ description, on the other hand, is the one given by the members of a culture themselves. The categories, concepts and discourses might not at all be the same, or even mutually understandable.

The problems surrounding the researcher as an insider or an outsider are also inherent in ethnomusicological research. In 1993, there was a special panel on the insider/outsider perspective at the *Thirty Second Conference of the International Council for Traditional Music*. One of the conclusions from this panel was that no one could be a total insider or outsider, from either the scholarly or a personal viewpoint. For example, the culture that has shaped the researcher’s way of thinking, cannot simply be substituted with the ‘emic’ way of thinking, no matter how long time the researcher has spent trying to become ‘the other’.

The insider, on the other hand, obtains new ideas and influences at the same moment as the meeting with the ‘outsider’ takes place. The ethnomusicologist Marcia Herndon therefore asks for a careful use of these clearly divergent categories and she introduces the headings ‘knowing our limits’ and ‘limiting our knowing’. In the same discussion Gerald Florian Messner claims that the insider/outsider debate still reflects a Western way of thinking. He recommends an integrative approach where the insider and the outsider are viewed as two complementary categories rather than being in opposition (Baumann, 1993).

In the present study there is a constant reference to the ‘emic/etic’ and the ‘insider/outsider’ perspectives respectively. The relationship between the two pairs of concepts can be illustrated by Figure 1:

	emic	etic
Analytical categories		
Positions	insider	outsider

Figure 1: Relationship of concepts

As Herndon (1993) emphasises, ‘the outsider can learn to *act* like an insider’, and ‘the insider can learn to *analyse* like an outsider’ (p.66). This discussion is continued in Chapter 5.

In his more recent texts, Nettl (1998) goes deeper into some of the approaches and beliefs of ethnomusicologists according to the following issues, starting with a continuation of the above discussion:

*Relativism* (emic - etic): The relativistic approach implies that each musical culture is measured and described in its own terms and in its own cultural context. To do this the researcher must strive to distinguish between two approaches: the insider and the outsider. In anthropology and ethnomusicology these are often called 'emic' and 'etic', as the previous discussion has shown, and during the years there has been a long debate on how to apply these concepts. Nettl (1998) cites evidence showing that it is virtually impossible to find the pure emic or etic description (Baumann, 1993), but that it is very important for the analysis to be aware of the vantage point and identity of the observer.

*Comparative*: The comparative approach does not mean that one culture is compared to another in order to make value judgements about which may be the better one. Rather, it simply means that knowing something about how your own music is structured and integrated into the culture, this can be used in order to gain additional insight into other musics and their cultures, and in doing so you gradually widen your own perspective.

*Music in culture*: Music as a cultural phenomenon is much more than mere sounds. Rather, it can be understood on three levels: sound, behaviour (events, lessons, audience behaviour, relationships between musicians) and concepts (ideas and beliefs about music).

*Field experience*: Undertaking fieldwork in another culture is an important means of broadening your understanding of both your own musical culture and contemporary music of the world. Through fieldwork, researchers come to realise that their own contribution to the global body of knowledge might not be so substantial. Most often one can only learn parts of what the members of the society already know. The contribution lies – again – in that it may help the process of intercultural understanding through music.

*All of the world's music*: Early ethnomusicologists were deeply rooted in concepts of cultural evolution, classical music and classical music theory, and they tended to establish contact with 'other' musics through missionaries. Tribal music was therefore seen as something constant, non-changing, while Western music was viewed as more substantial as well and continually evolving and developing. However, this early view no longer has any credible basis. Allan Merriam's (1964) model of music as sound, concept and behaviour, each capable of changing independently of the other, was one of the most important initial steps toward the recognition of Western music as a system that is not unique. Now, ethnomusicologists tend to believe that different musics simply represent different systems, and that they have enough in common to be treated as a unit.

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'Ethnomusicology is *not* the study of ethnic musics. Indeed, all musics are 'ethnic' in the sense that for each music, each style, repertory or genre, there is a group of people who identify themselves with it and consider it their own' (Nettl, 1998, p. 24).

*Pure and mixed:* Many concepts have been developed in the studies of how entities of musics change and interact. Syncretism was used to explain the Afro-American perspective in terms of how the confluence of similar or compatible culture traits create new, mixed forms. With syncretism one can approximately measure the degree of compatibility between musics. Other concepts in use are modernisation, westernisation and urbanisation. In a process of modernisation a music might be moved towards the Western system, without abandoning central and essential traits in the musical culture. Westernisation on the other hand, implies that central values are changed. Urbanisation in itself is not a result of westernisation, as cities have existed in non-Western cultures for centuries. But the kind of rapid urbanisation now taking place is associated with the introduction of Western technology, which affects the culture (Nettl, 1985).

*Transmission, teaching and learning:* Most of the world's music is taught and learned 'by ear', according to an oral method of transmission. However, the Western world is an exception with its long tradition of specialisation and emphasis on recreating music from a common, standardised notation by means of the printed score. The way a music is transmitted constitutes an important part of its essence and different methods for transmission often lead to very different results. It is therefore important for music teachers to provide their students with a wide range of different musics, which recognises and highlights the different ways in which these musics are transmitted. Importantly, in order to understand a foreign music culture a listener must also have some concept of how it has been transmitted.

*Continuity and change:* In recent years many ethnomusicologists have studied music in change, questioning the concept of pure, in terms of 'original' and 'authentic', and stressing that all musical cultures are constantly evolving and mixing.

### 4.1.2 CULTURE, IDENTITY AND WORLD MUSIC

Ethnomusicologists have put considerable effort into showing the potential influence and power of how music is used in society. The underlying assumption is that culture and identity are intertwined and the most important organising concepts in modern societies (Garfias (1985); Lundberg & Ronström (2000); Merriam (1964); Nettl (1980); Volk (1998)). Consequently, it is important for the members of a society to produce identity and differences between 'us' and 'them'. Crucial in identity production is style and taste, and the expressive forms that

emphasise style in a useful way: music, like food and clothing, is one of these expressive forms.

In a recent ethnomusicological research project at the Royal Academy of music in Stockholm, Sweden, it is claimed that music is both the object and the means; it is that which is going to be explained and at the same time it is that which explains (Lundberg et al., 2000).

The theoretical assumptions, which underpin this project, are:

- That there is a strong connection between music and the construction of the multicultural Sweden; and
- In the Swedish society there is an ongoing process of re-stratifying from groups based on social affinities (relatives) to groups based on cultural affinities (music, sports, opinions). Analyses of differences in the society are no longer based on social class but on cultural understanding (Lundberg et al, 2000).

Cultural identity, according to the authors, is not an answer to the question 'who are we?', but rather the complex question 'where, when and how are we?'. The competence needed to express this second question is manifested in what is called 'ego-screaming' (Lundberg et al, 2000). Swedish youngsters might well choose to play West-African drums and plait their hair as a way of 'ego-screaming' identity.

One of the disturbing traits in the Swedish multicultural discourse is the confusion of concepts. There is a collision between a liberal tradition of thoughts about pluralism (i.e., that it is good for the individual) and the principle of pluralism as it is expressed in the anthropological concept of culture (i.e., pluralism of cultures). Various governmental documents (e.g., 'Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden - från invandrapolitik till integrationspolitik' (1997) make this confusion explicit.

'Multicultural' has in many contexts been used as a synonym to 'multi-ethnic', which the above-mentioned documents explicitly avoid. It is stressed that 'multicultural' is a question for society, which includes more dimensions than the ethnic. In the political debate 'multicultural' is often given a normative meaning, while researchers tend to discuss the concept of 'multicultural' more descriptively. Therefore, the Swedish government has now chosen to abandon the 'multicultural' concept in favour of 'cultural diversity'. Despite this, even the concept 'cultural diversity' is used according to the discourse of 'multicultural'. There are at least two ways of using 'diversity'. The first is based on the liberal tradition, with the individual in focus. In this sense, the assumption is that the aim is freedom for the individual to choose - the more the better. A common metaphor is the botanical garden full of different species, but still one. In practice though, no weeds are allowed.

The second way of applying 'diversity' is based on the socialistic, multicultural discourse with roots in the USA of the 1960's. Here, the group is in focus, and the aim is the group's rights for cultural roots and

visibility. A common metaphor for this discourse is the mosaic, where society and cultural life are regarded as differentiated into separate groups, with each group being included in society, but still exclusively on their own. In practice, though, ethnic activists and purists guard the parts of the mosaic, which creates hermetic walls around ethnic territories (Lundberg et al., 2000).

Fock (1997) touched on the same issues when she analysed a Danish report on multicultural Denmark. She notes that the writers of the report associated World Music with multiculturalism, immigrants and youngsters; World Music being the catalyst and marker of globalisation. She claims that World Music became the musical equivalent of the political illusion of globalisation in the eighties: 'We romanticised the primitive and authentic cultures of the world - possibly with a Western touch - to make them acceptable. We created a distinction between 'us' and 'the others' (Fock, 1997, p. 57). Her study on immigrant youngsters in Denmark showed that when they are constantly associated with the so-called multicultural society, they become culturalised and ethnicised and finally disrespected. She concludes:

The musical expression of the political globalisation is one of fragments and cultural hierarchies, covered behind an illusion of universal interest. We easily exclude factual musicological knowledge, based on equivalent (but diverse) complexity, in order to stress the difference between 'us' and 'them'. We don't meet the music of the immigrants where it is, but where we are, hiding behind walls of expectations and cultural self-sufficiency. (Fock, 1997, p. 64)

#### 4.1.3 COMPLEXITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Music is an important part of our identity. The potential that music could be used as a symbol, a marker of identity, makes it suitable to express and maintain differences as well as similarities. The relation between the symbol and the symbolised rests on a collective interpretation of the meaning. However, the connection between the symbol and the symbolised is made by the individual, a fact that sometimes leads to conflicts about the ownership of the identity marker (Lundberg, 2001).

For example, whose music is jali Alagi Mbye playing? The music of the Gambia, or the music of the jali community? Could his music be used in the tourist industry in the Gambia, or is this contradictory to a jali's function in society?

Music, and certainly folk or traditional music, is an extreme marker of identity. The reason for this extreme position is that it is a part of our presumptions on collective expressions. Music is used as a collective marker of identity and each group is supposed to have its own specific

way of expressing its culture. Africans, for example, are expected to drum and dance to express themselves.

Apart from the individual's perspective there is another perspective. Because of the availability of the world's musics, music can be freed from the cultural context and musicians are allowed to choose among styles and forms. There is a clear difference between experienced and ascribed identity. Most musicians play the music they want to play, regardless of ethnic belonging (Lundberg, 2001). Sometimes this creates a collision between expectations on the relationship between the musician and the music and the actual relationship. Is Alagi Mbye, for example, still a jali when he plays for a Western audience, together with Western musicians?

How the relationship between the individual and the culture is described and interpreted also depends on whether culture is seen as a homogeneous unity or as a complex set of variations. Hannerz, (1992) stresses that culture is complex in itself. To him, culture is a question of meaning; this meaning is created by human beings and this meaning also creates human beings in the sense that it makes them belong to a society. Culture, in Hannerz's description, has two aspects:

- All the forms (for example music) by which meaning can be transferred to others.
- The cognitive patterns that are required to interpret the above forms as meaningful.

His metaphor to paint the relationship between these two aspects is the river. Culture is the constant flow between the external forms and the internal cognitive patterns. Like a river, culture is sustainable, it has a form, but still it is not possible to jump into the same river twice.

Hannerz's (1992) point is that the flow of culture does not reach everyone, everywhere, in the same way. Therefore, he claims, an analysis of a culture needs to involve three dimensions: a) the cognitive patterns (i.e. ideas and ways of thinking); b) forms of externalisation (i.e. ways of making ideas external) and c) social distribution (i.e. how and to what extent ideas and forms are spread over a population).

The above implies that cultural analyses need a sociology:

Whenever a culture is understood to be a collective phenomenon, it needs a sociology. When the sociology is left implicit, the danger is greater that it is a weak sociology. (p. 10)

The concept that Hannerz uses to connect culture to social structure is 'culturality' (p. 43) that can be measured in 'dissemination' and 'range'. The more spread and sustainable a form is, the more cultural it is.

Another concept that adds to the understanding of 'culturality' is 'perspective'. With perspective Hannerz understands one individual's personal part of the culture. As individuals we understand meaning from our position in the social structure. The perspective on the individual

level is constantly created as a result of the tension between culture and social structure. There is never a given, ready-made consensus between situational experiences and available meanings. Perspective serves as the individuals' tool to organise the meaning of forms that they meet. Thereby, perspective also constitutes a biographic structure.

Individual perspectives, however, are not only individual horizons, they are also tools to deal with the perspectives of other individuals: 'perspectives are perspectives toward perspectives' (p. 67).

Hannerz criticises the assumption that people or individuals are exchangeable, that they are identical members of a culture, ethnic group or nation. This assumption can be expressed as a formula: 'I know, and I know that everybody else knows, and I know that everybody else knows that everybody else knows' (p. 68). He suggests a number of other formulas that express what some, but not all, share. For the present study some of the more relevant are 'He knows more about this than I do' or 'I believe you know more about this than I do, and I believe you know that you do' (p. 68).

In ethnomusicological research there has been a clear change of focus from the early pioneers who studied 'das Volk', to the present interest in individual musicians. In the Nordic countries most ethnomusicological studies are found within the genre of folk music, which has also influenced the discussion on pros and cons of this shift of focus. Lundberg and Ternhag (2000) recognize the following three advantages of research having its focus on the individual musicians:

1. The process of learning: social interplay is crucial in musical learning. It might involve family members, friends or masters. 'But without focus upon the musician himself/herself, all descriptions of this complex process will be inexplicable' (p. 15)
2. The creating process: historically, collectors of folk music rejected tunes that were composed by the musician as they hunted for the genuine tunes, composed by 'das Volk'. In reality, the making of music has been open to everyone. However, Lundberg and Ternhag emphasise that there is a risk of ethnocentric judgement when using terminology from Western literate music like 'to compose' and 'to write music'.
3. The shaping of a repertory: when studying individual musicians this perspective can be clarified by asking questions like 'What does a repertory really consist of? Is it possible to define? And who is to define it, the musician or the scholar?' (p. 16)

As shown above there are many advantages of focusing on the individual. But, of course, there are also problems. Lundberg and Ternhag (2000) mention the following: representativity, limited contexts, and the integrity of the study-object.

When it comes to representativity they claim that:

Further on, one should realize that the chosen musicians always are exceptional persons. They are certainly no middle men or women, but interesting because they differ from these. With this insight all discussions about representativity will disappear from the agenda. The persons in question represent possibly their own sort, which is found all over the world. (p. 17)

The first part of this chapter has highlighted the following issues: Ethnomusicology contributes to the field of music education research by including broader issues such as intercultural understanding through music and by introducing the concepts of 'emic' and 'etic'. There is also an underlying assumption that music reflects the values of the society. Finally, culture and identity are described as intertwined and together being the most important organising concepts in modern societies.

## **4.2 LITERACY AND ORALITY**

The music in focus of this study belongs to an oral tradition, and thereby some remarks on literacy and orality cannot be avoided. Finnegan (1989) is well known for her mapping of the musical life in a small English town. That study was built on many years of research and fieldwork in different cultures focusing on literal versus oral culture. Even though none of her studies concentrates on music education, her arguments around different aspects of orality are central, especially for those who acknowledge the consequences of a multicultural society.

The book *Literacy & Orality* is a condensed version of seminars and articles from 1969 to 1984. In this book, Finnegan touches on communication and technology, the meaning of literature in non-literate cultures, oral composition and oral literature, co-existence of orality and literacy – referring to fieldworks in Sierra Leone and the Pacific Islands. The last chapter on transmission in oral and written traditions is a conclusion of all the above themes, under the heading 'transmission'. Learning in Finnegan's terminology is a sub-division of transmission. Transmission in oral and literal traditions is, together with the associated concepts orality and literacy, not so easy to give a clear and unambiguous definition. The concepts hold both contradictions and ambiguity. Accordingly, Finnegan states:

- Most of the most common associations to orality and literacy have to be re-evaluated,
- There are, after all, recurrent patterns for transmission, and these can be identified, even if on a modest scale.

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The most common way of describing orality and literacy is as polar typologies. This model shows important elements in 'pure' oral or literal cultures. The aim is to give a clearer understanding of 'the normal' in the respective culture. In a polar model, oral transmission exists in cultures that:

- lack writing;
- lack commerce and transport systems; and
- rest on traditional and common norms

According to the same model, literal transmission exists in cultures that:

- have writing and printing;
- have science; and
- have urban and bureaucratic systems

This type of comparative framework is no longer valid, but still used in a concealed and perhaps unconscious form. The advantage of this model, according to Finnegan, is that ethnocentric judgements can be avoided, as each culture is evaluated in its own context. She refers to descriptions of Yugoslavian oral poetry (Lord, 1968), which would have been impossible if they were regarded as literal texts. To use ideal types is a classical procedure, but in the case of literacy versus orality it leads to many pitfalls. How useful is it when in reality most cultures do not fit into the model? The mixture of orality and literacy is well documented. It is very difficult to find 'pure' types of societies. It is the mixture, rather than the 'pure' type that is the available reality.

For example, it is evident that an emphasis on individualism, success and secularisation can exist even in non-industrialised cultures, like the Kapauku Papuans in New Guinea and the Ibo in Nigeria. And the Yoruba in Nigeria show that big scale urbanisation can be developed without industrialisation and literacy.

It is true that differing cultures lay different emphasis on, say, written learning and that specific uses of oral media vary at different times and places – but this is something that demands detailed investigation rather than defining out of existence. (Finnegan, 1988, p. 142)

Finnegan strongly opposes the opinion that new media, when they are established, will force the old media out. This opinion, the technological determinism, has been presented by McLuhan (1962) and Ong (1982). For example, Kirk, referring to Parry's and Lord's research of traditional poetry in Yugoslavia in the 1930s, argues that literacy is a threat to creativity: '...the acquisition of writing invariably destroys the powers of an oral poet' (Kirk, 1965, p. 22).

Even if Lord's analysis of the Yugoslavian case is valid, there is no proof that this is universal. On the contrary, it is easy to find examples where literacy and orality exist side by side within the same culture, even within the same individual. This is shown in Finnegan's study *The hidden musicians* (1989). She analyses three different groups and their relationship to composing – classical musicians, jazz-musicians and rock-musicians. The conclusion is that in this little modern English town there are musical worlds with completely different approaches to orality and literacy. There is also a lot of overlapping, like jazz-musicians who also play classical music or rock.

Finnegan does not mince matters when criticising the binary model:

Tempting us to generalize before we have detailed evidence. Over-simplifying situations in which complexity is not just an accidental distraction but an essential aspect of actual human activity and expression, and misleadingly implying that certain situations - 'pure oral' in particular – are somehow more 'natural' and unproblematic than others. The final result leads us to misunderstanding of *ourselves* as well as of the other historical or contemporary cultures we wish to study. (Finnegan, 1988, pp. 145 – 146)

She argues that the technological deterministic model is wrong because it focuses on the media themselves and ignores their use and function. Different media present different opportunities and obstacles, but they would not be in use at all without human choices and activities. Studies of different techniques for transmission are of particular interest in the light of how the media are used.

Some examples on the use of orality:

Many descriptions of oral cultures stress how oral tradition preserves the status quo (e.g. the songs of praise in the Mandinka culture). But there are also many examples of songs and poetry that challenge the authority (e.g. jali Alagi Mbye's songs against the military government in the Gambia). Oral tradition is naturally connected to the context where it is performed, and thereby it calls for face to face interaction, close to the actual situation.

But oral communication can also create a distance, similar to what is the case in literal cultures. This happens through the use of expressive specialists (like the jalis), particular poetic and musical languages, the use of fables and proverbs and special conventions around time, place and performance. Abstract concepts are also catered for in oral cultures. Examples are found in the cosmology of the Dogon in West Africa, the navigation system of the Trukese in the Pacific Ocean and The Maoris' school of learning (Finnegan, 1988).

There are also well-documented techniques for composing during the performance that enable variation in performances of long oratures. Even

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exact reproduction is possible in oral traditions. In ancient Somalia there was an oral post system, where the postman was trained for exact memorisation. Among the Zulu and the Xhosa in South Africa there is a poetic tradition with memorisation and improvisation (similar to the Mandinka tradition of historic songs).

To control the 'official memory' and communication can be as important in oral cultures as in literal contexts. Particular groups may try to monopolise the learning of specific oral abilities, or insist on the value of special oral forms (this is obvious in the case of the *jalis* in Gambia).

Finnegan concludes with a comparison between oral and literal transmission. The first question is: What is transmitted? In an academic tradition it is easy to presuppose that it is the text, whether from a manuscript or from a transcribed oral performance. What is transmitted in the oral context is rather a whole storehouse of formulas and the ability to use them in different surroundings. In connection to this, the Swedish musicologist Gunnar Ternhag has introduced the term 'repertoire picture' when he discusses the role of the Swedish folk music transcribers' work in the early 1900s (Ternhag, 1992).

The second question is: How is it transmitted? In both oral and literal cultures three main forms are used: Composition, performance and transmission over time. A work can be oral in its performance, but not in composition and transmission. A work can also be of written origin, with oral performances and transmission. The different patterns do not coincide with the distinction between oral and written cultures.

But concentrating on local-level and limited patterns of transmission in this kind of comparative perspective can provide discriminating information about how certain forms of communication are actually transmitted in practice in specific situations, an aspect that is often missed when the focus is on grander questions about the technologies of print, writing or oral communication in general. (Finnegan, 1988, p. 174)

This discussion is applied in the field of classical music in a study on approaches to musical notation (Hultberg, 2000). One of the points made in Hultberg's study is that even in a strictly literal tradition, oral techniques for transmission are used.

If, however, the polar model of orality versus literacy is applied, the preference for writing in Western culture can be described as a handicap:

Oral transmission is not a particular feature of some music at certain times, but rather a universal characteristic of almost all music at almost all times. What we call 'oral transmission' is what most human beings throughout history have known simply as 'music' – something to play or hear rather than something to write or read. We modern Westerners are the ones who do things

differently, and our preference for writing is our handicap.  
(Jeffery, 1992, p.124)

This handicap manifests itself in what Lilliestam (1995, 1996) calls 'notational centrality'. It implies that we, consciously or unconsciously, take musical notation as a norm, a consequence of what Treitler (1986) calls 'the paradigm of literacy' (p 39). Within Swedish higher music education, one clear example of this is that under the subject of 'ear-training' it is the ability to read and write notes that is trained, not the ability to learn by ear. For students coming from other musical worlds than the Western classical, this can lead to a great deal of confusion. One of these unpleasant collisions is described by the folk musician Hanna Tibell (1997) who wrote her exam essay on this topic.

Lilliestam also brings up the example of the Western concept of 'high' or 'low' pitch, which might emanate from the visual effects of the paper with the notes on the lines, over or under each other. But why are the notes on the right side of the piano higher than the notes on the left side?

Usually organised music teaching in Western societies is about reading notes and learning music theory. In the article *Music education freed from colonialism: A new praxis*, Robert Walker (1996) argues that this has impregnated music education. In Walker's article, a prime example of how the 'colonialistic' approach works, is David Elliot's definition of music. According to Walker, Elliot's desire to establish universal principles overlooks the issue that diverse particulars might be incommensurate.

If my arguments so far hold water, in trying to establish a universal term we are obliged to descend to such a level of ambiguity of definition in order to accommodate 'musics' from outside the western traditions that we are left with a description of activity which covers practically everything humans do. In which case, like all such notions, it hardly avoids the relativistic trap of lack of clear delineation if applied universally. But it also renders the term 'music', as it defines modern western activities, meaningless. The term 'music' is as culturally laden with Western traditions of the last several hundred years as is the term 'gamelan' with Balinese traditions. (Walker, 1996)

Robert Walker argues that Western thought has historically defined music, and therefore the essence in music 'the Western way' concerns pitch and stable harmonics.

We cannot fit sounds from outside Western traditions into such a paradigm without insulting and destroying their integrity, as well as implying that we in the West have developed the art of music

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to higher degrees of sophistication than others because of our technology and culture. (Walker, 1996, p. 9)

Orally transmitted music tends to have a minor place in the more advanced Western music institutions, but in recent years there has been a transformation going on. The Malmö Academy of Music has profiles with pop, rock and folk music. Multicultural music teaching is also a strong trend, not only in Sweden, but all over the Western world. One example is the network Cultural Diversity in Music Education, CDIME, formed in 1992 under the original name Teaching World Music, TWM. In Holland many of the music schools have opened departments for World Music, and in Sweden different experiments are made (see Chapter 2). All of these experiments and trends touch the relationship between orally transmitted music and music that has strong ties to literal traditions.

In this study, orality and literacy are not seen as polar typologies. The study rather supports Finnegan (1989) in her arguing that the deterministic model is no longer valid. There is a great deal of overlapping between different types of transmission in literal and oral cultures.

### 4.3 OTHER KINDS OF KNOWING

The discussion above on orality versus literacy has many similarities with the discussion on informal versus formal education, and the discussion on knowing versus knowledge. It also leads up to the introduction of a socio-cultural research approach, where the development of knowledge is regarded as a communicative act between the individual and the social context.

As Folkestad (1996) states, there has also been a shift in focus from the static to the dynamic aspects of learning: '*knowledge* should be replaced by *knowing*, the noun by the verb, and that learning and knowing are integrated and mutually defining each other in a dynamic process' (p. 58).

Heiling (2000) relates to the above mentioned when stating that he prefers to emphasise the activity, and therefore in his study talks about '*knowing*' rather than '*knowledge*'. Heiling (2000) divides the socio-cultural research approach into two main groups:

- Activity theories, as used by, for example, Vygotsky (1962, 1974, 1978), Rogoff (1984, 1995) and Rolf (1991).
- Theories on situated learning, as used by, for example, Folkestad (1996) and Lave & Wenger (1991).

In short, the main contributions from each of the above mentioned researchers are:

Vygotsky (1962, 1974, 1978) introduces the concept of 'zones of proximal development', which describes the difference between what an individual can learn by himself/herself and what he/she can learn with the help of a 'tutor'. Vygotsky (1896 –1934) was a progressive innovator of psychologic and pedagogic thinking, as he broke with the dominant perceptions of psychological processes as being static and unchangeable. He describes human consciousness as a product of development and human life in the society. Children develop their consciousness and learn depending on how the elders around them decide their relationship and practical connection to the surrounding world. Vygotsky did not believe in a spontaneous development, on the contrary, he emphasised the importance of communication with adults: What a child today only masters with the help of an adult, will be mastered without help tomorrow, thereby opening the door to the next zone of the proximal development.

Rogoff (1984, 1995) uses the concepts of 'participatory appropriation', 'guided participation' and 'apprenticeship'. To her, thinking is a practical activity adjusted to meet the demands of the context and situation.

The three concepts serve to focus different planes of sociocultural activity, planes that are always internally related:

Apprenticeship focuses on community activity, where individuals participate in culturally organised activities. In discussing apprenticeship, Rogoff includes all forms for culturally organised activity, like family relations and schooling.

Guided participation focuses on the communication between people, like face-to-face interaction and working side-by-side in culturally valued activities.

Participatory appropriation focuses on the individual. It describes how individuals are changed by involvement in different activities, in a process of 'becoming, rather than acquisition' (Rogoff, 1995, p. 142).

Rolf (1991) uses the concepts 'skill', 'know-how' and 'competence'. He claims that knowing rests on a relationship between an individual in action and a set of social rules. Knowing, in his use of the word, has a tacit and dynamic function both within the individual and in the social context. Rolf divides practical knowing into three different concepts, describing different degrees of reflection and relation to the social context:

'Skill' is simply practical attainments that can be learned by one's own experience, without social interaction, like, for example, riding a bicycle.

The quality of 'know-how', on the other hand, is always decided by a social community. It can also be described as an ability to act, which differs 'know-how' from 'knowing about'.

'Competence', finally, is 'know-how' combined with theory and reflection. In that process, the 'competence' develops and changes the 'know-how'.

Increased competence can only be reached when reflection is connected to practical life. However, the social praxis of an institution will not be changed if only single individuals are given further training outside their everyday institutional context and praxis. It is factors beyond the individual level that decide and maintain know how and competence in the form of routines and traditions. (Rolf, 1991)

Folkestad (1996) uses the concept 'situated practice' as he regards music activities and learning as always related to the context and the situation in which they take place. To young people, this is an integral part of life, in which the genre of music is one of several ways of expressing affinity with a cultural community where everyone takes part in 'legitimate peripheral participation'. In Folkestad (1998) these ideas are further elaborated leading up to a definition of musical learning as a 'cultural practice'.

Lave and Wenger (1991) introduce the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation', and describe learning as a process distinguished by participation in an activity and not by changes in the brain of an individual. The concept 'legitimate peripheral participation' is a result of delving deeper into the concepts of 'apprenticeship' and 'situated learning'. The attempt to clarify these concepts resulted in Lave's and Wenger's move to the view that 'learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice' (p. 31). A consequence of this definition is that it is not only the learners that learn, it is *all* the individuals participating in the learning context that learn; it is the whole community that learns. Learning, with this definition, is not a way of getting to know about the world, it is a way of being in the world. Legitimate peripheral participation concerns 'a process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice' (p. 29).

#### 4.3.1 FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

As stated by Lucy Green (2002) a global music educational system has evolved over the past 150 years with the following ingredients:

- Educational institutions from primary schools to conservatories, partly involving, or entirely dedicated to, the teaching and learning of music.
- Instrumental and vocal teaching programmes running either within or alongside these institutions.
- Written curricula, syllabuses or explicit teaching traditions.
- Professional teachers, lecturers or 'master musicians' who in most cases possess some form of relevant qualifications.
- Systematic assessment mechanisms such as grade exams, national school exams or university exams.
- A variety of qualifications such as diplomas and degrees.
- Musical notation, which is sometimes regarded as peripheral, but more often as central.
- A body of literature, including texts on music, pedagogical texts and teaching material. (Green, 2002, p. 3)

Green states that though many musical styles have developed through formal educational systems that are specific for these styles, much of the world's music education is based on Western models. Her interviews with popular musicians show that they did not define their own informal learning as learning. In fact it seemed as if nothing had been taught to them except what was taught through the formal system. As a consequence, the popular musicians she interviewed did not incorporate informal strategies for teaching when they themselves were teaching inside the formal system. In her concluding chapter, Green discusses what music teachers can do to revitalise the formal system with methods from the informal system.

One form of informal learning system is apprenticeship, which according to Nielsen and Kvale (1999) deserves appreciation in educational research. They see apprenticeship as a way of describing the 'landscape of learning' (p. 255) in contrast to the view that the school is the privileged room for learning. In their landscape for learning the apprenticeship serves as a reservoir of possibilities for learning, rather than as an area for applications of scholastic knowledge.

According to Nielsen and Kvale (1999), apprenticeship means different forms for learning by participating in a social praxis, with mutual commitments for master and apprentice in a specific social structure during a long period of time. With this definition of apprenticeship follows, in contrast to Rogoff, a distinction between situated learning and apprenticeship: Besides apprenticeship, situated learning is defined as general learning in a social practice.

According to Nielsen and Kvale (1999) the most important aspects of apprenticeship are:

- Community. Learning takes place in a social organisation; through legitimate peripheral participation the apprentice grows into a master's skills.
- Identity. Learning the many skills of a profession also defines the professional identity.
- Absence of formal teaching. In the complex and differentiated social structure of apprenticeship, the apprentice is provided with the opportunity to learn by observing and imitating.
- Evaluation through praxis. The skills are continually evaluated through the response from 'clients'. The apprenticeship is normally completed with a formal test, (like the 'test-run' into the world for the jali apprentice, mentioned in Chapter 1).

When apprenticeship is used in the meaning legitimate peripheral participation it opens for a new tenor of learning: 'learning as a transforming aspect of everyday life' (Nielsen & Kvale, 1999, p. 32). This transforming aspect is also discussed by Ericsson (2002) by using the concept 'preoccupied assimilation'.

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To Nielsen and Kvale the interesting task for future research is to build bridges between scholastic institutions and resources of learning in the outside world, like the learning processes used in apprenticeship: observation, imitation, identification, training, supervising and supervision.

### 4.3.2 THE SCHOOLS AND THE MUSICS

The school and the music school are potential meeting places for all musics. But this meeting can sometimes result in a conflict of power, particularly in situations where the majority culture decides and shapes the content of that culture. As a result, it is rare to find municipal schools in Sweden that include instruments or teachers of music cultures from the large immigrant population. This has consequences for the society as a whole.

The development of the municipal school in Sweden coincided with the development of the welfare system in the 1930s. By 1976 almost every Swedish municipality had an optional music education that was based on the view that the economic or the social status of a child's family should not determine whether or not they could gain access to a music education.

However, as Brändström and Wiklund (1995) shows, the principal idea of openness to everyone has been pushed into the background. The recruitment to the municipal music school is socially biased.

Regarding the pupils' socio-economic backgrounds, we find that, on the whole, it is twice as common among children of middle or higher-level employees and university graduates to participate in the music school than among children with a working class background. (Brändström & Wiklund, 1995, p. 235)

The social bias is the same in music teacher education. Brändström and Wiklund argue that a broader recruitment to higher education would reduce the gap and increase understanding between those with a higher cultural capital and those with more limited cultural resources. At the individual level, the personal profit of studies would increase if children and youngsters were able to choose more freely and consciously. They suggest that there would be significant benefits for society as a whole, if music schools were more successful in counteracting their socially biased recruitment systems.

The research by Brändström and Wiklund does not cover all of Sweden, but concentrates on Piteå, a town in the north of Sweden with very few immigrants. In Malmö, however, more than 50% of the children in the schools come from a non-Swedish background. No research has been undertaken regarding the optional music education in Malmö, but

there are statistics at the municipal music school (Kulturkompaniet) that provide some information. A majority of the children at the music school come from the more 'Swedish' and affluent parts of Malmö. In some immigrant areas, children do not even know about the existence of the Kulturkompaniet. In response, the municipal music school is now trying to change this situation by applying quotas, which means reserving a certain number of places at the Kulturkompaniet for children from areas in Malmö that are poorly represented at the Kulturkompaniet. Since Rosengård (an immigrant area) has many children, there are also many places reserved for Rosengård children at the Kulturkompaniet. These places, however, are often not filled up. The Kulturkompaniet does not have the resources to investigate why these children are absent.

In today's Swedish society culture and identity are key concepts in the official governmental and educational debate. Social categories no longer tend to be built on social class, but on cultural identity (Lundberg, Malm & Ronström, 2000). In such societies the need to express one's identity is of vital importance. Music is one of the important tools in 'ego-screaming' - to mark one's identity. 'Ego-screaming' is of vital importance to the individual and to groups who need to be seen and heard for their existence (Lundberg, Malm & Ronström, 2000).

There are many terms used in the debate, sometimes synonymous, that need to be clarified:

- Multicultural
- Cultural diversity
- Multicultural education, and
- Intercultural

Multicultural and cultural diversity share the same problem: They can refer to a liberal tradition, which emphasises the individual's rights *or* the social democratic tradition, which emphasises the group. The metaphor for the liberal tradition is the botanical garden (i.e., pluralism, but in practice no weeds are allowed). The metaphor for the social democratic tradition is the mosaic (i.e., every group has its place, but in practice there are high walls around ethnic territories).

The terms 'intercultural' and 'multicultural' were introduced in Sweden at the beginning of the 1980s. They are often used as synonyms, but there is a difference.

'Intercultural' is a process that aims at increasing the understanding of, and respect for, differences in cultural expressions. On the other hand, 'multicultural' is the condition of a society, i.e. a society with many ethnic groups is multicultural (SOU, 1983).

Music education in the schools of a multicultural society is a challenge to both teachers and researchers.

Music education based on multicultural content and teaching strategies fulfils a number of aims including the promotion of knowledge of music in specific geographical and cultural settings; the exemplification of musical concepts and processes; the

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demonstration of the role(s) of music in defining, maintaining and brokering culture; and the analysis of the concept of culture as a force in people's lives. (McPherson & Dunbar-Hall, 2001, p. 23)

This point is highlighted by Hargreaves and North (2001) in their concluding chapter which surveys music education in an international perspective: 'The clear lesson to be learned for the future is that our view of the scope and nature of music education needs to be very broad, and certainly more so than is currently the case in many curricula' (p. 234).

## **CHAPTER 5: METHOD AND DESIGN**

Based on the theoretical perspectives presented in the previous chapters, the methodology adopted for the study is multifaceted, incorporating research techniques that reflect an eclectic approach. This chapter, which outlines the method applied in the study, is organised according to six major sections: 'Methodology', 'Procedure', 'Sample', 'Techniques to be used', 'Development of key questions' and 'Data analyses.'

### **5.1 METHODOLOGY**

The focus of the present study is on the approach to teaching and learning music in an oral tradition. The methodology employed in the study was qualitative, encompassing a number of elements that provided a framework for the collection and analysis of the data.

Seven distinct elements, 'Circle movements and open approaches to the problem', 'Theoretical sensitivity', 'The traveller', 'Different conversations', 'Researcher as participant observer', 'Interview techniques', and 'Avoiding the question', help distinguish key aspects of the methodology adapted in the study. These are described in the sections that follow.

#### **5.1.1 CIRCLE MOVEMENTS AND OPEN APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM**

In qualitative research, categories and theories are constructed mainly by induction from the data. This act, however, cannot be achieved without reflection by the researcher on his or her own pre-understanding, and without a critical review of how the empirical data are to be selected, presented and interpreted.

It is, argues Ruud (1995), easy to get lost in transcriptions of interviews and summaries of another person's work. According to Ruud, a core element of a dissertation lies in the analysis, but he does not believe in a model of stairs, going from one level to the other, but rather recommends movements in a circle where the researcher maintains a dialogue with himself throughout the process. Keywords in this inner dialogue are: context, evaluation, self-critique, design, analysis, and focus. This inner circle movement recommended by Ruud (1995) leads naturally to an open approach to the problem, which is also one important issue

emphasised by Kvale (1997) as one of the most distinguishing features of qualitative methods. Kvale lists the following ingredients as important:

- an open approach to the problem, which focuses on the possibility of being able to generate new theories;
- categories and theories are constructed by induction from the data; and
- the researcher has to constantly return to questions about focus, problem, hypothesis, theme and intention.

The circle movement suggested by Ruud (1995) and Kvale (1997) is also described in Glaser and Strauss (1967) discussing 'theoretical sensitivity'. Further detail on this idea will be discussed in the following section.

### 5.1.2 THEORETICAL SENSITIVITY

Glaser and Strauss (1967) claim that theoretical sensitivity is a necessity in qualitative research. In their view, theoretical sensitivity implies making active use of the researcher's own pre-understanding, while being able to stretch and develop it into a theoretical position that deals perceptively with the data collected during the study. When theoretical sensitivity is an integral part of the research process, collecting empirical data, coding and analysis becomes a simultaneous act.

However, since their initial publication in 1967, Glaser and Strauss evolved different opinions on grounded theory. This debate is described by Bouij (1998). Glaser's prime argument is that the theoretical pre-understanding should not be exaggerated. He warns of presupposed meanings, and advises researchers not to become too fond of earlier theories and literature before the analysis of their own empirical data. According to Glaser, grounded theory is based on the knowledge of the researcher involved within his own area and life experiences, used with creativity.

Strauss, on the other hand, suggests systematic comparisons to be able to construct substantial questions. Strauss differs from Glaser in that he places more emphasis on 'true' and valid description of events, processes and phenomena through the use of meta-theoretical perspectives. This is done in order to increase theoretical aspects of grounded theory but might, according to Glaser, work against open approaches to the problem. Glaser accuses Strauss of being too rigid and normative in his description of how to use grounded theory. In Glaser's opinion, Strauss's emphasis on theoretical aspects might also work against open approaches to the problem.

Bouij (1998) tends to agree with Strauss. He argues that there might be a problem in using too much of the researcher's own pre-understanding and theoretical sensitivity, namely that the researcher stops at a kind of common sense level. It is the researcher's duty, he says, to go beyond that level. This leads to the concept abduction, as a key to bridging the

problems of both induction and deduction. Induction tends to only sum up the empirical data resulting in poor theories. Deduction seldom leads to novel or illuminating explanations, as it is usually confined to individual cases based on a general rule. Abduction implies interplay between induction and deduction, where the pre-understanding is used to understand the research object using theoretical concepts. Abduction is characterised by versatility and flexibility between theoretical concepts, where unexpected events are taken into the process of analysis (Bouij, 1998).

The data of the present study has been collected during many years of repeated visits to the Gambia, using participating observation, interviews and video documentation. Consequently, the empirical data I have collected is influenced by the concurrent analysis of earlier data. Running in parallel to this is my own pre-understanding that has been stretched and developed through theoretical studies into something akin to Glaser's and Strauss's (1967) concept of 'theoretical sensitivity' (p. 46).

### **5.1.3 THE TRAVELLER**

This theoretical sensitivity can also be expressed in other ways. Kvale (1997) introduces the researcher as one of two types; the 'miner' and the 'traveller' respectively. These two metaphors exemplify completely different theories of knowledge. On the one hand, the 'miner' attempts to wash out of the material – the interviews – the noble knowledge, the objective, everlasting and true. On the other hand, the 'traveller' will construct knowledge in interplay with the co-travellers, the informants. The results of a traveller's conversation leads to new conversations about the results with research colleagues and the external world, conversations that will again give new knowledge. The traveller is, like Kvale himself, the postmodernistic oriented researcher, focusing on social constructions of reality.

When the world of the human being is looked on as a reality of conversations, the interview will be an objective research method that suits this investigated reality of conversations. (Kvale, 1997, p. 251) (My translation)

Kvale (1997) also provides a tool shed with the most common arguments for qualitative methods, and the most common objections, from both insiders and outsiders. The concept of objectivity is once more in focus. He identifies three different meanings for research to be objective, depending on theoretical points of departure:

- Objectivity as freedom from bias.
- Objectivity as inter-subjective knowledge.

- Objectivity as a mirror of the nature of the object.

One meaning of *objectivity* is that an objective investigation reflects the nature of the object investigated, it 'lets the object speak'. This is literally the case in an interview inquiry where the intersubjective knowledge is constructed in a conversation between the researcher and the 'objects' investigated. With the 'objects' – the interview subjects – giving voice to their understanding of an interpersonally negotiated social world, the qualitative research interview obtains a privileged position for creating objective knowledge of a conversational world. (Kvale, 1996, pp. 297-298)

Like a hermeneutic spiral of analysis and construction of knowledge Kvale (1997), in his argumentation, touches on theoretical and methodological questions. As methodological questions always lead back to theoretical questions, much attention is given to theories that provide inspiration to qualitative methods. Basically, this shows that positivistic philosophy of science has had to give place to hermeneutics, phenomenology, dialectics and postmodernism. The task is no longer to quantify objective data, but to interpret meaningful relations. According to Kvale (1997), in order to be able to develop theoretical concepts, the researcher all the time has to return to epistemology.

When it comes to methodology, Kvale (1997) argues for a balance between spontaneous and stiff methodical work. This balance demands skills developed by using his methods for research interviews.

#### 5.1.4 DIFFERENT CONVERSATIONS

The choice of method will have implications for theories of science. Qualitative methods imply the use of hermeneutic theories with all their subdivisions. On the other hand, positivistic traditions have had difficulties in accepting qualitative dimensions. The shift in attitudes has come, thanks to the development of phenomenology and grounded theory (Ruud, 1995.)

The qualitative research interview, as Kvale (1997) sees it, is a kind of conversation, separated from everyday conversations, philosophical dialogue or therapeutic interview. The different forms of conversations lead to different forms of knowledge such as empirical knowledge of the everyday world, logical conceptual knowledge and emotional personal knowledge. The conversation can be viewed from different angles, either as a technique or a method, or as a fundamental way of gaining knowledge. This concerns hermeneutic and postmodern epistemology.

Alternatively, the conversation can be viewed as a way of constituting reality and ourselves. This ontological conception has its inspiration from postmodern social constructivism (Ericsson, 2002).

The theoretical foundations connected to qualitative research are:

*Hermeneutic* – which was originally used for text analysis, where the interpretation of the meaning is achieved through an interplay between the whole and the parts, until consensus is reached. According to postmodernism, consensus is an illusion. Pre-understanding is given great importance.

*Phenomenology* – which concentrates on life values. By phenomenological reduction, exact descriptions are strived for. Pre-understanding is between brackets.

*Dialectics* – which focuses on contradictions in statements in order to place them in relation to contradictions in the social and material world. The novel is important, as is the relationship between knowledge and action.

*Postmodernism* – which has as its focus the social construction of reality. Aspects of language and interaction are important, as the relation between the written and the oral. The stories in themselves are accentuated.

*Phenomenography* – which is related to phenomenology. This relation is explained in Marton and Booth (1997): Phenomenology and phenomenography have the same object of research - both aim at making a survey of human consciousness and experience. Phenomenography is an onset of research – Marton and Booth do not present it as a theory or method – and can therefore be classed as a subdivision under phenomenology. But this is not possible, according to Marton and Booth (1997), as phenomenology is locked to certain methods and theories:

Philosophers investigate their own experiences. Phenomenographers, on the other hand, study the experience of others. In phenomenology there is an important dividing line between pre-understanding and conceptual thought. In phenomenography this difference does not exist. Phenomenology tries to find the essence of how a phenomenon is experienced. Phenomenography draws attention to the variations of the experiences. The phenomenologist asks 'How does the person experience the world?' The phenomenographer asks 'What specific characters in different ways of experiencing the world is it that makes people more or less capable of dealing efficient with it?' (Marton & Booth, 1997, pp. 116 – 117)

The phenomenographic way of analysing interviews is questioned by Säljö (1997). He claims that too little attention is paid to the fact that the answers also reflect the informant's attempt to communicate with the interviewer and the surrounding world. The way they are talking and

arguing is decided by discursive patterns that the informants are involved in. Therefore, the answers cannot simply be analysed or described as ways of experiencing or as opinions.

Uncritically, the answers given by interviewees are read as indicators of ways of experiencing, and alternative interpretations of the functional mechanisms of why people talk the way they do are rarely considered. This circularity prescribes a logic to the research process that in unnecessary ways restrict the potential significance of its outcome: we could learn much more about actors' definition of the world if we viewed their accounts primarily as attempts at communication in situated practices rather than as ways of experiencing. (Säljö, 1997, p. 188)

The story told by the Kanuteh brothers under the mango tree (see Chapter 6) is a typical example of a way of talking that reflects social and discursive patterns. Consequently, according to Säljö's argument above, a pure phenomenographic approach would not give enough information. For example, much effort is made to praise the interviewer, in this case jali Alagi Mbye. Praising is a standardised way of expression among jali-families. The Kanuteh brothers also emphasise what in their opinion is the 'true' story. Even that is a typical trait among jali-families, who want to give their own forefathers a central role in history.

#### 5.1.5 RESEARCHER AS PARTICIPANT OBSERVER

One of the sources of inspiration for my work is the ethnomusicologist K. Gourlay. In an article on 'the missing ethnomusicologist' (1978), he criticises other ethnomusicologists such as Merriam and Blacking for having failed to sufficiently recognize that the core of all research is the researcher. According to Gourlay (1978) previous models for ethnomusicological analyses are built on the illusion of the objective. In order to ensure objectivity, these models presuppose:

- The independent existence of data which have been collected in an objective way and which enables the formulation and subsequent testing of a theory.
- Communication of results intelligibly and without subjective bias. Experiments with statistical or mathematical models have often been chosen as the best alternative.
- A methodology which makes it possible for others to test the model, which often means avoiding descriptive models.
- 'An overriding appeal to science or reason as the supreme court whose decisions are final'. (p. 3)

Gourlay (1978) also questions whether there is only one kind of science:

The 'scientific method' of this conception is self contradictory in its failure to include all variables, while achieving a semblance of authenticity through use of abstract expression which conceals their omission from the writer. The analogical reasoning that empirical methods which have produced objective results in the 'hard' sciences are equally and directly applicable to the human sciences may or may not be valid. (p. 7)

What Gourlay means when talking about 'the missing ethnomusicologist' is that it is not possible to extract either the researcher or the research object as a person from the analysis model. In fact, Gourlay emphasises their inevitable existence. Gourlay is critical of Merriam (1964) for not having sufficiently discussed the consequence of empirical methods. Nettl (1964) is likewise criticised by Gourlay for taking the whole question of objectivity for granted, without discussing adequately how the researcher can avoid value judgements based on his own cultural background. Finally, Gourlay criticises Blacking (1959) for being in general more concerned with one particular methodological problem (transcription) rather than the place of the ethnomusicologist in research. Empirical work does include the researcher, by definition, and thereby follow some unavoidable constraints. According to Gourlay these constraints involve:

- *Personal constraints*, such as absence or presence of perfect pitch, inflated ego or having to admit that some matters are beyond our comprehension.
- *Situational constraints*, such as reduced research funds, bureaucratic obstacles, or the specific field situation where the researcher is himself a constraint on what he observes.
- *Universal constraints*, such as the ethnomusicologist's own worldview that includes both the way he looks at things and how he thinks about them. Gourlay (1978) suggests that, 'all ethnomusicologists operate within the constraints of the ideology which influences concepts held about the aims and methods of the discipline' (p. 2).

Given the above comments, three issues can be identified which help to place the researcher at the core:

- *Preparation*: This implies learning facts about a foreign culture in order to critically evaluate one's own ideas of the world, which can act as an obstacle when trying to understand 'the other'.
- *Research process*: This is where the researcher and the research object meet. The focus for the researcher lies on 'musical event' and 'musical occasion'. These two issues however, are only applicable to situations when the researcher is not present. Every other situation,

when the researcher is present, is a 'research event' or a 'research occasion'. Thus, because the presence of the researcher makes it impossible to study what is really wanted, it is clear that the researcher cannot come closer than to the 'research event' or the 'research occasion'.

- *Presentation process*: This is where the researcher reconsiders the social network, the career, and possible success of his or her research as a result of lectures or through media events for a broader audience.

It is true that the researcher is outside the research model as an entity, but the problem is that as a subject in the research process he is part of an 'intramodel' and thereby an object of his own operations. The ideas expressed by the Norwegian anthropologist Berkaak (1983) are close to Gourlay when he uses 'experience' in his generative model for analysis. He details his argument as follows:

I just want to remark that music is art, and therefore it should not be social behaviour and institutional framework that decide our analyses. It should also not be the technical analysis of form, sound and harmony. It is the experience ... that decides socio-musical behaviour and form. Without methodical and theoretical tools to capture the experience, there will be no possibility to explain patterns of behaviour and sounds. The soft data methods used in anthropology should give hope of a better point of departure for an approach to analysis. (Berkaak, 1983 p. 80, my translation)

### 5.1.6 INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

The techniques for collecting data are both participating observation and interviews. The aim of each interview is to get a rich story. The keys to these stories are 'prompts', pictures, sounds or texts that help those being interviewed to 'get going' (Kvale, 1997).

The 'prompts' that have been used to reveal attitudes and to facilitate discussions on teaching in the interviews are my own instrument, the fiddle and, above all, dancing. When bolon-player 'Magasina' was recorded, it was accompanied by the villagers – and my own – dance. This was also true of the interview with the Kanuteh family. When the *jali musos* (female musicians) danced, there was one extra *muso*, me, the *tubab* (white person). Of course, my dancing was a natural response to excellent playing, but it was also a deliberate act to gain confidence. As the dance is a matter of course and an important part of West African culture, dancing is one way of showing general cultural competence. The first president of postcolonial Senegal, Leopold Senghor, who was also a poet, has captured this:

The organizing power that makes black music is *rhythm*. It is the most perceptible and the least material thing. Even in the nightly drumming, black music is not a purely aesthetic manifestation, but brings its faithful into communion, more intimately, to the rhythm of the community which dances, of the World which dances. (Chernoff, 1979, p. 23)

Another 'prompt' was the ostinatos played by Alagi Mbye on the kora. Every ostinato is connected to a special song text, dealing with a certain aspect of history or moral. A well-educated storyteller will immediately respond to changes in the kora accompaniment. This happened in the interview with the Kanuteh family – but it took me one year to discover it. This key event is fully discussed in the following section, and in Chapter 6.

### 5.1.7 AVOIDING THE QUESTION

Mantle Hood (1971), who has written about field methods, often describes it as the art of avoiding the question. Behind this description lies the understanding that in meetings between cultures, it is often impossible to put direct questions, as the outsider has great difficulties in knowing what would be relevant questions to the interviewee.

It is only after long field periods including developing bi-musicality (Saether, 1993) and participating observation that it is possible to fully comprehend what categorisations would bear meaning. A typical example is the question to the West African drummer: 'Where is the first beat?' By playing with and studying from drum masters, the outsider will realise that the 'first beat' does not exist as a concept in West African musical thinking.

The art of not asking the question is also important for other reasons. In a fieldwork, sooner or later the 'yes man' will appear – the one who is always ready to provide an answer even when he or she is not able to provide a sensible response. The 'yes man' has his strategic reasons for wanting to be close to the researcher. For example, it could strengthen his or her positions in the local community and it could give him money or other advantages. To Hood (1971), the art of not asking questions is essential. When the researcher understands the significance of this concept, the answers will come in the form of stories, sometimes at the most unexpected moments.

This method is described in other terms by Herndon and McLeod (1981). To them, the researcher should try to be the 'fly on the wall'. The researcher should also be prepared to meet the 'best man', the 'yes man' and the 'local experts'. He or she should also be prepared for the worst sickness of all: 'ethnologistis', also called 'field work psychosis'. A common symptom of this disease is an urgent need of a Friday night at

home with chips in front of the television. Furthermore, the art of avoiding the question might give access to gossip, which, in Herndon and McLeods version, is to be regarded not as unnecessary information, but as a compressed code to be taken into the analysis. Feld's (1984) model and exemplary inquiry list for a successful fieldwork has also been worth considering. I have had time to develop 'ethnologistis', I have met the 'local experts' and the 'yes man'. The advice to be 'the fly on the wall' has not always been compatible with the desire to develop 'bimusicality', but the more time I have spent studying the Gambian jalis, the more occasions I have had to apply the 'fly on the wall strategy'.

It might seem as a contradiction to use interviews as a method after all these strong arguments for not putting the question and warnings against uncritical use of the informants' answers, which depend on discursive patterns. Still, that is what is done in this study, mainly because I regard the interviews as conversations, which aim to obtain logical conceptual knowledge. But these conversations could not be analysed, if they were not embedded in years of 'not putting the question'. Since my first meeting with jali Alagi Mbye in 1990, the conversation has been ongoing. It is this ongoing conversation that has provided me with sufficient pre-understanding and courage to cut out one single moment in the time-line and look at that particular story for answers.

In this particular case, the interview with the Kanuteh brothers, jali Alagi Mbye was the interviewer. Alagi Mbye put the questions according to what he thought he knew about my needs as a researcher, which of course told me about his own pre-understanding of our relationship. He also took advantage of the situation to improve his own status among the elder jalis. That made him look dangerously similar to a 'yes man', which unfortunately could not be avoided. However, Alagi Mbye's different relations to all persons involved in the interview situation acted as a source of extra information in the analysis.

## 5.2 PROCEDURE

My understanding of the jali's world of music has evolved over the past 11 years, by following Alagi Mbye in many different roles: as a guest in his home; as a co-musician touring in Sweden with a program for children; as a producer of various productions, through filming his musical performance; by talking to him and observing him; through our developing relationship as friends; and by critically reflecting on each form of the data I have been able to collate during the past years. This chapter, therefore, starts with a personal perspective on the main issues, which were discussed in Chapter 4.

### **5.2.1 FIELD EXPERIENCE**

From 1991, my fieldwork consisted of yearly meetings with Alagi Mbye, which normally involved between two and five weeks visits to the Gambia. Some of the meetings took place in Sweden. It is highly likely that one long period of observations would have produced different results, but my interrupted period, which stretched over 10 years, provided many advantages. Both Alagi Mbye and myself have undergone changes during this period, which have subsequently impacted, on my original plans of this research project.

My research focus has evolved from 'A female perspective on Mandinka songs' via 'Gambia's first music school for children' to the attitudes to music teaching and learning among musicians and jalis in the Gambia. Alagi Mbye's meetings with my culture have provided many insights for both of us. The most visible result is that Alagi Mbye is now in charge of Maali's Music School, which is built on traditional Gambian music values of the Mandinkan culture but open to all children, rather than being restricted to only those children who, following normal traditional lines, would be allowed to become a jali. In doing this, Alagi has broken some of the taboos of the Mandinka culture.

The problems Alagi has faced in his work with the Maali Music School has helped to focus his attention on many fundamental questions about teaching and learning in the Mandinka society, with the result that his personal reflections have enabled me to gain an insight into his thinking that otherwise may not have been possible. In an important sense, his position as headmaster of a school that is both modern and traditional has helped me to practice the art of not putting the question.

Since 1990 Alagi Mbye has been connected to the Malmö Academy of Music, both as a teacher and as a guest student. One tangible result of this cross fertilisation between our two cultures is a joint project, which has served both this study and his school at the same time: The CD 'Roots of The Gambia' was recorded in 1998, after preparations made by Alagi Mbye.

This CD had a dual purpose. On the one hand, Alagi Mbye's aim was to collect material, which he could use for the education of the children in Gambia. On the other hand, my aim was to initiate research on the methods for teaching and learning in this oral tradition.

A first album was released in 1994, as one of many ingredients in the multicultural projects at the Malmö Academy. This first album mainly served as a documentation of the teacher's working with the students from Malmö. It was made by one of the students, and was a part of his education.

On the second CD, we wanted to make a more focused documentation, concentrating on finding masters and traditions that Alagi Mbye thought should be saved for coming generations. All the recordings on this CD

are made live in the homes of traditional masters of Gambian music. The door opener, guide and translator was jali Alagi Mbye.

### 5.2.2 PURE OR MIXED

When I first met Alagi Mbye, he listened to one of my records, which was a mixture of kora and flamenco guitar. At the time I remember him being quite upset, and suggesting to me that his grandfather would never have approved of this way of playing the kora. But he recorded the tunes, and when I met him the following year he was able to play them all. And some years later, when he was touring with the Norwegian blues guitarist Knut Reiersrud, he had integrated the works he had heard on my recordings to a point where he was able to create a blending of these two traditions.

The question of what is 'pure' Mandinka is a troubling one for Alagi himself. As a jali he has a responsibility to carry on the tradition to the next generation. But over recent years he has reflected long and hard on how he should best do this, particularly in a changing society.

### 5.2.3 COMPARATIVE APPROACH

My own background as a Swedish folk musician and my meetings with old Scandinavian fiddlers has helped me in the meetings with prominent masters of traditional music in the Gambia. The way to talk – or not to talk – about music or teaching is in many ways similar in these two oral cultures. When I listened to the Gambian one-stringed fiddle 'riti', played by Juldeh Camara, my mind went to my lessons with the late Norwegian fiddler Pål Skogum.

Reflecting on these experiences, I am convinced that what I learned earlier from Scandinavian folk music masters, influenced my listening and understanding of Gambian masters. I am also convinced that my love for both Scandinavian and African dance helped me to interview the Gambian musicians. It seemed natural to dance in the interview situation, just because of the music that was played. From my researcher perspective, I am also aware of the fact that this was a fruitful way to facilitate two-way communication. In 1986, when I was dancing in Abidjan, the capital of the Ivory Coast, someone to my surprise put a money note on my sweaty forehead. Why? Because, I was told, 'when you dance you show that you know something about the culture'.

In the case of Alagi Mbye, his meeting with the Swedish music education system continues to be reflected through his own experiences from the jali system. His comments on our culture have also shed new light on both his and my culture. A good example is when he was a guest student at the Malmö Academy of Music, and commented on our way of dealing with time: 'You are always running from one room to the other, or from meeting to meeting.'

#### **5.2.4 EMIC AND ETIC**

The concepts of emic and etic have been discussed in Chapter 4. Here they are related to the methodology and procedure of this study: My own observations of Mandinka culture as conveyed to me by Alagi Mbye is a typical example of the insider/outsider dilemma discussed in Chapter 4. As previously stated, no one can be a total insider or outsider, from the scholarly as well as the personal viewpoint. No matter how long the researcher has spent trying to become 'the other', the researcher's way of thinking will always be shaped by the researcher's culture. The outsider, however, can learn to act like an insider. The insider/outsider concepts have, in this study, shown to be of greatest importance, not only as a dilemma, but also as a tool both for method and analyses.

From the beginning, my aim was to examine the insider's perspective of Mandinka culture. But, as a natural consequence of my outsider perspective meeting Alagi Mbye's insider perspective, our roles became blurred. We have known each other since 1990. By the time we reached Basse in 1998 to interview the Kanuteh brothers, Alagi had learnt to act as an insider in my own research culture.

I cannot speak Mandinka, but through Alagi I can 'speak' it, and in that sense get close to the inside of Mandinka culture. When Alagi translates my questions, he sometimes puts in extra questions and comments, as he (as an insider in my culture) thinks I would have liked to have it. Through this procedure I can experience Mandinka as an outsider, and at the same time come closer to an understanding of Mandinka culture as an insider.

Some of the questions he has asked I would never have thought of, because I am not fully inside. These questions can only come from a true insider. But then – how do I know when Alagi asks questions from my perspective or his own inside perspective? The way I have chosen to answer this question is that the question presupposes that there are distinct borders between the emic and the etic perspective. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the emic and the etic can be viewed as two complementary categories rather than being in opposition. Playing with the emic and etic perspectives has helped me to develop an unusual interview technique. This technique has provided a richness of data that otherwise would not have been possible to obtain in a more normal outsider's style of interview (see Figure 2).

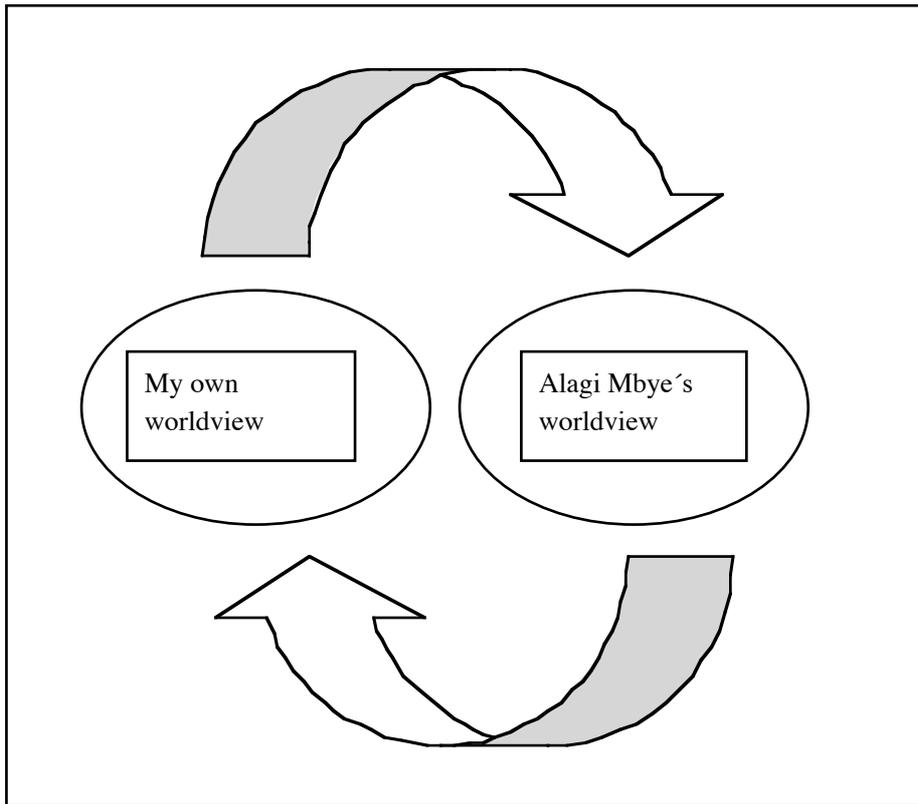
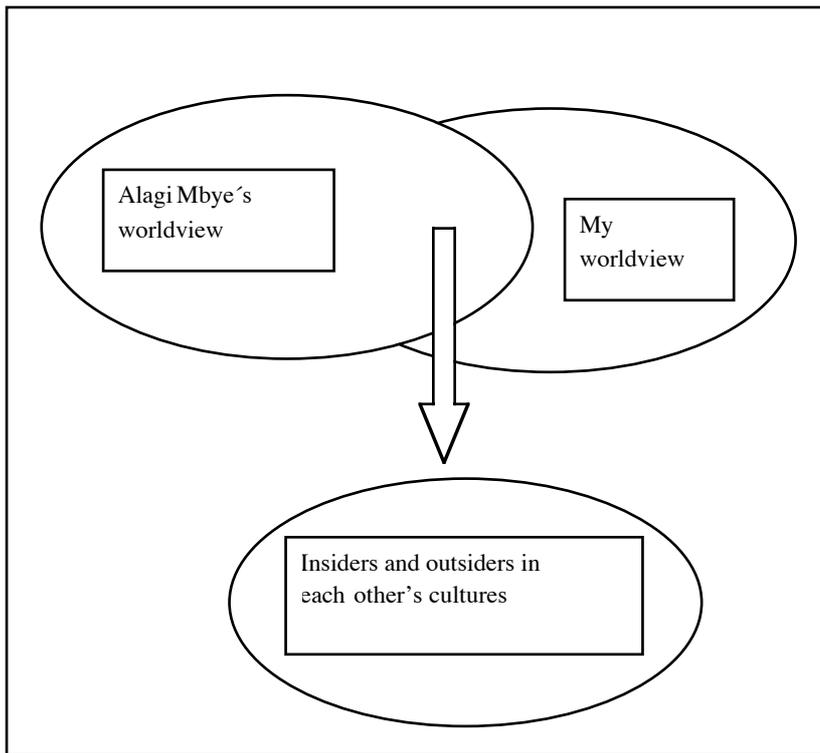


Figure 2: Interaction of perspectives

During the process of the fieldwork my own worldview – or the etic perspective – has interacted with Alagi Mbye's worldview – or the emic perspective. These two respective worldviews have made a different impact on the interviews. The earliest interviews are most clearly related to the etic perspective, while later in the process it is the emic perspective that impregnates the data.

The interviews that are most clearly shaped by my worldview are the interviews with Alagi Mbye from 1996, 1997 and 1999 (see Chapter 6). There are also some interviews that are clearly coloured by the emic perspective: the interviews with the village musicians and with the Kanuteh family (see Chapter 6). Finally, there is a third category of interviews, which are an example of emic and etic being complementary categories. This third category is the result of the above illustrated meeting between two worldviews (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3: Acting like insiders.*

The resulting interviews of this process are the most important ones. It is here we find the interview with the Kanuteh family – again – and the feedback interview with Alagi Mbye from 2001. There is a clear difference between the types of interviews coloured by Alagi Mbye's worldview. In the first type he is still doing the interviews 'through me', more or less translating my questions, rather than using his kora to underline the different themes. This is essentially how the interviews with the village musicians were made. In the second type, illustrated above, Alagi Mbye has learnt to act as an insider in my culture, and thereby has the courage to completely 'leave' me. Now he is using the kora to add the deeper dimension to the questions. I, on the other hand, have the courage to 'let him go', acting like an insider in his culture.

### **5.2.5 FROM TALK TO TEXT – TRANSCRIPTION AS ANALYSIS**

Some researchers in the field of social anthropology and ethnomusicology allow their selective memory to work during the interview (Kvale, 1997). Kvale himself is not a keen supporter of tape recorders and complete transcriptions. He, like Ruud (1995), cautions about becoming lost in the writing, based on a belief that it is simply not possible to analyse every

piece of information. There is also a risk of getting lost in a kind of reversed positivism.

Kvale refers to researchers (e.g. Ong, 1982) who have analysed the difference between the talk and the written text. According to Ong, every transcription must be considered as a construction. In this conception, transcriptions should not be seen as the subject of a research interview, but rather as the means by which they are analysed. The transcription – regarded as a means to analysis – has both a strength and a weakness in that the transcription is not an aesthetic nor static product, but rather something that can continually evolve. Some of this might be avoided by computer programs, which make it possible to skip the transcription and place the text directly into the computer for subsequent analysis. In my case this has not been possible, since I needed Alagi Mbye's help with translating the Mandinka conversations.

Every transcription unavoidably contains analysis, as has been claimed by many anthropologists, above all performance researchers like Dennis Tedlock, Jeff Todd Titon and Dell Hymes who belong to the 'ethnopoetic' branch (Klein, 1990). The ethnopoetic ambition is to represent the aesthetic power in oral performances, to retain some of the oral qualities, while at the same time making the written text easy to read and enjoy. The ethnopoetic method aims to reveal how 'artfully' human beings construct their daily being together (Klein, 1990).

One consequence of defining the interview as a communicative act is that the sharp border between the interviewer and the interviewee is diminished. In the Kanuteh interview this has been very clear. As Mandinka is not a written language, using a secretary is out of the question. Already Alagi Mbye's translation into English is a construction, and my way of writing his English is another step that hardly could have been achieved by an outsider. Facial expressions, body language and comments from Alagi have proved of enormous benefit during the process of transcribing and analysing the transcripts obtained during the current study.

### 5.3 SAMPLE – SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE INFORMANTS

The informants of the present study are of two categories: (a) Alagi Mbye, my main informant, who also with time has developed into a co-researcher (see 5.2.4), and (b) the musicians introduced to me by Alagi Mbye, during our work with the CD 'Roots of The Gambia'.

Each of these informants is a master musician, who is deeply rooted in the traditional music of Gambia. However, there is a difference between these masters, in the sense that only two of them are jalis; these are the Kanuteh brothers living in Basse. The jalis represent a more 'intellectual' type of musician, which is clearly represented in the data. The label 'village musicians' is used for the other musicians who are not trained in

the 'oral university' to the same extent. They have excellent musical skills, but lack the historical knowledge that a jali needs for his profession. The interviews with Alagi Mbye are spread over the past 10 years and cover many areas, while the other informants have only been interviewed once in 1998.

### **5.3.1 ALAGI MBYE**

Instrument: Kora

Interviewed in: Malmö and Lund in Sweden, and Serrekunda in the Gambia.

Alagi Mbye was born a jali, and like all his forefathers and mothers, his task in this world is to be a wandering and singing library, to keep the society together with his songs and his kora. In 1990, when he was about to leave his country, Gambia, for his first journey to Europe, his grandfather tried to stop him, asking who would understand him and whom he would sing for. The grandfather was afraid he would forget the tradition. But, faithful to his heritage, Alagi Mbye did not forget his jali tradition.

Through many successful tours to Scandinavia, Alagi has developed into a modern jali, who possesses a deep respect for his own tradition but also the courage to start something new.

### **5.3.2 MOMODU CAMARA**

Instrument: Bolon.

Interviewed and recorded in: Njoba Kunda village.

Momodu's parents lived in Gambia, but sent him to Guinea to learn to play the bolon. The father was also a musician who played the flute. Momodu Camara is a Fula and has lived in Njoba Kunda the last 20 years. The village chief was eager to stress that Momodu Camara is a 'good man'. During the interview with Momodu Camara all the villagers surrounded us, eager to continue the dance. Momodu answered the questions, while still playing the bolon.

### **5.3.3 LANG SONKO, OUSMAN SONKO AND SEKOU SIDIBE**

Instruments: Sabaro, kutiringba and kutiringding

Interviewed and recorded in: Katamina village.

These three Mandinka drummers play an important role in their village. They tell us that if an outsider should accidentally win over the wrestlers in the village, the drummers will play rhythms that will make the outsider lose his next game.

The drummers also help the farmers in the region by playing in the fields when it is time for harvesting or other hard work. We visited the village to meet the two masks, Mamon and Kangkurang. Mamon appears in the night and if the women in the village sing good enough for him he will tell the villagers about the prospects for their next year. Kangkurang can come in the daytime, and is more of a general entertainer.

#### 5.3.4 JULDEH SOWE AND SARRA BAH

Instruments: Riti

Interviewed and recorded in: Katamina village

Juldeh, 64, and Sarra, 35, are two of the most famous Fula musicians in the Gambia and travel all over to perform at traditional ceremonies. They live in Sambang village, close to Katamina. The relationship between these two gentlemen is a typical master – apprentice relationship: the younger follows the elder, with full respect and patience. He learns from the master as they perform together.

#### 5.3.5 AHMADU KANUTEH AND KEBBA KANUTEH

Interviewed and recorded in: Basse

Ahmadu, 61, and Kebba, 50, live in a large compound in Basse. Their instruments are Kora and dundun respectively. They belong to a big mandinka jali family that also includes 12 female musicians "jali muso". One of these, Kankaba, has performed in France, and is the teacher of the children in the compound. The number of children is not really clear: 'We are many, some died'.

Ahmadu and Kebba are old masters, but at the same time as they defend the old tradition, they also support Alagi Mbye's goal of starting a music school for all children, not only the ones who belong to the jali families. Before we leave, Basse Ahmadu hands over the 'mundiato' to Alagi Mbye. The 'mundiato' is a wooden stick with skin decoration, which is given by old jalis to young jalis as a final proof of quality. It can be compared to the highest academic degree of the western universities.

#### 5.3.6 DEMBA DANJO

Instruments: Kontingding and kontingba.

Interviewed and recorded in: Serrekunda

Demba Danjo comes from a family of artists and blacksmiths. As a child he had leprosy and was sent to Senegal for medical treatment. During his stay in Senegal he heard molo (a lute) which he quickly learnt how to play. The molo became his 'baby'; he always slept with it in his bed.

One night he had a dream about a molo with many strings, not just one. This dream came back three times, and in the end Demba understood that he should not be alone with his instrument, he should play for the people. He also changed instrument to kontingba (lute with four strings) and kontingding (lute with 7 strings).

### 5.4 TECHNIQUES TO BE USED

In the following, some of the consequences of the methodological aspects discussed in 5.1 are summarised.

#### **5.4.1 PARTICIPATING OBSERVATION – THE TRAVELLER**

Since 1990 I have been ‘travelling’ alongside with jali Alagi Mbye. We have observed each other’s musical and everyday worlds and exchanged experiences. During the first years of developing the ‘Gambia-course’ at Malmö Academy of Music, I was present in Gambia, which gave me an opportunity to observe Alagi Mbye teaching western students.

I also spent 3 weeks in his home, following his wife Mariama Saho in her daily work as a female jali. Alagi Mbye and I have together toured in Sweden, making musical program for children. We have together planned and carried through the CD-recording with old masters and visited international conferences on music education, such as the International Society for Music Education World Conferences in both 1996 (the Netherlands) and 1998 (South Africa).

#### **5.4.2 INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES – PROMPTS, AVOIDING THE QUESTION**

The interviews in this study may appear to be interviews on the surface, but they should rather be regarded as conversations. This is most clear in the interviews made with Alagi Mbye as my interpreter. There are questions, but when Alagi Mbye puts them, he becomes my solution to the ‘art of avoiding the question’. The prompts that have been most important are my own dancing and above all, Alagi Mbye’s way of playing kora-ostinatos to his questions (see 5.1.6).

#### **5.4.3 SELECTIVE MEMORY – CONVERSATIONS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN RECORDED**

Of course there have been many conversations between Alagi Mbye and me that have not been recorded, and therefore not transcribed. However, they are stored in my selective memory, and have helped in developing the theoretical sensitivity that is at the core of the present study. This implies that I have made active use of my own pre-understanding, which has effected the theoretical position I have chosen to deal with the collection of the data and the analysis of it.

#### **5.4.4 FEED-BACK FROM ALAGI MBYE IN 2001**

In order to strengthen the relevance and quality of the empirical study, a preliminary version of the thesis was presented to Alagi Mbye in October 2001. At this occasion we also spent more time extending the interview in Basse, and focusing on the kora-ostinatos and how they were used.

#### 5.4.5 THE PRESENT ETHNOMUSICOLOGIST

As Gourlay (1978) points out in the article on 'the missing ethnomusicologist', empirical work does include the researcher, by definition, and because of that some unavoidable constraints follow:

*Personal constraints*, which in my case would be my inability to grasp the many dimensions of communication involved in this study.

*Situational constraints*, which in my case is the field situation where my presence has been a constraint on what I wish to observe.

*Universal constraints*, which in my case is my own worldview influencing all concepts about aims and methods (see 5.1.5).

#### 5.5 DEVELOPMENT OF KEY QUESTIONS

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the focus of my interest has shifted during the years. My initial plan was to study the female repertoire in Mandinka tradition. A pilot study was undertaken, after which I decided to change my focus to the process that Alagi Mbye found himself in when starting his music school. As a result of this, however, the underlying questions of how the Mandinka culture regards the concepts of teaching and learning music started to crystallise. However, it was not until February 1998, when Alagi Mbye spent one week at my hotel room in Gambia, translating the interviews from the village musicians into his own 'Gambian English', that I started to realise what kind of questions he (or I) had used in the interviews.

My questions, translated by Alagi to the informants, were on the surface level quite simple. I just wanted to know if jalis think that it is important for children to learn music, and if so, what they believe is the best way of achieving this. The translating process with Alagi Mbye showed that these questions were never answered. Still the material was full of information on what I was searching for – particularly in terms of attitudes to learning and teaching traditional music.

The interview in Basse was the turning point. This is where I completely lost control over the interview situation. It was Alagi Mbye and his accompaniment on the kora that produced the richest answer, a partly recited, partly sung version of the birth of Sunjata Keita, intertwined with opinions on teaching and learning music. It was only at this point that I started to realise that I had been successful in the art of avoiding the question.

##### 5.5.1 TIMELINE

My conversations with Alagi Mbye started in 1990, but the first formal interview with him was from 1993, made by one of the students from

Malmö Academy of Music (Sæther, 1993). In this study my own interviews from 1996, 1997, and 1999 form the core data. The village musicians were all recorded in February 1998. A preliminary version of my findings was presented to Alagi Mbye in October 2001, which allowed him to provide feedback on the information that I had collated and to clarify specific points as well as provide new information.

### **5.5.2 STATEMENT OF THE KEY ISSUES**

I would like to regard myself as the 'traveller' (Kvale, 1997), the kind of researcher who constructs knowledge in and interplay with the co-travellers, the informants. My co-traveller, jali Alagi Mbye, has made it possible for me to avoid questions by using a very special interview technique. His playing and my dancing, in combination with the insider/outsider competence that we have developed during the years in each other's cultures, have helped to achieve a greater insight into the thinking on music education that is deeply embedded inside the Mandinka tradition.

## **5.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

As stressed in the preceding sections, an important dimension of the current study was to 'avoid asking the question'. Realising the consequences of the 'attending ethnomusicologist' I have had to accept all the constraints that my presence creates. In a sense, this means that I have had to 'dance' through most of the conversations that form the core of the data, using the dance as a type of 'prompt', and therefore technique for obtaining data. Dancing also serves as a metaphor for the process of analyses, which involved 'circle movements' between the theory, the selective memory, the transcripts and the recordings. Dancing together with my informant, co-researcher and co-traveller jali Alagi Mbye, the accompaniment has come both from the 21-stringed kora and the questions concerning the Mandinka 'insider perspective' on music teaching and learning.

The basic form of data - or rather conversations - has been gathered across many years of meeting jali Alagi Mbye in different settings. However, the core data are interviews with Alagi Mbye recorded in 1996, 1997, 1999 and 2001. The village musicians and the Kanuteh brothers were all recorded and interviewed in 1998.

These interviews have titles that consist of quotations, chosen because they indicate the main theme of each interview:

With Alagi Mbye:

## Chapter 5

- 'I'm having the swords now'. Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, 2001, Lund.
- 'Changing ideas doesn't mean that you have to change yourself completely'. (Tuesday the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 1996, MAM).
- 'A career as a musician I don't think can prevent you from teaching'. (Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, 1997.) The interview was made in his home in Serekunda, Gambia, and filmed by Maria Becker.)
- 'You have to be intellectual in music to satisfy the people'. Aesthetics from a Gambian perspective. (Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, 1999, Lund).
- 'When I say the African method I mean my ear'. (Tuesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, 1996, ISME, Malmö).

With village musicians:

- 'You don't have to talk much' (Interview with Momodu Camara, "Magasina", Saturday the 31<sup>st</sup> of January, 1998, in Njoba Kunda).
- 'This music is the everyday life of the people'. (Lang and Ousman Sonko, Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, 1998, Katamina village.)
- 'It's our duty to teach them'. (Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, 1998, Katamina village. The female leader Mai Njie with the title 'nyansinba' is interviewed about the Mamo masque. Mamo dances every year when the rains are to come, and he will give prophecies of the coming year).
- 'I just loved it' (Interview with Juldeh Sowe, riti-player, Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, 1998 in Katamina village).

With the Kanuteh family:

- 'To know more about ourselves in the future' (Interview with Ahmadu Kanuteh and Kebba Kanuteh, Basse, Monday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, 1998. The whole interview turned out as a lesson in history about the origin of Mandinka culture, concentrating on the most important event in Mandinka history; the birth of the big hero Sunjata Keita. This is embedded in thoughts about teaching and learning).
- Kanuteh songs. The women play an important role in the jaliya, as masters of the song tradition. In these songs, performed before the actual interview, the women improvise on heroes, the world in general and our visit in particular.

The interview with the Kanuteh brothers is provided in its complete form in the appendix (pp. 133-146) of this dissertation. The interview with the Kanuteh brothers also exists as a CD-recording and is attached to this dissertation, in order to illustrate how the music leads the talking and vice versa. References to the CD are provided in the appendix with track number and time on the actual track.

## CHAPTER 6: RESULTS

On February 2, 1998, I sat under a mango tree with the Kanuteh family in Basse, Gambia, listening to beautiful kora music - it appeared. Certainly Alagi Mbye was sitting there, playing enchanting ostinatos on his kora. The wives and singers of the compound occasionally joined the kora with a suitable song, and occasionally some of the children danced in an absent-minded way - while others slept, made *attaya*, plaited their hair or cooked - but this was not a concert. This was the scenario for what turned out to be the most important interview in my Gambian fieldwork.

The present chapter, presenting the results of the empirical study, has four sections: 'Inside the jali culture', 'Outside the jali culture', 'The Oral University', and 'Inside and outside the Oral University - the multicultural jali'. The first part deals with the intellectual perspective from the jali-musicians (i.e. the Kanuteh brothers and Alagi Mbye), and the second deals with the perspective of the 'village musicians'. The third part serves as a conclusion of these two perspectives: 'The Oral University'. The fourth part refers to interviews and conversations with jali Alagi Mbye. These reflect his response to the meetings with a Swedish way of teaching. This last section adds more insight to what is mentioned in the section 'Inside the jali culture', and moves between the emic and etic perspectives respectively through the reflections of Alagi Mbye.

In all sections, references are frequently given to the interviews. In the appendix, the full transcript of the interview with the Kanuteh brothers is presented. All of the interviews have been translated from Mandinka or Fula to English by jali Alagi Mbye. I have edited the syntax and the grammar to enable reading, but still some of the 'Gambian English' is kept intact in order to retain the context and special flavour of the interviews. Mandinka, an oral language, is a language full of proverbs and the use of metaphors is frequent. When Alagi Mbye translates his mother tongue Mandinka into English, some of these poetic traits are also transmitted.

The interview with the Kanuteh brothers, in which Alagi Mbye plays the kora during the whole interview to inspire the masters to talk and sing, is also attached as a CD, since it can be listened to in many ways: as a concert, as a story, and as a research interview. Listening to the interview on the CD, reveals that the Mandinka oral version contains many more words than the English written translation. Accordingly, the

references in the text to tracks on the CD indicate sections rather than words.

Before continued reading of this chapter, and the thematic presentation of the results, it is highly recommended to listen to the complete interview with the Kanuteh brothers on the CD, recorded under the mango tree at the Kanuteh family's compound in Basse, Gambia.

## 6.1 INSIDE THE JALI MUSICAL CULTURE

The core conversation of this study was collected on Monday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1998 with the jali brothers Ahmadu and Kebba Kanuteh. This interview is the one where jali Alagi Mbye starts to act as my co-researcher instead of being a mere informant. Alagi Mbye asks questions that he thinks are relevant to me. Being a young jali himself, he also brings forward themes that are important to him, especially in terms of his role as a headmaster of a music school for *all* children, not only the jali-children. Most importantly, his inside position provides him with the tools necessary for making the masters talk. During the conversation he constantly plays ostinatos on the kora, that are linked to different parts in the Mandinka history, and which inspire the Kanuteh brothers to develop different issues.

Before the interview took place, the jali musos of the compound had performed for us, and in their improvisations of these songs the old men contributed occasionally with spoken comments. These are therefore included in this section, to give extra dimensions to the themes that are mentioned in the long conversation under the mango tree.

### 6.1.1 HISTORY AND IDENTITY

The most evident and most expressed themes in the interview with the old masters from the Kanuteh family are history and identity. Many times they stress how important it is to ask questions about the art of jaliya. When asked what is important to teach a child, the immediate answer was:

And this is the necessary question to be asked in the black society. And this is the question that belongs to the whole black society because each and every one of us has inherited something. If you inherit something, and you are unable to say anything or unable to do anything about that thing, I think the inheriting is useless. And in Africa, here from our ancestors up to today, there is nothing more important than the jailya and the tradition. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 133)

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The reason for this is expressed, many times, with the wording 'to learn about yourself':

You, the child who is sent to a school to learn about yourself and the cultures of your ancestors should first of all stay away from all bad things and concentrate on the knowledge you are looking for. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 135)

Alagi's concluding remark also goes back to what was mentioned in the beginning of the interview:

Now where we stopped Sunjata is now born in Manding. What is left is what he was doing in Manding society during his life and we are thinking of continuing this work to know more about ourselves in the future. (Alagi Mbye, p. 146)

Ordinary schools are described by Alagi with quite a lot of scepticism. They are often referred to as 'colonial'. The same picture is given by the Kanuteh brothers:

And going to primary ordinary schools should not prevent us from learning our culture...(Kebba Kanuteh, p. 136)

The Mandinka society is organised according to a hierarchic structure, which gives the jalis a special place. The Kanuteh brothers emphasise the peacemaking function of jaliya:

People have not come the same in this world, that's why people are doing different things. Jalis were peacemakers before. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 138-139 )

The most obvious proof that history and identity are the overriding themes for the Kanuteh brothers, is that they chose to answer Alagi Mbyes question by telling the long story about the birth of Sunjata Keita, the hero that marks the starting point of the Mandinka culture. The story starts long before the birth of Sunjata, in a period when the Mandinka people lived in exile, which gives the meaning of the word 'manding':

The rests of the Mandinkos who run away after the dead of the snake settled in a place where it's more difficult than where the snake was. The word manding means 'it's not nice'. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 140)

There are many things to learn while in exile, for example flexibility...

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...if you go to a village you meet the people dancing on one leg, don't cut your leg. But if you can, put it over your head...(Kebba Kanuteh, p. 140)

In the appendix (see p. 140) there is a long list of Sunjata's forefathers. The Kanuteh brothers want to emphasise this, not only to give extra depth to the story, but also to show that they master their art, the art of jaliya. It is one of their duties to keep the society together, by remembering all the names of the important families and individuals.

The women play an important role in jaliya. During the interview there were many activities going on besides the actual talking. Some women were plaiting their hair, some were playing, some cooking and some sleeping. But all the women and children paid attention to what was said. Suddenly one of the women stopped cooking and joined the story-telling by singing a song. The reason for this is that the Kanuteh brothers need their women to sing the story, as it is the female musicians who are usually the masters of the song tradition – the men play the kora. The brothers comment on this:

This is like bringing all the jalis as they were before when jalis were one. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 141)

The day Sunjata was driven away from Manding and was going to exile this ne<sup>4</sup> was the instrument played behind him by his jali muso. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 8)

The women have their own, instrument, the ne<sup>5</sup> and they were the musicians who followed Sunjata when he was driven away, a fact which provides them with extra status.

In the songs that the women perform before the actual interview, the role of the jali is elaborated, like, for example, in the song Lambango. The horses are often mentioned, leading the thoughts back to Sunjata's horses who helped him to win the final battle against the Suso king. Here the horses are needed to help the world in more general terms:

It's not easy to be a jali. I'm calling the horses. Horses are always nice, because I'm afraid of the world. (Assa Koyate, p. 1)

I call the horses, horses that have been carrying the heroes all over the world will never be forgotten. Horses have done a beautiful job. (Kundo Kanuteh, p. 5)

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<sup>5</sup> The ne is reserved for female jalis, and is used to accompany their songs. It consists of a piece of iron and an iron stick, together functioning as a stick..

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The jali has to find a balance between the kings – or the people who have the power – and the people:

But if you, a jali, want to sing for a king, sing for a king who will have sympathy for the people. Sing for a king who will be ready to say what he has to share with his people, be it his wealth or his ideas. (Assa Koyate, p. 2)

Doing things for people, before you do something for somebody, make sure you are doing it for the right person. (Kankaba Kanuteh, p. 6)

...always remember your friend...(Kankaba Kanuteh, p 7,)

At this point, the female jali stresses that it's not enough to have a good voice. Education is more important:

In jaliya if you don't die early you will hear and see a lot of things. I'm now on my knees for my parents. Singers and well known people are not the same. Some have beautiful voices but the knowledge is not far. (Kankaba Kanuteh, p. 2-3)

The female singers and male singers educated and uneducated, we cannot be the same. (Kundo Kanuteh, p. 4)

Heroes are not only made with sword and guns. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 5)

The singer is complaining about the fact that both jalis and kings have forgotten their respective responsibilities. The jalis by neglecting education, and the leaders by being corrupt. This is mentioned several times by different members of the family:

Useful people are very little now. (Kundo Kanuteh, p. 4)

But now people with money or many tricks are known as the kings now. But if you give somebody something that doesn't belong to him it's always a problem. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 4)

Female jalis and male jalis we are now not seeing any kings who can leave us in peace. (Kundo Kanuteh, p. 5)

...the education they came with - this is still existing in their family because they were taking care of it and honest enough to give it to their children. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 5)

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It is also the jalis' role, in the Muslim society, to remind each other and the listeners about Allah, like in the song Allah lake:

That's why the song Allah lake is a very important song in the jaliya to remind us God's deeds. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 6)

My friend, my friend, God protects you from the greedy people, my friend. (Kankaba Kanuteh, p. 6)

Another function is to praise the kings or leaders, the Kanuteh brothers say that this is how standing up while playing the kora started, but according to them this is not the most typical way of playing:

They are used in the society for many occasions. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 7)

That was how standing playing the kora started. But the kora is meant to sit down and the audience will come around you and listen. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 7)

### 6.1.2 TRADITION FOR GOOD AND BAD

After a while the interview turns into a more focused discussion between jali Alagi Mbye and the Kanuteh brothers on how a jali should act according to traditional values. Are they to be regarded as static, unchangeable and almost holy, or is it possible to be more pragmatic or even critical? For Alagi Mbye this is a crucial point, as he has to break some of the taboos in the jali tradition to be able to realise his dream about a music school for all children. In the beginning of the discussion, the Kanuteh brothers act as strong defenders of the old and real tradition. When you start teaching a child you should start with the ritual:

My first answer to that question is to start from the roots how to learn a kora. In the old days people buy kola nuts and go to a village where the kora people are to give these kola nuts to the elders to start the kora. The elders will then distribute these kola nuts to the whole compound and to all the necessary people. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 134)

When leaning against the old rituals and rules, the Kanuteh brothers imagine the world as stable and firm:

Why are you afraid of the world? Because this world is the same world our ancestors were living before. Still the sun is rising from the east, going down to the west. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 1)

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Another reason for doing it the old way, is simply that jaliya is old - older than the Koran, older than the prophet:

Before the Koran came, jaliya was existing. Before the prophet Mohammed came, jaliya was existing and the prophet himself has his own jali who used to say the 201 good names of the prophet Mohammed for the people to know about him. The jaliya is a very old thing. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 137)

In the argumentation, jaliya is sometimes older than the Koran, and sometimes created by Allah. However, both are used for the same purpose, to give status:

We became jalis because of Allah. This jaliya is created by God. (Choir of the women, p. 1)

Sunjata Keita is the reason for jaliya, and the starting point. The music of the hero should be handled with respect, and the hierarchy of the jali-families as well:

...the song you are playing is not just played, something happened before this song come. Sunjata he has done something, he is not an angel, he is a human being, but a hard working human. Sunjata, Sumanguru Kante, Balafa Sege Koyateh are all heroes. That is why I say Koyatehs are the first jalis of Manding. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 137)

Sunjata Keita was a hard working man, and that is the lesson for all of us:

If you want something you have to work for it. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 138)

Economy is also part of the argumentation. If tradition is kept in a good way, it is also a way of feeding a big family:

You have seen the big family and I think I am in the benefit of the kora. God is now paying me the difficulties I've been through by making it possible for me and my brother Kebba feeding and taking care of this family with the kora and the jaliya. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 138)

After a while, Alagi Mbye tries to remind them of things in the tradition that might be troublesome, especially for the students. He is very successful in his attempt to change the Kanuteh brother's way of talking

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about tradition. Kebba Kanuteh even refers to this way of teaching as 'slavery':

All the women in the compound can also bring out all the dirty clothes of their husbands and themselves and tell you to go and fetch water from the well and wash these clothes. This is your masters clothes. And you have to wash this. After washing they can put you to another working... After doing all this for me, the master, my mind is still on the 30 dalasis you have to bring for me to get some of the secret things here... Even to me Kebba this is like a slavery or overworking the children. This is what I think some of them not getting the exact education they should get. (Kebba Kanuteh, pp. 135)

Later on, Ahmadu supports his younger brother:

I have been through a lot of very big difficulties but I don't even want to say them now. Pounding firewoods and everything, if you see me that time you will think I am the slave of somebody. The day they gave me the kora the first thing I did was thanking God the Almighty for freeing me from the catastrophe. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 138)

Alagi Mbye probably welcomed this turn in the conversation, but the double message also reflects his own struggle with the conflict between old and new values. Most important – he needs the elder defenders of the tradition on his side.

### 6.1.3 AUTHORISATION – THE MUNDIATO EVENT

Authorisation is an important subject in the interview. For Alagi Mbye it is crucial to hear from the Kanuteh brothers that what he is doing is not against the tradition – or rather against the will of the elders in the tradition. For the Kanuteh brothers quite a lot of time is spent demonstrating that they know what they are talking about, and that they are the appropriate experts to be interviewed. Telling the whole story of Sunjata's birth is one example of that. They also claim that the popular song 'Allah lake' is from their area, and therefore their version should be listened to:

On a day which is a Monday to come to us to do this beautiful gathering and sensible gathering we are very happy and will never forget this day for ever. Even if it is only one second we had together it's enough, but what I want to say, let the people and the jalis know that this song 'Allah lake' is from this area in the Basse, here. It was composed here. Not from Mali, not from La

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Guinea, not from Mauretania. It's from Gambia here and from the Basse area. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 7)

Before the interview starts, Alagi Mbye has spent some hours explaining to the Kanuteh brothers why we have come to them, and about his plans for the music school. Very early in the interview the Kanuteh brothers show that they appreciate his ideas:

For that matter I'm very happy today seeing people who have sympathy for us making us feel like our tradition is still worth it, we should give this education to our children. I'm appealing to all the jalis this is started because of the development of our culture and education of our children. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 134)

Encouraged by the support, Alagi Mbye puts a direct question to them about teaching the tradition in the classroom (p. 136). The answer comes in the form of a saying:

This work you have started seems to me like something you are sent to look for up in a very, very high mountain or a high tree, and this thing is lying in the mountain. You wake up early one morning, you see the thing lying just next to you. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 136)

They even start to get involved in the practical solutions, such as how to integrate the music school with the ordinary school:

Going to school to my observation children finish by 2 o'clock in the afternoon, come back to your home and eat. You can start the music school 3 o'clock to 5 o'clock. You can learn a lot if you are serious. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 136)

Alagi Mbye gets very strong support for his ideas, expressed in another saying, where he is compared to the king. The Kanuteh brothers will not hide anything from him, or to his friends, the tubabs:

If you have a problem with your traditional musician, you, the king, might die in the hands of your enemy because he knows all your secrets. This is why we will give you all the clear information we know because we feel very proud having you here, Alagi Mbye. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 137)

But if a horse is running if you hit the horse small it means to run more. And because of he and his friends are here to help all of us, all the jalis in the Gambia for the benefit of our children

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tomorrow, we are ready to give him all what we know to be able to develop this idea on behalf of my brother Ahmadu and the women of the compound, I Kebba Kanuteh in the name of the house of Manding I say thank you all. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 146)

He is a jali also, very intelligent, he can tell the tubabs, but he can only tell them what he knows. We are also telling you what we know. This is very important. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 3)

And they want to be involved as partners:

For example if we have a school in Nema Kunku a jali from Basse can teach there and will meet the jalis of Nema Kunku. I have seen a lot of oneness in this project. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 141)

Alagi does not have a typical jali family name, but the Kanuteh family know his history and claim that he is a Koyateh, which is a great honour to Alagi Mbye.

Alagi Mbye, when we go back to history, you belong to the Koyateh family, the leaders of the jalis in Manding . (Kundo and Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 4)

Even Allah is asked to help Alagi Mbye while he is breaking the taboos:

I'm praying to God to free you from pains in your hands and fingers and praying to Allah the Almighty not put you insane or mix your brain. Human sense is the first diamond God has given to a human being. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 138)

Allah is also referred to, as an extra reminder of the authorisation:

We became jalis because of Allah. This jaliya is created by God. (Choir of the women, p. 1)

It's done by God, not a human being, words of the human beings can be changed, but the words of God never change. (Choir of the women, p. 6)

When the actual interview is finished, Alagi Mbye finally gets the needed authorisation – and at the same time graduates as a jali. Before the interview started, Ahmadu Kebba had shown the mundiato to us, the wooden stick proving that the holder is a master of jaliya. As I had never seen a mundiato before, I wanted to check that I had understood the meaning of it correctly. After I had stated my question, Ahmadu went to

his hut and returned with the *mundiato* – and handed it over to Alagi Mbye. This was one of the few moments when I saw Alagi Mbye unable to use words. Only the most experienced and learned *jalis* can hold a *mundiato*. Afterwards, Alagi Mbye commented on his examination that it also served another function: the *mundiato* gives him the extra protection that he needs, as he is really too young to bear all his knowledge and at the same time challenge the tradition.

#### **6.1.4 TEACHING AND LEARNING FROM THE TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE**

A major theme of the interview was how to teach children music. However, the Kanuteh brothers did not provide a direct comment about this process, but every now and then, embedded in their story about the birth of Sunjata Keita, they touched on the topic.

These children, their parents, the reason of giving them to you is they respected you with the knowledge you have and you should think they look upon you as a very important person. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 134)

Key points emerged about the teacher's duty and responsibility such as the need for patience... :

But first of all a teacher should be somebody who has a lot of patience, who will know by himself these children are given to me to educate them. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 134)

... as well as sympathy:

You should have sympathy for these children. The only thing you can compare these children to is that you should treat them as your own children. (Kebba Kanuteh, p.134)

A teacher must also be well educated himself... :

Another important thing for a teacher, a teacher who is going to teach the children should have education himself, should be somebody well educated to be able to give good education. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 134)

... and make sure that his knowledge passes on to the next generation, to new teachers...

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Therefore you should not hide anything you know to give to these children. That will benefit them tomorrow so that they can also teach when they grow up. (Kebba Kanuteh, , p. 134)

High moral standards are important for a good teacher, according to the Kanuteh brothers:

Teachers should be careful not bringing personal problems in the class. If you fight with a child's father, this doesn't mean that you should not educate this child because your are not in good terms with his father. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 137)

The Kanuteh brothers have a generous definition of education. It is something to be given away. By giving, you teach:

Education is very wide and open, you will know something but not everything. The rest others will know that also but by giving this to Alagi Mbye he knows it all. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 145)

### 6.1.5 TEACHING AND LEARNING FROM THE CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE

Responsibility was a frequent theme when talking from a teacher's perspective. When changing to the children's perspective the same theme had a prominent position.

The first advice I want to tell the students: by seeing people who come to us to teach our own children not their culture, but our culture, they should know that this culture is worth it and will be worth it for ever. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 135)

The Kanuteh brothers want the children to stay away from 'bad things' - things that belong to the modern society.

You the child who is sent to a school to learn about yourself and the culture of your ancestors should first of all stay away from all bad things and concentrate on the knowledge you are looking for. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 135)

This might be interpreted as an argument for not changing anything in the old traditional way of teaching, which troubled Alagi Mbye. Therefore he asked what they think about bringing the tradition into the classroom. To his relief they replied that this is good for the children.

... it is a big difference, but the difference in this is in the favour of the children. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 135)

What they mean when advising the children to stay away from 'bad things' is clarified later:

Why I'm saying all this is to advice the children who are going to school to concentrate on what they are there for. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 138)

Despite these comments, there still seems to be a contradiction between their support for the classroom teaching and their references to the old way of teaching.

This is also a song in the tradition. After starting with 'Kelefaba' as a beginner you come to 'Allah lake' and then you come to 'Jaka'. The rest is up to how you are keen and how much your master knows. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 7)

#### **6.1.6 ON WRITING**

The Kanuteh brothers are great masters of an oral tradition, living in a time when it is not obvious that their competence will be transmitted to the next generation. They are anxious that what they say will be listened to in the future, and they know that the art of remembering is rare. Anyway, the tubabs don't know it.

Before the tubabs came to Africa, Africans were very clever by knowing and remembering things that are not written. (Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 3)

But the tubabs know how to write, and maybe that can be used:

I'm giving this, maybe there will be some of you reading this in books in future. (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 139)

Just like the narrator has to be careful with 'the truth', the writer has to be careful with the written words:

The jali sense of human is very wide and that is the way it should be. What I'm saying here I know the tubabs are going to write it, but if you see people arguing on something written it must be a mistake in the writing or the narrator of that article doesn't speak the truth. The jalis should not play with their sense...(Ahmadu Kanuteh, p. 3)

The above recommended use of literal transmission in an oral context leads back to Ruth Finnegan's criticism of the technological deterministic

model which rests on a belief that orality and literacy are polar typologies (see Chapter 4). Her research shows that in different cultures orality and literacy can overlap, depending on use and function. Different media give different opportunities, and it is human choices and activities that decide which techniques for transmission that will be used.

### 6.1.7 OSTINATO CHANGING STORY

It was long after the interview was made, at home, listening to the interview while working with the transcription that I noticed that Alagi Mbye changed the *ostinatos* of the *kora* at certain points. When asking him about this he laughed and said ‘aha, you discovered that’. Then he explained to me how the whole intellectual battle between *jali* Alagi Mbye and the Kanuteh brothers is manifested in the music.

The whole interview starts with the song ‘Allah lake’ because this is an important song to the Kanuteh brothers, which Alagi Mbye is well aware of. When he wants to inspire the older brother Ahmadu to join the conversation he heats up the atmosphere by changing to ‘Sunjata Faso’ (CD: 7: 0.37). His comment to this is: ‘Now the whole book is opened’ (Alagi Mbye, p. 14).

After a while Ahmadu starts talking about king Falai who was a hardworking man, again stressing that if you want something, you have to work hard for it. He then mentions ‘Tutu Jara’ and other songs that have been played at important occasions, which conveys to Alagi the idea of changing to the *ostinato* of ‘Tutu Jara’. (CD: 8: 1.44). This throws the initiative back to Alagi, who comments this change like this: ‘I’m having the swords now...Now they are seeing everything, because of the songs’ (Alagi Mbye, p. 14).

The Kanuteh brothers start narrating the story about the Mandinkas who were living in exile, before the birth of Sunjata. This part of the story is about the snake who wanted to eat children from the village, and about the brave man who dared to kill the snake. In connection to this Alagi changes again, to ‘Old Tutu’ (CD: 10: 2.37). ‘Because Old Tutu reminds me of a great master of the *kora*. *Jali* Ahamadu Bansang Jobarteh. ...and when he was narrating the story of *musa Molo*, Ahmadu was playing ‘Old Tutu’ (Alagi Mbye, , p. 15).

When the story comes closer to the birth of Sunjata, and the ancestors names are mentioned, Alagi adds to the tension by changing to ‘Sunjata Simbon’ (CD: 11: 2.45). The Kanuteh brothers reaction is a shout: ‘Oh, *abaraka*’ (thank you).

Now I put another sword on them. (Laughing). Now he is on the life of Sunjata and this is why I play the real Sunjata...The screaming here is – *Kebba* said one proverb that ‘fire cannot come without smoke. Smoke comes and then fire and the wood burns

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and then charcoal comes'. (Sunjata is the charcoal, my comment) (Alagi Mbye, p. 16).

This point is the climax of the interview. It is the most intense moment, and Alagi's new ostinato therefore also has the function of calming and releasing the previous tension.

This is to cool them down after a long talk. (Laughing). And also in that they feel like 'all what we have been saying, this is the witness of it'. That song is the witness of all we have said. (Alagi Mbye, p. 16)

After this intense moment the women, who up to this point have been busy cooking or cleaning, join the story (CD: 12). The first song is not sung by a member of a Koyateh family, which would normally be the case. She was just not present at the time, Alagi explains. But as soon as she comes, Ahmadu calls for her to provide her part.

Normally the Koyateh start the singing among jalis. It is also the nyama they are talking about. When the Koyateh has started there is no nyama that can harm the others. (Alagi Mbye, p. 16)

The Kanuteh wants to tell Alagi Mbye how the jaliya started, as a part of the answer to the question about children and music teaching. There is a dramatic point in the story about the birth of Sunjata, which explains this. A lot of witches had tried to kill the baby, but the king's jali went into the house and found the newborn hero safe (CD: 18:2.18). 'This is where the praising of the jaliya started' (Kebba Kanuteh, p. 145).

Another part of the answer comes at the end, when the Kanuteh brothers talk about education in general, 'education is very wide and open' (Kebba Kanuteh, , p. 145). The final song is Sunjata Simbon, and Alagi chooses this end because: '... we are all together' (Alagi Mbye, p. 17).

## **6.2 OUTSIDE THE JALI MUSICAL CULTURE**

Not all musicians have the same education as the Kanuteh brothers and jali Alagi Mbye. I have chosen to call the other musicians, who are still great masters but not so skilled in history and theory, the 'village musicians'. In this section their thoughts on teaching music to children are summarised.

### 6.2.1 DON'T TALK

In the tiny village Njoba Kunda we found bolon master 'Magasina'. It was not difficult at all to get him to play, and after only a few minutes the dance had started. Talking, however, was not so easy. 'Magasina' answered in short sentences, all the time playing his bolon:

Starting with a child on bolon or kora or to make music you don't have to talk much. You just have to show the child the exact thing...The teacher has to be very polite to the child. (Momodu Camara, p. 54)

In Katamina village, not far from Njoba Kunda, the Sonko brothers who play mandinka drums follow the same line; don't talk to much, and don't stop the child from playing:

First of all the most important thing to a child who wants to learn the drum is not to forbid him from what he wants to do. You have to give him courage and also the important procedure for a child is you the elder should support. (Lang Sonko, p. 57)

The teacher's role is above all to play good music, and encourage the children, says riti-player Juldeh Sowe:

The first important thing for a beginner, a child, is that the child likes the music and wants to do it. Children are not thinking of 'I'm becoming a master' or 'I will get a lot of money', they don't have that sense when they are little. When they see something they like, that is the time to give them courage. (Julde Sowe, p. 64)

For Juldeh Sowe himself, it was the love for the instrument that gave him the inspiration to play, not the teacher:

When I was a child and heard the ritisi playing I always loved it. And then I started to do it, and then I started to follow people. But there was no specific teacher for me. I just loved it... (Juldeh Sowe, p. 64)

### 6.2.2 THE EVERYDAY LIFE

The Sonko brothers play an important role in their village. They are highly appreciated, and very much needed:

This music is the everyday life of the people. They need it in the rice fields. They need it in the gardens. They need it. (Lang Sonko, p. 57)

In Katamina village we are invited to listen to the Mamo masque – the one who tells the villagers about the coming year's harvest, rain and other important things. It is the female leader in the village, Mai Njie, who explains the Mamo to us, but she also talks about the children and the music:

It's our duty to teach them. That's why we take them with us when we are dancing the Mamo or singing the Mamo. Sometimes we dance with them when we have time with them at home we explain to them some of the songs. (Mai Njie, p. 59)

### **6.2.3 THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION**

Though he is a man of few words, 'Magasina' says something about the spiritual dimension of his instrument. He is actually the only one who touches upon this area, even if this topic seems to be present all the time, under the surface.

Yes, the more use you make of the instrument, the more spiritual it gets. The more social, the more spiritual. (Momodu Camara, p. 56)

He mentions the voodooos that the student will get from his master. Even in the kora tradition there are some special rituals; for example, the treatment for the hands of the new student, before he is allowed to touch the instrument.

After all the necessary traditional events until you have your bolon the master will also give you some special voodooos for this bolon that you will use or drink to get as much connection or contact with the instrument as possible. (Momodu Camara, p. 56)

### **6.2.4 AUTHORISATION BY DANCE**

The body seems to be more important than the talking. When the Kanuteh brothers stress that kora music should be listened to seated, it is the opposite to 'Magasina'. He would be disappointed if people sat down.

You are a master when people start to dance when you hit the bolon. It is through the dancing you know. (Momodu Camara, p. 55)

### 6.3 THE ORAL UNIVERSITY

The two previous sections reflect the emic and the etic perspectives respectively in different ways. The first part, 'Inside the jali culture' is clearly impregnated with the emic perspective as Alagi Mbye does the interview with the Kanuteh brothers, acting like an insider in my research culture and at the same time using the kora to guide the conversation. The second part, 'Outside the jali culture', is more coloured by the etic perspective, since Alagi Mbye merely serves as a translator of my questions, even though I try to act like an insider in his culture by, for example, dancing when the music requires dance.

There are clear differences between the themes from inside and outside of the jali culture. While the 'insiders' highlight questions about culture, identity and education, the 'outsiders' talk about 'not talking', dancing and the spiritual dimension. All of the interviewed musicians are highly skilled, as musicians, and some of them also have great skills as historians or intellectuals. This second group, which I have chosen to call the 'insiders', can be compared to the professors within a Western university. They have the highest academic degree, in their case the *mundiato*. The first group can be compared to students or teachers at lower levels within a Western university, in their case the Oral University.

### 6.4 INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ORAL UNIVERSITY - THE MULTICULTURAL JALI

In this section the multifaceted identity of jali Alagi Mbye is under the magnifying glass. With one leg, he is firmly rooted in the jali tradition, with the other he is moving around in the world – something that is not always easy.

#### 6.4.1 MALMÖ-INFLUENCES

In the interview with the Kanuteh brothers, Alagi Mbye uses the word 'universities'. This is not a part of the Mandinka vocabulary, and I was somewhat surprised by his use of it. But to himself this is clear.

I use 'universities', relating it to the traditional schools. Because these traditional schools are where all the music comes from. So these are the first 'universities', before we have big buildings...They will feel their home like a 'university', because there has been many, many great musicians that have passed through these old homes. (Alagi Mbye, p.11)

## *Results*

Alagi Mbye has an inside experience from a Swedish university, from the time he spent one semester as a guest student at the Malmö Academy of Music. That meeting served to encourage him to reflect on many issues, including the use of time.

As I start to travel to Sweden to meet Malmö Academy and many times in the school there looking into people, how the people are moving in this building, going up and down, back and forward, it gives me another experience of how busy a school should be and how busy a teacher or a student should be if you are working on music. (Alagi Mbye, p. 17)

Also the different methods of teaching had been an inspiration:

And also the teaching part of the project itself has been a real...exchanging ideas to my side in the way I work with teachers who have better experience than me on teaching. (Alagi Mbye, p. 18)

Coming from a very hierarchic society, the meeting with democratic Sweden was sometimes confusing...

I'm seeing that both the students and the teachers in the school there, you never know who is who. (Alagi Mbye, p. 19)

...but also very useful.

I think it's a very beautiful way of combining with the students and a lot of meetings and discussions about what they are doing...This we don't have before...Many things we do is not planned, so I feel before you come out with good results of what you are doing you have to plan for it. (Alagi Mbye, p. 19)

Since Alagi Mbye liked this relationship between the teachers and the students, he has changed his own approach to his students.

They are not afraid of me any more as I was afraid of my teacher and my grand father and my uncle... We can sleep on the same bed. (Alagi Mbye, p. 19-20)

He is also trying to make the students more concentrated. Practice is normally not mentioned in Mandinka tradition - you just play.

Now I'm putting my students also on that practice, to concentrate. It comes to me that concentration on what you are doing can give you a lot of experience. (Alagi Mbye, p. 20)

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The influences of people outside his own tradition have been very important, even necessary:

Before you start doing something you must take ideas, either ideas from people or meet musicians first or different students or different cultures from yours. (Alagi Mbye, p. 25)

Without them he would not have been able to develop a concept of how to start the school...

First of all putting African music in a classroom. (Alagi Mbye, p. 25)

... or teaching other instruments in addition to the kora.

Instead of the students learning only kora from me, now we have different teachers who are giving lessons on different instruments. That was another experience from having the possibility to being a part of a multicultural society. (Alagi Mbye, p. 47)

### 6.4.2 TEACHING CHILDREN IN AFRICA

Sometimes, when talking about children and music, Alagi Mbye thinks the 'African' way. This means, for example, thinking of every musician as a teacher.

Because every musician has been taught by someone. Every musician in this world, I believe you are a teacher. (Alagi Mbye, p. 25)

It also includes another use of time than the Western way...

My teaching is always like a continuous process. (Alagi Mbye, p. 26)

... and the emphasis on the ear.

When I say the African method I mean my ear. I was listening to him very much. I was listening and watching my teacher, this is the way we do. (Alagi Mbye, p. 46)

The African teacher has a duty to teach, no matter what time of the day or night.

## *Results*

Because my students are not afraid to come and knock my door in the middle of the night to come and teach them the kora. And it's my duty to wake up. (Alagi Mbye, p. 46-47)

There are also secrets in every family that the teacher is not supposed to share with anyone else.

But music is kept together with the history, there is always a secret in any jali family which will not be given to anybody except the one next to you. (Alagi Mbye, p. 51)

There are problem with the 'African' way. Alagi mentions that aggression is one of them.

'Allah lake' was made to solve a big family problem. If our mind is having problems we cannot put anything inside our heads...Many, many places in Africa, in the classrooms, even in the homes, people beat the children when they want to teach them something. (Alagi Mbye, pp. 11-12)

Another problem is the teacher's attitude towards the student.

... old masters of this tradition are very strict teachers. They have very little contact with their students, they are like small Gods. (Alagi Mbye, p. 27)

### **6.4.3 CHALLENGING THE TRADITION**

As a result of the meetings with other cultures, Alagi Mbye has chosen to develop his own in a way that might offend the old masters. For example, a jali should only teach jali children, according to the rules. When breaking the rules, Alagi Mbye knows that he is taking a huge risk of being excluded or punished.

... when I was trying to break in to this tradition there are many difficulties I went through. Some cannot even be explained...You have to take care, or that secret part of the tradition will destroy you. So I went to them to talk to them, to make them change and compare the difference between the old school and what we are trying to do. (Alagi Mbye, p. 13)

The interview with the Kanuteh brothers was a great opportunity for him to try to convince them of his sincerity and to get them on his side.

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By letting them remember the overworking of children – that is when they change to the other side. (Alagi Mbye, p.13)

He knows the strategy and chooses the right topic for the right man.

Kebba is a suitable man for me to quickly understand the school questions, but when we come to the tradition I come to Ahmadu. (Alagi Mbye, p. 13)

The strategy to attract the young generation is to make the kora more flashy and modern. Extra strings and extraordinary style is useful, but trying to approach the politicians seems useless to Alagi.

I was working my head off to try to add some extra strings to the kora. It's 21 strings but I'm playing 24 now. On my back like Jimi Hendrix. These are the methods I'm using to put a little society together and stay away from politicians who have not very much interest in what we are doing. (Alagi Mbye, p. 49)

Alagi Mbye always stresses the important role of the women in Mandinka tradition. This helps him in his advocacy for allowing girls to study in the music school.

...But women have a very big role to play in the African music society...But what they told me was that it is not forbidden for a woman to play any of these instruments. Its just a practical thing that has started before. (Alagi Mbye, p. 50)

He is changing his role – a little – but still keeping some of the functions...

So I changed the role of the jali a little, I'm looking in the future and meeting people from different cultures. I'm seeing things that are possible for me to try. (Alagi Mbye, p. 52)

...in particular the function of spreading information.

...I'm using the role of the jali now by collecting papers from offices where they talk about the AIDS, I read the papers and I make a song about AIDS and sing to the people. (Alagi Mbye, p. 52)

### 6.4.4 REASONS FOR BREAKING THE TRADITION

There are many reasons for Alagi Mbye to challenge his own tradition. First:

## *Results*

The children are lack of concentration after the ordinary school, they have nothing more to do...When they grow up like that they involve in many, many bad things. (Alagi Mbye, p. 25-26)

second:

The culture is dying. (Alagi Mbye, p. 26)

third:

People who are not from the jali family will never touch a kora and to my observation ...there are some children who are musically talented, very intelligent, can be also part of music. (Alagi Mbye, p. 29)

and fourth:

It is to give the children an opportunity of music and learn about themselves. (Alagi Mbye, p. 31)

He also talks about four problems for African culture: colonisation, politics, tourism and the musicians themselves. And finally, some of the old masters' methods are not very useful: 'Yes, there are things that we have already changed' (p. 27).

### **6.4.5 REASONS FOR KEEPING THE TRADITION**

Challenging the tradition does not mean leaving it. For Alagi Mbye there are also many reasons to keep the tradition. First:

And there are some old things in this tradition that we will not change. It is how to welcome a student...I take care of him as my son and fulfil my duty to teach. (Alagi Mbye, p. 27-28)

second:

The second tradition we will not change is how to release a student to go. (Referring to the jury of the elders, my comment) (Alagi Mbye, p. 28)

third:

Because thousand miles journey starts with one step. The first step of music is traditional music. (Alagi Mbye, p. 39)

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and fourth:

Yes, because they have also the music to their own blood and to Sunjata Keita's blood. (Alagi Mbye, p. 40)

To Alagi Mbye it is sometimes a problem that the roles in the society are no longer kept in the old way.

People have no respect for their own things, said Ahmadu Jebateh. He said people from the hero families and the royal families and the leaders have gone another way and the jalis have gone another way. (Alagi Mbye, p. 41)

He appeals to all jalis to respect their own culture, and if they have to change, not to change totally.

So the jalis themselves must have respect for their culture. Because when things change, they change totally, instead of changing half and leave the half. (Alagi Mbye, p. 41-42)

Sometimes, he claims that his meetings with other cultures have not affected his way of playing the traditional tunes: 'That has not changed anything from my traditional playing (Alagi Mbye, p. 23).

There are some things which will never be changed. And elders will not allow us even to change that. That is the traditional way of teaching. (Alagi Mbye, p. 47)

The traditional way of teaching is sometimes worth keeping, sometimes not...

### 6.4.6 REFLECTIONS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The constant changes of perspective that the meetings with the Western way of teaching music has led to, forces a reflective approach to his own development. For Alagi Mbye there is a need for balance between the African and the Western way of thinking, which in the first place requires an awareness of what the most important experiences are.

First of all, it gives us a real experience of how valuable our tradition is. It gives us another experience, how valuable exchange of ideas is... The first valuable thing is, sometimes I come with these children to this farm to witness me teaching students from Sweden. This is now forcing my own children having their own school...(Alagi Mbye, p. 17)

## *Results*

Sometimes the meetings have been problematic, but he tends to regard this as something natural and necessary.

But I don't think we should talk about problems in this project. These are things that come through life if you start a thing like this. Before you come to the real development of the thing you have to go across many things. (Alagi Mbye, p. 18)

Our respective cultures are very different, but Alagi Mbye thinks that on a personal level, in spite of cultural differences, the co-operation has been easy.

It's not easy, two different cultures working together. But then, for some humanitarian reasons I think we have been working very good together. (Alagi Mbye, p. 18)

He would like other cultures and individuals to have the same opportunity to meet another culture, as he himself, and Mandinka culture has had.

Gambian culture is not only the kora, but Gambian culture generally is very rich. There's a lot of different cultures in Gambia that can be developed through such a kind of project working hand in hand with different countries, or different cultures of different teachers. (Alagi Mbye, p. 18)

When travelling to Europe, Alagi Mbye has seen many Gambians who try to survive as musicians in a foreign context. Some of them have not been musicians in Gambia, but change identity when they go abroad. Some really are musicians, but have lost their identity.

... there are things that I've seen from my own people living in this country that I don't even like...I want them to know that they are African musicians. I even want them to dress in African dress when they are playing. To feel like they are Africans and they are also valuable on their music...They can learn Western instruments, musically, and take Western studies, exchange of ideas. Changing ideas doesn't mean that you have to change yourself completely. (Alagi Mbye, p. 20)

Changing half is the solution:

This is what I want to do, like changing half, because the language now I'm speaking is English, it's not my language and I have learned it from the school but it will never prevent me from

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playing the kora or doing my culture. This is why I want children to understand that going to school, becoming a profession in office should not prevent you from playing the music, keeping the culture. You even are the one who can promote that culture, because you can read about it, write it down – and you can do it. (Alagi Mbye, p. 42)

If he had the chance he would have liked to give them advice.

I am just African. This is the thing I want to impose on them before they start travelling as I am doing. Not to change themselves or involve themselves into something that will not benefit them tomorrow. (Alagi Mbye, p. 21)

When talking about change or not change, he also includes European students.

It changes some of them, their mind, not to do one thing but to try another thing besides their own culture...(referring to European students in the Gambia, my comment) (Alagi Mbye, p. 21)

For everyone included there is one common element – listening:

... but when it comes to exchangements of ideas and talking and listening, listening is very important in exchangements of cultures. Listening is very important. (Alagi Mbye, p. 22)

To change, but to end up at home is his dream:

... it's hard to say where you are going to end up...I would like to be travelling, but end up being a teacher in Africa. (Alagi Mbye, p. 24-25)

And a career as a musician can never be a threat to his mission as a teacher.

A career as a musician I don't think can prevent you from teaching. (Alagi Mbye, p. 25)

At a practical level, it is starting and developing the school that is of the most importance to Alagi.

This Friday singing the children come together, some are drumming at the tables and they sing colonial songs...I think it's high time for us to found a music school where we can teach the children about themselves. (Alagi Mbye, p. 26)

## *Results*

His school will combine methods from his own tradition with methods that he met in Europe.

The teaching side on that school will be very equal because we are using both methods. Methods of traditional and modern ideas I have from Europe to combine them together. (Alagi Mbye, p. 29)

Above all, it is the more equal relationship between the student and the teacher that inspires him.

When I start to travel here I feel like that's very stupid (referring to the old masters God-like position towards the students, my comment). You have to work hand in hand with your own students. This is how the student can be attached to the teacher and attached very much to the music you have. (Alagi Mbye, p. 19)

One concern of his is to convince other musicians to work with him. He does not want to put all the blame on the society when traditional musicians are put aside. He blames the individuals for not realising their own opportunities.

Because this modern society is affecting the tradition. But I don't think it has affected more. The people themselves are affecting themselves in their tradition. (Alagi Mbye, p. 30)

The jalis have also, according to Alagi Mbye, been too lazy.

So I think both ways, the society and the jalis themselves, but for the jali side the past years they were too lazy to teach, that is why that side became to fall down. (Alagi Mbye, p. 42)

He would like other Gambian musicians who are teaching Western students to join him, and also work at home for Gambian children.

Yes, we are using African teachers to teach them (referring to European students, my comment). I'm now telling these African teachers to join me and teach our own children also. (Alagi Mbye, p. 32)

Some meetings have been more important than others. One of the big surprises was when Alagi Mbye met late professor Dumusani Maraire from Zimbabwe at an ISME conference. At first he was not very impressed...

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But when I saw him playing the mbira then I know yes, this is a real professor now, because most of the African professors would never ever be able to be a professor and also pick up a kora, stand and play. (Alagi Mbye, p. 42)

The meeting with the Norwegian traditional fiddlers also stays in good memory. Two strict traditions cannot meet...

And I met these fiddlers from the west of Norway. They were playing very strict and very good. And I was also playing very strict. The first week we met it was a problem for us to push the music together. (Alagi Mbye, p. 53)

Alagi Mbye has, with time, become well aware of the large differences.

I experienced a lot and there is a very big difference of the way they teach their students and the African way of teaching the students. I have experienced a lot on both sides. (Alagi Mbye, p. 46)

### 6.4.7 SUNJATA AND THE MUSIC

The very fact that the whole interview with the Kanuteh brothers circles around the birth of Sunjata shows that music and Sunjata Keita cannot be separated. Music reflects the culture, and in Mandinka culture the story of Sunjata Keita is like a container for all important values. As Alagi Mbye puts it:

If you start Manding history, most of it starts with Sunjata. And that is because of these musicians and these heroes and music itself, that he has been taking care of. (Alagi Mbye, p. 34-35)

One of Alagi's favourite parts in the story is where the jalis start to discuss whether or not to stay with Sunjata Keita. Maybe he will not be able to pay them? Maybe it would be better to play for another king? Sunjata becomes angry and wants to show them how much he is prepared to pay for their music.

And if I don't have anything to feed you I will give from myself. And he gave them a proof. He cut himself. And the jalis were very scared. And they said to themselves: He is serious enough to take care of us. This is very serious... And they take this as a very serious thing that includes blood, and they make a song for that (Sunjata faso, my comment). (Alagi Mbye, p. 35-36)

#### **6.4.8 THE POWER OF MUSIC**

Sunjata Keita cut his own muscle – thereby symbolically linking the jalis to the rulers with his own blood and flesh. The rulers have to be prepared to sacrifice for the jalis, and the jalis must know that they have a place in society, linked to the power. According to Alagi Mbye ‘in the society it’s the power of music’ (p. 36). He also refers to how old masters talk and think about music:

They describe it as everything. It means everything to them. Because it’s powerful, beautiful and also music is something attached to everyday life. (Alagi Mbye, p. 36)

Music is the power that keeps society together, by the position of the jalis, and by its attachment to everyday life.

That is why music is powerful in Mandinka society. In society every corner...If you have a house here, every corner is built on music (Alagi Mbye, p. 36)

Alagi Mbye himself talks about three different powers of music. The first is the moving power:

...I can say it’s three different powers I know of music. The first power of music is the moving power of music...there must be one thing that can even move the whole world. If you touch that thing in music, the whole world will move. (Alagi Mbye, p. 37)

The second power relates to listening inwards:

The second power of music is meditating music. Music that can be inside you which is also very, very powerful. Meditating music always is quiet. You can only create meditating music when you listen to yourself. (Alagi Mbye, p. 37)

The third power is destructive:

The other power of music I know is the aggressive power of music. Aggressive music is first of all very, very loud music. We have music in Africa; those songs are created for war. If you touch that music people come out with swords and guns. (Alagi Mbye, p. 37)

### 6.4.9 THINKING AND DOING

When talking to the 'village musicians', the actual doing of music is emphasised. In the Kanuteh interview, however, the thinking is stressed. To Alagi Mbye there is no contradiction in this:

Yes, thinking and doing are connected in music and it's a very narrow road between them. (Alagi Mbye, p. 43)

But, according to him, doing is not enough:

You have to be intellectual in music to satisfy the people. (Alagi Mbye, p. 40)

It seems as if it is the connection between the two poles that is the most important to him:

There is one old saying: seeing, listening, thinking and doing were arguing who is the oldest. Seeing is the oldest, because before you think something you see it first. And then you will listen and think of it, and then do it. This is a big argument in our society. But I think they are very much connected. (Alagi Mbye, p. 40)

The striving for a balance between the two poles doing and thinking is not only of personal importance to Alagi Mbye. This issue also leads up to Chapter 7, where the findings from the study are discussed, starting with a discussion on Western ways of balancing the two poles.

## 6.5 SUMMARY

Delving deeper into the conversations with the musicians 'inside' and 'outside' the jali musical culture, the thematic outcome is differing. While the 'insiders' highlight the intellectual dimension of music education expressed in thoughts on culture and identity, and with references to the Sunjata orature, the 'outsiders' highlight the practical instrumental training dimension of music education, expressed, for example, by praising 'the art of not talking' as a way of teaching, and claiming that the master level and position is reached when people start to dance to your playing.

These differences in attitudes towards music teaching and learning reflect different ways of expressing knowledge.

The insiders and the outsiders of the jali culture together constitute a body of knowledge: 'the Oral University'.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The focus of the present study is on attitudes to teaching and learning music in a strong oral tradition. The background of the study is to a large extent found in the ongoing debate on how Swedish institutions need to change when monocultures are substituted by multicultures. However, the research question concerns one specific culture, the Mandinka, which in this project has been studied through the interaction of insider and outsider perspectives from my own culture as well as the culture of jali Alagi Mbye.

In stressing the unique structure and organisation of the jali-education I have chosen to use Western terms, even if they do not exist in the Mandinka world. First of all, the jali and jali muso do not talk about his/her institution or university. In this sense, terms such as these serve more as a metaphor or a reflection of the findings of my study. The invisible Oral University in the Mandinka culture educates jalis while the Malmö Academy of Music educates music teachers.

The sections of this chapter are organised according to the following structure:

- 'Another university', which discusses the existence of the Oral University and touches on contradictions and differences within this institution;
- 'A jali's solution', which discusses how jali Alagi Mbye navigates inside and outside his Oral University;
- 'Critical issues', which concludes the Gambian perspective;
- 'Educational consequences', which discusses society, schools and intercultural understanding, and
- 'Conclusion', which summarises the study in three subsections: 'Oral University', 'Inside and outside' and 'Future research'.

### 7.1 ANOTHER UNIVERSITY

In most Western cultures, there are established practices for dealing with both the theory and the practice of knowledge. In an ideal learning situation there is a balance between the two, where the learner is taught both how to do something and how to articulate and explain how it is done. In this sense, 'know how' (Rolf, 1991) refers to the learner's ability to do something as a result of practical first-hand experience, whereas

'knowing' refers to a learner's theoretical or conceptual knowledge about how to do something divorced from practical experience (see Chapter 4).

For the purposes of this dissertation, 'knowing' refers to the dynamic aspects of learning, in contrast to the more static 'knowledge' (Heiling 2000, Folkestad 1996, Rogoff 1995, Lave & Wenger 1991, Nielsen & Kvale 1999).

This distinction between different types of knowledge has also been described in other terms, like, for example, 'propositional knowledge' versus 'procedural knowledge' (Stubley, 1992). According to Stubley(1992) 'procedural knowledge' introduces 'a new orientation to epistemology in which knowing is not restricted to words and other symbols, but is also manifested in doing' (p. 13). In most Western cultures there is a tendency to view 'other' cultures as being more 'practical' and less 'theoretical'. According to this élitist perspective, Western cultures have something to give to 'them' and not vice versa (see chapter 4).

The conversations with the Mandinka musicians show that this idea of 'the other' as being less sophisticated is not applicable. There is a distinction between the themes that emerge inside the jali musical culture and the ones emerging outside the jali musical culture. There are intellectuals in the Mandinka society who reflect deeply and critically on various aspects of their culture, and there are musicians who are more practical 'doers'. The difference between the two types are reflected in the way of using words – the 'doers' suggest that talking should be avoided, while the intellectuals claim the opposite – that you 'have to be intellectual in music in order to satisfy the people'. All musicians interviewed represent the Mandinka culture, and the results clearly demonstrate different layers within that culture. The difference between the themes highlights the existence of what has been described as the Oral University in the Mandinka culture.

### 7.1.1 A GLOBAL SYSTEM

Green (2001) presents a description of what she calls the 'global' music education system that is embedded in the European term 'university' (see Chapter 4). In Figure 4 I have used her categories and compared them to the findings of the present study.

In Green's (2001) view, the distinction between formal and informal systems seems irrelevant because different systems emanate from various types of socio-economical, technological, geographical and other factors. In terms of the present study, the Oral University could be regarded as one of these systems.

The statement by jali Alagi Mbye that you have to be intellectual in music to satisfy the people, carries a lot of information. It highlights the importance of theoretical knowledge. In his view it is not sufficient just to be able to play the kora or any other instrument. The context from which his comments are made reflects his African intellectual heritage, which means that he is stimulated by other intellectuals, be it inside or outside

## Discussion and Conclusion

his own culture. In this context he is at ease, and able to discuss his views on the Western debate on praxial versus aesthetic philosophies of music education.

<b>University – in the ‘European’ music education system</b>	<b>Oral University – in the Mandinka culture</b>
<i>Educational institutions from primary schools to conservatories, partly involving or entirely dedicated to the teaching and learning of music.</i>	<i>Sending boys from the age of 5 to skilled masters, in order to concentrate on the art of jaliya. Girls study with their mother or grandmother, the “jali muso”</i>
<i>Instrumental and vocal teaching programmes running either within or alongside these institutions.</i>	<i>Vocal music is dedicated to the girls’ training, while the boys study the kora or other jali instruments like balafon.</i>
<i>Written curricula, syllabuses or explicit teaching traditions.</i>	<i>There is a strict tradition of how to learn and in what order. This, however, is not written.</i>
<i>Professional teachers, lecturers or “master musicians” who in most cases possess some form of relevant qualifications.</i>	<i>The teachers are the jalis who are accepted by the society as masters.</i>
<i>Systematic assessment mechanisms such as grade exams, national school exams or university exams.</i>	<i>The obligatory test-run into the world, where the young jali shows that he is ready for the exam, which gives him the right to have his own kora.</i>
<i>A variety of qualifications such as diplomas and degrees.</i>	<i>The highest degree is the mundiato.</i>
<i>Musical notation, which is sometimes regarded as peripheral, but more often, central.</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>A body of literature, including texts on music, pedagogical texts and teaching material.</i>	<i>Yes, but in the form of orature.</i>

*Figure 4: European University and Oral University*

It could be argued that this orientation might reflect that Alagi Mbye has been ‘westernised’ by all his meetings with Western musicians and educators, and therefore more likely to put greater emphasis on theoretical aspects, particularly in his interactions with Westerners. However, it could also be argued that the idea of Alagi Mbye being

'westernised' reflects a 'colonialistic' approach, which assumes that there is no theory in the Mandinka music.

There is also a clear 'procedural aspect of Alagi Mbye's intellectual capacity and heritage, which is most clearly demonstrated in the interview with the Kanuteh brothers. In these interviews, Alagi Mbye uses the *ostinatos* in the kora accompaniment to direct the conversation into the themes that he thinks are relevant, and where the Kanuteh brothers show by their emotional reactions that they appreciate his way of 'directing' them. When the young jali Alagi Mbye 'directs' the older experts it is a very brave act. According to the strict hierarchy in the Mandinka culture he should not challenge the elders, but he has to act 'anti-socially' to show his skills and to get the authorisation he needs. This is a delicate act of balance in the power-relationship between young and old intellectuals inside the Oral University.

### 7.1.2 CONTRADICTIONS AND DIFFERENCES

The distinction between the outsiders and the insiders of the Oral University is complemented by another set of distinct differences and contradictions. The themes that are important inside the Oral University are in some cases contradictory. Some examples include:

- By giving you teach, education is open/There are secrets inside all jali families.
- The world is static, still the same as before/Support should be given to the new school Alagi is planning, no secrets should be hidden
- Allah created jaliya/Jaliya is older than the Koran
- The old teaching methods are slavery/The old teaching methods should be treated with respect
- The old way of teaching is to prefer/Classroom teaching is claimed to be the best.

The most important themes from the inside of the Oral University are:

- History and identity 'to know more about ourselves in the future'. Evidence of this is the Sunjata story in itself and the *ostinatos* that carry the story, 'the song is the witness'. Interestingly, the Sunjata story is always contextually determined in the form of stories that are accompanied by *ostinatos* that give form and presence to the myths.
- The jali in the world and in relation to Allah, 'you should have sympathy for the people'.
- Hard work is emphasised in different ways, through proverbs and different references to historical events. Hard manual labour and human hardship in a more general sense are both important.
- Education is a theme, expressed in terms like 'Education is very wide and open'

In contrast, musicians who are not inside of the Oral University stress other issues such as: 'don't talk', the everyday life, a sense of duty, and the importance of dance.

The musician who most clearly demonstrates the issue of 'not talking' in his teaching strategy is the bolon-player Momodo Camara. He is also the one who stresses the importance of dance. Momodo Camara has learnt how to play the bolon by doing it – and he knows he is a master because people dance when he is playing!

In the Katamina village these themes were present, but also expanded with the inclusion of the role of music in the villagers' everyday life. As the Sonko brothers express it: 'They need it in the rice fields' which, together with many other comments, shows how music pervades their daily lives. It is also in Katamina that the transmission of music is described as a duty in that they believe that it is the duty of the elders to bring the children to the rituals that are essential for the life in Katamina. Rituals are also mentioned by the Kanuteh brothers, as in the theme 'history and identity'.

## **7.2 A JALI'S SOLUTION – STILL AFRICAN**

The section on 'the multicultural jali' in Chapter 6, describes how Alagi Mbye himself deals with the contradictions that exist within his own tradition, in addition to the conflicts and contradictions that he himself has experienced through his meetings with Western methods of music teaching and music making. Alagi's words show the value of cultural meetings and how productive they could be: 'before you start doing something, you must take ideas'.

This statement can be linked back to the concepts 'knowing' and 'knowing about'. Here, Alagi Mbye uses them in a similar way as in his conversation on aesthetics, where the 'doing' seems subordinated to the 'thinking'.

The section on 'the multicultural jali' also provides additional clarity to the inside of the Oral University. The role of the Sunjata Keita story and its relation to music is discussed. The conversations with Alagi Mbye also cover aesthetic issues, particularly in terms of 'the powers of music' and the relationship between thinking and doing.

Through exposure to other cultures, Alagi has come to realise the value of his own culture and this has helped to reaffirm his belief in what he himself does and believes in.

For Alagi it has also resulted in a great deal of soul searching, particularly in terms of the ever present question of what to retain from the old tradition when changing to the demands of a modern society. He mentions different key points that he has to consider:

- Use of time: 'My teaching is always like a continuous process'.
- Democracy: 'This we don't have before'.
- Teaching methods: 'When I say the African method I mean my ear'.

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- Practice: 'Now I'm putting my students also on that practice, to concentrate'.
- Classroom consequences: 'People who are not from the jali family will never touch a kora and to my observation...there are some children who are musically talented, very intelligent, can be also part of music'.
- Other instruments: 'Instead of the students learning only kora from me, now we have different teachers who are giving lessons on different instruments'.
- Listening: '...but when it comes to exchangements of ideas and talking and listening, listening is very important in exchangements of cultures'.
- Secrets: '...there is always a secret in any jali family'.
- Aggression: '...old masters of this tradition are very strict teachers'.
- Attitudes: 'They are not afraid of me anymore as I was afraid of my teacher and my grandfather and my uncle'.

In the way described above, Alagi Mbye seems to have reached some kind of conclusion: two strict traditions cannot meet. And if you have to change, you don't have to change everything, and definitely not yourself. This raises questions. In a formal sense it is true that two strict traditions cannot meet. However, his meeting with another culture implies that either he or the other has changed - or both. In this sense it is undoubtedly difficult for Alagi to clearly distinguish exactly how he has changed, but easier for me as an observer. This is best illustrated with examples from our meetings.

One of the first times we met I showed Alagi Mbye a record with a kora master playing together with a flamenco guitarist. We listened and Alagi Mbye complained that his grandfather would never have approved of how the kora master played, and that this was not how a kora should be played. Interestingly, however, at our next meeting Alagi knew all the songs from this record.

During this meeting Alagi gave the impression of being a very quiet person. Later it became evident that he had been quietly reflecting on the experience while listening very attentively. When he had listened long enough to understand some of the communicative codes in our Swedish culture, he turned out to be very communicative.

From my perspective, Alagi has changed from a stubborn defender of his own tradition, to a creative defender of his tradition. This is expressed by his comment that: 'You don't have to change yourself' as well as his view that 'I am still African'.

The terms *fadenya*, *badenya* and *nyama* help to understand Alagi Mbye's actions and problems. *Fadenya* is the competition along the father's line, shaping the individual, leading to action - sometimes anti-social action - such as starting the school for all children.

*Badenya* is the call for community along the mother's line. It is also the mother who provides the *nyama* - the power needed when acting outside of the norms.

*So* and *wula* are also essential. *So* is the bush where creativity can be found. Alagi's bush, *so*, is *tubabodo*, the white man's land. *Wula* is the home providing security.

Alagi Mbye says: 'When I'm in *so* I always carry *wula* inside. Otherwise I would be no one.' This explains his advice: 'Don't change yourself. Stay African.'

### 7.3 CRITICAL ISSUES

The interviews with the Mandinka musicians show that there is an Oral University. Just like in Western societies there are different ways of describing and talking about knowledge, depending on – among other things – if you are an insider or an outsider in relation to the world of the educated or intellectuals. The importance of theoretical knowledge is highlighted by Alagi Mbye in many ways, most clearly in the interview entitled 'You have to be intellectual in music to satisfy the people'. Being an intellectual Mandinka musician also includes a 'procedural' aspect demonstrated in the interview with the Kanuteh brothers, where it is the *ostinatos* in the *kora* accompaniment that direct the conversation.

Carrying a 'border identity', Alagi Mbye has to deal with many contradictions, while he is not only crossing the borders between his own old traditional values and the demands of a modern society, but also the borders between the 'African' and the 'European' culture. As shown in the interviews, there are contradictions built into the tradition, as well as conflicts that emerge from the meeting with European methods of teaching, learning and making music. Alagi Mbye stresses the importance of cultural meetings, expressed in the sentence: 'Before you start doing something you must take ideas'. This statement, of course, can also be read the other way round, starting from a Swedish point of view.

Alagi's problems are shared with the whole African continent: There is an imbalance between the oral system and the formal education system. In the oral system it is the music itself that is the basis of the education of the community members.

This leads to questions concerning literacy/orality. Can orality and literacy exist together at the same time, even within the same individual?

The above discussion highlights issues that concern the existence of Oral Universities. Firstly, it describes themes that are important inside the *jali* musical culture of the Mandinka tradition. Secondly, it compares these themes to the themes that are common outside the *jali* musical culture. Thirdly, it shows the contradictions that are built into the themes within the Oral University, but also how concepts from the Oral

University can help Alagi Mbye to navigate as a border intellectual between the African oral system and the European formal education system.

With the above points in mind, the section which follows is concerned with practical, theoretical and research related implications of the study. It provides a broader perspective on questions currently being debated and discussed internationally, and which arise from the issues covered earlier in this chapter.

## 7.4 EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

Nettl (1985) believes that music reflects the values of society, and that this reflection is music's *raison d'être*. It is also, as Lundberg, Malm and Ronström (2000) suggest, a key to the understanding of cultural values as well as the means for expressing them. It is in the teaching methods, says Nettl, where we find the aspects of culture that music teaches (see Chapter 2). And thus, in order to change central values in a culture, we might well start with music. This is exactly what jali Alagi Mbye does when he uses the *ostinatos* to lead the old masters to the themes he needs to discuss when opening up the jali system of music education to all children.

As the purpose of this study is to support the development of current views on teaching and learning in music, and to encourage new thoughts on how teachers might be better equipped to work and function in a multicultural society, the focus of the study is on transmission.

According to Nettl (1985), a listener must have some concept of how the music has been transmitted in order to understand a foreign music culture. Therefore, knowledge about transmission in other cultures is essential for a music education that strives to include all musics. In many cases, when music from a foreign culture is included in the teaching of Western music institutions, it is taught with the same methods as those developed within other genres, mainly Western classical music. Or it is not taught at all – just used as listening examples in a theoretical course on 'music from other cultures'. At the Malmö Academy of Music there is an effort to include other ways of teaching. For example, the teachers in West African Dancing and Drumming both come from Guinea Conakry, but they live in Sweden. By employing these musicians, they are also integrated into the Swedish society, which is normally a major problem for immigrants.

The policy to let 'other musics' be taught by 'other teachers', is in itself a result of this study, where competence from the informant is used in an interplay with the research culture that I myself belong to.

Just as in the American debate on multicultural education, the Swedish debate concerns the terms 'recognition', 'diversity' and 'difference' (see Chapter 4). Taylor (1995) highlights the need to respect differences in

order to recognise 'the other'. In his opinion, if this recognition is not reached, then there is no possibility of defining any individuality. Taylor argues that in order to define our individuality, we need to interact with others. How can this interaction take place if recognition of the other is not obtained, he asks.

The problem in the Swedish official school policy resembles the problem of the terms 'multicultural' and 'cultural diversity': should there be 'the same parcel for all' or does 'every individual have the right to be unique'?

Mc Laren (1998) talks about these differences. He recognises that there *are* differences, but that we have to live together. This situation calls for a type of intercultural education, in which it is understood that culture is the vehicle for understanding. Respectful awareness and cultural competence are key concepts. McLaren also introduces the term 'border culture' to strengthen his argument that educators have to reinvent themselves like Alagi Mbye had to reinvent himself, and even the Malmö Academy of Music had to reinvent itself.

Nettl's concepts of emic/etic contribute to an understanding of this study by stressing that the identity of the observer needs to be very clear. This issue was addressed in Chapters 4 and 5. To Nettl, field experience is necessary, but not because it gives more actual knowledge on what is studied (in this study the Mandinka thoughts on transmission). My knowledge is not even close to what the insiders of the culture already know. But my field experience helps the process of developing my own understanding of this culture, and more important, the process of intercultural understanding.

Based on the above, *how* can we listen to each other in order to understand each other? This is not easy, because linguistic patterns and the way we think tend to be very closely linked to our culture. Is there a method for changing our ways of thinking? In some way, what we have achieved at the Malmö Academy of Music has helped to explore ways in which attitudes can be changed. One of the most successful ways has been *confrontation with the unknown*, such as in the Gambia course. This is also how Alagi Mbye has been changed, and how I myself have been changed.

In Swedish research there is a need for studies on intercultural competence. A recent report on school research and its relation to gender, class and ethnicity (Rubinstein Reich, Tallberg Broman & Hägersten, 2002) states that most of the research projects studied do not cover questions about ethnicity. If ethnicity is discussed, there is often a tendency to describe 'the other' as a collective. In the projects studied there is generally a stronger focus on the individual than on structure and system. As a consequence, the culture of the majority remains unproblematic and the norm remains invisible.

## 7.5 CONCLUSION

The three sections of this chapter are 'The Oral University', 'Inside and Outside' and 'Future research'. Altogether, these sections lead back to the horizon of the study, the development of music teacher education in Sweden.

### 7.5.1 THE ORAL UNIVERSITY

What I have come to realise as a result of living and working with musicians in the Gambia is that the essence of their Oral University is an attitude to music in their lives. This essence is represented in the following points.

#### *History and identity*

This was the theme that was most frequently expressed in the interview with the Mandinka jalis. The reason for this, as expressed by the jalis themselves, is that you have to 'learn about yourself'. This also explains why they always go back to the epic of Sunjata, since it embodies the very heart of the Mandinka culture.

#### *The everyday life*

This theme was expressed most clearly by the village musicians, but was illustrated also by the jalis. The female leader in Katamina village claims that it is the duty of the elders to teach the children, which includes music teaching. That is why they dance to the Mamo masque together with the children. Music is simply seen as a necessary part of everyday life. To the jalis, everyday life *is* music.

#### *The spiritual dimension*

Under the surface, the spiritual dimension is present all the time. Jali Alagi Mbye never ends a day without having prayed to Allah. He also spends much time visiting the Marabouts who give him good advice concerning his life. The Kanuteh brothers praise Allah in their songs, but they also include the animistic thinking expressed in the Sunjata epic. It is a village musician who actually mentions it when talking about his instrument the bolon, as 'the more social, the more spiritual.'

### *The intellectual dimension*

There is a difference between themes presented by jalis and themes that are present in the interviews with village musicians. The intellectual dimension is only presented by the musicians who have 'a degree' in the Oral University. As jali Alagi Mbye expresses it: 'You have to be intellectual in music to satisfy people.'

#### **7.5.2 INSIDE AND OUTSIDE**

The following subheadings refer to the educational aspect of this study. They also illustrate the insider/outsider themes that have been used in two ways: (a) as a theoretical tool to be used in the analyses of the interviews and (b) as a way of approaching the teaching and learning of music in a multicultural setting, here illustrated by jali Alagi Mbye and the Malmö Academy of Music.

### *The power of music*

Based on the results of this study, it could be proposed that changes to the central values in a society may come directly from music. This was shown in the current study on different levels – Alagi Mbye, being a traditional jali, *has* to change some of the central values in his Mandinka tradition in order to teach traditional music to *all* children, and not only the children who belong to the jali families. In the interview with the Kanuteh brothers he urgently seeks the support he needs from them. To keep them 'on the track' (Alagi Mbye's track) and to prevent them from starting to talk too much about the old values, he leads the interview with the *ostinatos* on the *kora*, which serves to inspire the old masters to talk, while at the same time providing them with associations that encourage them to talk about the negative aspects of their own traditional way of teaching music. This is an example of a subtle way of using traditional codes in order to make way for new codes.

### *The power of meetings*

These new codes, on the other hand, have emerged through the meetings with other ways of teaching and making music. During Alagi Mbye's first meetings with the Malmö Academy of Music, both teachers and students forced him to reflect on how to promote his own culture – a culture that he respects even more than before after the cultural encounters with 'tubabodo', the white man's land.

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As earlier described, the meetings with Alagi Mbye and other musicians from West Africa and other parts of the world have inspired new courses and new approaches to teaching methods at the Malmö Academy of Music. The students who have been in the Gambia react in many different ways, but one of the most common reflections is that they are no longer afraid of working in multicultural (problematic) areas. On the contrary, they are keen to work in these areas, where they see such diversity as an inspiring challenge.

### *The power of knowing*

Knowledge about how music is transmitted in other cultures is essential for a music education that strives to include all musics. Acquiring knowledge about the process of transmission automatically leads to a greater sense of 'knowing' rather than 'knowing about'. But using other teaching strategies also leads to other kinds of knowledge. The procedural aspect of jali Alagi Mbye's knowledge, which is clearly demonstrated in his way of asking questions with ostinatos from his kora, is one example of this. This has also been discussed in Chapter 4.

### *The power of intercultural understanding*

This study does not increase the body of knowledge on the Mandinka music, (it is already known by the members of the Mandinka culture) instead, it develops the process of intercultural understanding (see Chapter 4). This is exemplified in the interviews, and most clearly in the conversation with Alagi Mbye on aesthetic issues. Before that conversation started, I considered the debate between Elliot and Reimer on praxial versus aesthetic music education as a typical Western debate. As the conversation developed, I realised that this issue was as topical in the Mandinka thinking as it is in current Western discussions on music education. The statement by Alagi Mbye that 'you have to be intellectual in music to satisfy the people' in this context serves as an indicator of intercultural understanding.

### *The power to reinvent*

The school and the music school are potential meeting places for all musics. This fact is not fully understood and applied in today's Sweden. There is a need for a type of intercultural education, where culture is the vehicle for understanding. Educators at all levels, including music teachers, need to learn how to live in the 'border culture' and reinvent themselves. Music offers a way to achieve this.

*The power to confront the unknown*

The method for listening to each other, which is at the core of intercultural education, can be referred to as *confrontation with the unknown*. The same confrontation has led Alagi Mbye to reflect on teaching methods in his own culture, and has inspired the Malmö Academy of Music to develop a continuing collaboration between Gambia musicians and those of the academy. Perhaps the most important achievement of this project is that the Malmö Academy of Music had to reinvent itself. The project has resulted in the institution being more open to the music of other cultures, more receptive to different ways of working, and has provided students with alternative learning opportunities which force them to confront established norms.

**7.5.3 FUTURE RESEARCH**

The results of the present study raise new questions: in what ways are the attitudes to teaching and learning in the Oral University reflected in the very methods for teaching and learning? This question refers to the more specific Oral University in the Gambia that has been the focus of this study, but also to the oral universities present in other cultures, for example Scandinavian folk music, rock music, jazz and even classical music.

This study discusses border culture and border educators. I would like to introduce the label 'border researcher' and ask for more 'border research' by 'border researchers'. There are border landscapes in the field of music education research that need to be explored. What, for example, do we know of the needs for music education in immigrant areas, as expressed by the immigrants themselves? What do we know of the needs in schools in immigrant areas, as expressed by the teachers and students themselves? What do we know about the needs of immigrant musicians in Sweden, as expressed by themselves?

The theme of literacy/orality has also been touched upon. The 'paradigm of literacy' and the handicap it might impose on literate musicians was discussed in Chapter 4. There are many questions yet to be answered: To what extent is literacy a handicap? Is it possible to be literate and oral at the same time, or at least to be able to move between the two poles?

I leave all these questions for the future to be answered and I finish by thanking jali Alagi Mbye for letting me cross the borders, hoping that future researchers will have co-travellers like him. This study was only possible through the generosity with which jali Alagi Mbye allowed me

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to be an outsider inside his culture, and at the same time accepted being an outsider inside my Swedish culture.

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## APPENDIX

### **KANUTEH BROTHERS: 'TO KNOW MORE ABOUT OURSELVES IN THE FUTURE.'**

Interview with Ahmadu Kanuteh and Kebba Kanuteh, Basse, Monday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, 1998. The whole interview turned out as a lesson in history about the origin of the Mandinka culture, and concentrated on the most important event in Mandinka history, the birth of the great hero Sunjata Keita. This is embedded in thoughts about teaching and learning.

The interview was completed in Mandinka by Alagi Mbye, who also played the kora during the whole interview to inspire the masters to talk and sing. I have edited the syntax and grammar to enable reading, but still some of the 'Gambian English' is kept intact, in order to retain the context and special flavour of the interview. In this version I've made comments after each section. Normal type is used for the answers; bold type is used for the questions and italics for my comments.

**[CD, track 1, Allah Lake] Ahmadu Kanuteh, Kebba Kanuteh, we are now in the compound of big jalis in Basse. But Ahmadu we are on a mission to develop these big universities. If you have a school there are two things: teachers and students. I want to ask you a question. What is important for a child who doesn't know nothing but you want to teach him something? What efforts can you do to put something in this child's head and how is it possible to start with a child who knows nothing about music?**

(Kebba) Thank you Alagi Mbye. I heard what you have said. And this is the necessary question to be asked in the black society. And this is the question that belongs to the whole black society because each and every one of us has inherited something. If you inherit something and you are unable to say anything or unable to do anything about that thing, I think the inheriting is useless. **[CD, track 2]** And in Africa here from our ancestors up to us today there is nothing more important than the jaliya and the tradition. But the question you are asking, if I understand you correctly, concerns how to educate a child and who can be a teacher to educate this children - what kind of people.

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My first answer to that question is to start from the roots how to learn a kora. In the old days people used to buy kola nuts and go to a village where the kora people are, to give these kola nuts to the elders to start the kora. The elders will then distribute these kola nuts to the whole compound and to all the necessary people. Unlucky students who are not clever enough, it can take them eight years to learn the kora. Lucky students who are clever enough, it can take them four years to learn the kora.

But first of all a teacher should be somebody who has a lot of patience He will know by himself that these children are given to him to educate them. People given to you to educate, you the teachers should know that they are without education, that is why they come to get education. A teacher should have patience. These children - their parents - the reason of giving them to you is that they respect you with the knowledge you have and you should think they look upon you as a very important person. Therefore you should not hide anything you know to give to these children. That will benefit them tomorrow so that they can also teach when they grow up. You should have sympathy for these children. The only thing you can compare these children to you is that you should treat them as your born children.

For example me Kebba Kanuteh, if they say Kebba is the teacher at Basse I might be given children who I don't know or don't even know where they come from. Because of that I should take care of both my children and the other children given to me. I should also do my best not to make these children afraid of me. Anything I show my children, that knowledge I should share it with the unknown students given to me. The children will then feel comfortable. If I show them songs they are beginners. If they don't do it right the only thing to solve that problem is to show them again. Not to be aggressive on them or hit them or make them feel like they are not part of your family, then they will be afraid. A teacher being with a child like that, that child will tomorrow forget everything he learned today.

For that matter I'm very happy today seeing people who have sympathy for us making us feel like our tradition is still worth it, we should give this education to our children. [CD, track 3] I'm appealing to all the jalis this is started because of the development of our culture and education of our children.

Another important thing for a teacher, a teacher who is going to teach the children should have education himself, should be somebody well educated to be able to give good education. Because a teacher without education will never be able to educate. And teachers should be very careful not to be drunk in classes. Because if you are drunk you are not together with your brain. If you come in your classroom like that trying to teach the children what they don't even know and you want them to know it now you will just start shouting on them or hitting them. Tomorrow when you are sober if you ask them what have I told you yesterday very few of these children will remember. A teacher should not be drunk in class.

**Kebba, thank you very much for the good replies you have just said about the teachers. [CD, track 4] Your reply is based on the teachers. My second question is**

**who are the students and what advice can you give to a student coming to a music school? Or a parent who has a child to send to a music school?**

(Kebba) Thank you very much Alagi Mbye for asking me such an important question. The first advice I want to tell the students: by seeing people who come to us to teach our own children, not their culture but our culture, they should know that this culture is worth it and will be worth it for ever (*This refers to MAM*). You the child who is sent to a school to learn about yourself and the cultures of your ancestors, should first of all stay away from all bad things and concentrate on the knowledge you are looking for. Also stay away from all bad music that you do not even understand that will be played in radios and radio cassettes and put your mind on the cultural instrument you are learning. There is the kora, konting or balafon or any other instrument.

And you should also understand that this is how it should be, and you the child should know the reason of sending you to this cultural school or music school and should know that this a big help because you are prevented from buying kola nuts and travelling to the old masters by foot working for their wives and working for the masters. [CD, track 5] They can send you 30 kilometers without giving you a transport fee.

**Kebba, before you pass there I have one more question in between. What is the difference between these traditional schools and the school we are building now?**

(Kebba) Thank you Alagi, it is a big difference, but the difference in this is in the favour of the children. As I told you earlier in the old times if you come with your kola nuts to learn the kora, this kola nut will be given to all the women in the compound. My wives, my brothers wives and all the men in the compound. Then all these people are now your teachers. You should give the same respect to everyone in that compound. You are now afraid of everybody in our family.

For example, if you Alagi was the student here, I can just wake up one morning and tell you I want to send you to Bansang tomorrow. I can give you a name of one of my friends, and tell you to go and tell him 'my master sent me, he has nothing to feed the family today'. By the respect of the culture and the jaliyas, this friend might give you a bag of rice and know its your duty to bring it to me. You will start very, very early to go for that mission, if you are unlucky you will carry this on your head. All the women in the compound can also bring out all the dirty clothes of their husbands and themselves and tell you to go and fetch water from the well and wash these clothes. This is your master's clothes. And you have to wash this. After washing that they can put you to another working. If I give couscous to one of my wives to pound it they can ask you to do it. Before finishing pounding this couscous another woman from the same compound would come and say 'Oh Alagi Mbye, we have no fire today, can you help us with fire?' And you will never refuse.

You will be in the service for 3 or 4 years. Within this I will also be teaching you. When I know if you are qualified enough and it is time to give you your kora I will first send you to your family. 'Go to your father and tell him my master want to give me a

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kora this year, but he wants a sheep or a goat or a cow.' After you come with this animal, either a sheep or a goat or a cow, you will be sent away again to look for your calabass and the woods or the sticks for your kora and the skin. And on the celebration day of your kora this sheep you bring us from your father is the sheep we are going to kill. We will cook food and invite the elders to do the necessary ceremony. The first thing I will ask you to do for me after releasing you as a qualified student is that you have to bring 30 dalasis for me. By that time 30 dalasis is a lot of money. I will then ask somebody from our family or other close jali families to convey you back to your father or to your home and to tell your parents that our student has finished his course now. This person will never hesitate to tell your parents how you were staying with us, whether good or bad. There your parents should also be very happy and will kill another goat or sheep for the person who come with you to the home. [CD, track 6] After doing all this for me, the master, my mind is still on the 30 dalasis you have to bring for me to get some of the secret things here.

**Kebba, this is very clear to us. And I have been through some of this. But this is what we want to put together in the classroom, what do you think of that? And a child who is put to all this catastrophe how much time do you have for the child on the balafon or the kora or other instruments?**

(Kebba) Thank you very much Mbye. Even to me, Kebba, this is like a slavery or overworking the children. This is why I even think some of them are not getting the exact education they should get. This work you have started seems to me like something you are sent to look for up in a very, very high mountain or a high tree, and this thing is lying in this mountain. You wake up early one morning, you see the thing lying just next to you. (Proverb, something you are sent to look for in the mountains is just next to you). Now it is left to you the student how to handle this thing. And parents should know that a child going away from you for four years, compared to a school where every day you will see your child after school, it is a great help.

And going to primary ordinary schools should not prevent us from learning our culture, because you never know if you will be able to get a job after finishing that school or if you will be employed by any government. Going to school - to my observation children finish school by 2 o'clock in the afternoon, come back to your home and eat. You can start the music school 3 o'clock to 5 o'clock. You can learn a lot if you are serious. But for the primary schools or the English educating schools you never know what will happen to you, if your parents will be able to pay that school for you. If you come out from this school without good papers you might end up sitting at the market, writing letters for people and it will be impossible to make good living and in the end push you to bad things.

**Thank you very much Kebba for all the good informations. But next to me is the elder of the compound, Ahmadu. I have some questions for Ahmadu also. [CD, track 7] My question to you is: what response have you to the words of Kebba what he has said and how did this jaliya start in Manding? Because it is a lot of sayings and a**

**lot of historians and some are very different. My second question is what happened before the jalis started to compose songs? Was there something happening or did they just sit down and think and compose a song?**

[CD, track 7, 0.37, change to Sunjata Faso] (Ahmadu) Thank you very much Alagi Mbye. The reason for Allah to bring the koran to us was that none of us has ever seen Allah. It is because we have to learn and have knowledge of the creator and we all know that God is one - no matter which name you give to God. But the question you ask me is very important. Before the Koran came, jaliya was existing. Before the prophet Mohammed came, jaliya was existing and the prophet himself has his own jali who used to say the 201 good names of the prophet Mohammed for the people to know about him. The jaliya is a very old thing. There are two Kabas in the world. In the time of the islamic revolution in Mekka people who run away from that fight came to Manding and settled there and gave the place the same name: Kaba.

My brother Kebba, all what he has said is very true, but before getting any of this knowledge or any other knowledge in this world you have to work hard for it. If you Alagi Mbye want to learn something and if you first think of money you are not meant for that knowledge and you will never get that knowledge. Before going into the history of Manding I would like to throw some words to Kebbas advice to teachers.

Teachers should be careful bringing personal problems in the class. If you fight with a child's that doesn't mean that you should not educate this child because you are not in good terms with his father.

I think the mission you are in, it is very clear and important to us, the song you are playing is not just played, something happened before this song come. Sunjata he has done something, he is not an angel, he is a human being, but a hard working human. Sunjata, Sumanguru Kante, Balafa Sege Koyateh are all heroes. That is why I said Koyatehs are the first jalis of Manding. Sunjatas mother is from a region in Manding called Sangarang. Her name is Sukulung Konte, she is from the Konte family. We the Kanuteh family have something to do with Sunjata because our ancestors come from Sangarang, the same place where Sunjatas mother comes from.

It is today, but yesterday the kings will never hide any of their secrets from their jalis, that is why the old kings they are very, very careful with these traditional musicians. If you have a problem with your traditional musician, you, the king, might die in the hands of your enemy, because he knows all your secrets. This is why we will give you all the clear things or informations we know, because we feel very proud having you here Alagi Mbye.

What Kebba has said about the kora training is also very true. Our father's teacher is jali Mori Bona. (*Alagi explains when translating: Jali Mori is the father Sirif Suso. Sirif had a son called Abiaie Suso, Abiaies son is Sirif Suso, they named after the father, this is the student I'm having*) But after he finished his studies after few years he left the kora. I Ahmadu studied in a village called Sotuma. When I was studying in Sotuma my teachers name was Bala Jobarteh.

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That time Kebba and my other brothers they were all very, very young. My father asked Bala: Ahmadu is the only grown up son I have, can I ask you a favour to help me to release him after the rain season to come home and help us . When the rain season comes he can go back to help, while he is studying for you. Bala said no - if you want him to study the kora from us, he will stay with us and go through the normal procedure of studying the kora. [CD, track 8] Bala said: 'maybe it will be one year or two or three he should not even come home, he should stay with us'. I have been through a lot of very big difficulties but I don't even want to say them now. Pounding fire woods and everything, if you see me that time you'll think I am the slave of somebody. The day they give me the kora the first thing I did was thanking God the Almighty for freeing me from the catastrophe.

You have seen the big family and I think I am in the benefit of the kora. God is now paying me for the difficulties I've been through by making it possible for me and my brother Kebba feeding and taking care of this family with the kora and the jaliya. No salary paid by the English working people could be able to afford this. All my children are going to school, some of them have even finished but they have no job. The advice I would give is : I am going to start with my own children to go back to the roots and face the jaliya and learn the culture.

Even the song 'Allah lake' was played in Tamba Sansang (*means the small fence*) but there are stories that our elders don't even allow us to say. A lot of things can happen in war. But it is not that we don't know it, because we are the jalis of a lot of traditional hero families. A lot of things are mixed up, but I will give you an example of a king called Falai. He has been working very hard because he was a trader before he was a king. He travelled many times to Futa Tuba to the Marabouts to pray for him. That is very far because it is in Guinea. If you want something you have to work for it. Now I'm giving back to my brother Kebba to continue all the songs in this kora, 'Tutu Jara', 'Mankayira' all has been played for big people or great people or great occasions. [CD, track 8, 1.44, change to *Tutu Jara*]

(Kebba) Thank you very much my brother and thank you very much Alagi Mbye. I'm praying to God to free you from pains in your hands and fingers and praying to Allah the Almighty not put you insane or to mix your brain. Human sense is the first diamond God has given to a human being. If that sense is ok you will be able to cope with a lot of things. First of all when God was giving sense to a human being, he gave 100 sense to human being and 99 to the animals. The one difference is the one we feed the animals, we take care of them because they have not got that sense. Why I'm saying all this is to advice the children who are going to school to learn their culture to concentrate on what they are there for. [CD, track 9]

**In the society of Manding - I want to ask you: what is the roles of the jalis in that society?**

(Kebba) Thank you Alagi. That is a very important question. People have not come the same in this world, that's why people are doing different things. Jalis were

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peacemakers before. There are only two Kabas, one is in Mekka and one is Manding Kaba. The Kaba in Mekka was built by a prophet called Ibrahim. This was before Mohammed was born, people were not believing in God, even in Mekka. Everybody was worshipping their own things.

You the students, you have to listen to this carefully, starting it so far away is because I want to make it very clear the little I'm going to give today. If you insult a student it means you are insulting the master who was teaching him. I'm giving this, maybe there will be some of you reading this in books in future. After the Kaba was built when Mohammed was born that was the time worshipping of one God started. This was a conflict. Some people ran away from this. The first place they settled was called Wagadugu. By that time where we are now has no name, they just call it 'the West'. Wagadugu is now called Burkina Faso but the owner of this place, the tribe is called Mosi. [CD, track 10]

### **Wait, what is the meaning of Waga in Mandinka?**

(Kebba) There are people who run away. Either from war or it can be a child who has done wrong and run away from home. 'Exile place' is the meaning of Wagadugu. In this Wagadugu there was a well, in this well it is a very big snake. The people of Wagadugu feel very insecure by being settled besides a well containing a big snake. Every year they have something to give to this snake to feel protected or secured. This something is a human being. They always take one girl from the village and throw it in this well for this snake to eat so that they can feel secured. This has been existing for a long time.

The Sako family then say: 'this is something we cannot continue for ever, to give our children to a snake. I want to attack the snake to free the people from this.' His name was Yeri Makang Sako. The villagers said: 'you want to drive us away from our village. If you attack this snake you may not be able to kill the snake and the snake will eat the whole village instead of one by one every year. And if you kill the snake you never know what will happen to us because we don't know if our protection is in the hands of this snake.' He said: 'I must do this, I don't want to see our children die.' And he attacked the snake. He killed the snake. Some of the villagers decide to leave and go away because the snake is dead. [CD, track 10, 2.37, change to *Old Tutu*]

All the fulas among this society went to Ethiopia. After the fulas went to Ethiopia some of them moved again and settled in La Guinea. That time the name La Guinea is not existing. When they were coming to La Guinea it was the Jalunka tribe in La Guinea. They then said in the fula language: 'we are not now fulas for Ethiopia, we are now the fulas of Jalunkas.' That brings the name of Futa Jallon. That is the original name. The fulas who came to settle with the Jalunkas gave this name to the empire that we are a Futa Jallonkas. After they have independence in the time of president Sekou Touray he changed the name to La Guinea.

The Mandinkos who were left behind after the death of the snake - the meaning of Sako in Mandinka is 'people left behind after the death of the snake'. The Sako family

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decide to stay after they killed the snake, and they want everything to happen to them, just to give the freedom of the people. Others who left the village, if people ask them: 'who are there left behind?' they say : 'the Sakos they killed the snake and they decide to stay'. The rests of the Mandinkos who run away after the dead of the snake settled in a place where its more difficult then where the snake was. The word manding means 'it is not nice'.

During this, a man called Salimaka Bilali travelled to Mekka. He stayed with a friend of the prophet, called Abubacar. Daily prayers he said: 'I cannot do this', evening prayers he said: 'I cannot because I'm not a muslim'. The following day Bilali decided to follow Abubacar to the mosk. Abubucar said to Bilali: 'why this?' Bilali said 'if you go to a village you meet the people dancing on one leg don't cut your leg. But if you can, put it over your head.' [CD, track 11] Bilali then decided to convert to islam. Abubacar then took him to the prophet Mohammed and they gave him a position of calling the prayers. Bilali was then married and had a son. He named this son after the prophet Mohammed. Because the prophet loved Bilali very much. Bilali then named this child Mohammed Kanu. Kanu is love.

Mohammed Kanu had a son called Lawali. Lawali had a son called Latali Kalabi. Latali had a son called Damung Kalabi. Damung had a son called Lelatul Kalabi. Lelatul Kalabi was called Kalabi Bumba. Kalabi Bumba had a son called Kalabi Duman. Kalabi Dumans son is called Mamady Kani. That Mamady Kani is known as the first hunter of Manding. Mamady Kani had four children. First son was Kani Sinbong. And Kaninjoko Sinbong and Kabala Sinbong and Sinbong Tanjoko Killing. Sinbong Tanjoko Killing had a son called Bello. Bello had a son called Bello Bukani. Bello Bukani had a son called Makang Konate who is the father of Sunjata.

There are many jalis who knows that Sunjatas father is Makang and his mother is Sogolon but they don't know the names of all these ancestors. Sunjatas father is married to three wives. His first wives' name is Sasuma Berete. The second wife he married in the area called Sibi. Her name is Namanje Camara. The third wife is Sogolon Kutuma. [CD, track 11, 2.45, change to *Sunjata Simbon*] The Kutuma has a meaning. She was very ugly, she had a lot of warts. That is why they call her Sogolon Kutuma, Sogolon with the warts. Sogolon's fathers name is Madiba Konte in Sangarang. During this smoke is the picture of fire. The Trawally family their ancestors are two. And fire after burning a wood makes charcoal. The ancestors of the Trawallys, one of them was named Fire. Fire had a son called Kembo (*Charcoal*). Kembo had a son called Kembo Teneng. Teneng is Monday. [CD, track 12]

*(Here comes the first song, one of the women starts singing as if she has been ready all the time. In fact she has been cooking and taking care of the children, but obviously at the same time listening to the story. Ahmadu is also singing.)*

(Kebba) Thank you very much *jali* muso, Mariama Saho. We are in a moment of a very big thanksgiving to God by receiving the son of Sutereng who is Alagi Mbye, a peaceful *jali*, a recommended master. What I want to say is: 'let all the young *jalis* take

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the footstep of Alagi so that we can stand by ourselves and bring back what is dying from us. Because he is working with a very clean heart. The people he is here with they don't know us but he makes them know us, because we know something about our history. Thank you Alagi. This is like bringing all the jalis as they were before, when jalis were one. For example if we have a school in Nema Kunku a jali from Basse can teach there and will meet the jalis of Nema Kunku. I have seen a lot of oneness in this project.

*(More praising of Alagi Mbye and his school project. [CD, track 13] An older woman sings the names of the prophets, a religious song. Ahmadu Kanuteh shows his appreciation: 'You are the real griots of Manding. Welcome to what we are doing and do your part, because you are Koyateh.')*

Thank you Koyateh, thank you the daughter of Kanjung, the daughter of jali Mfamara Koyateh. There was nobody like your father among all the jalis who travelled from Manding to travel to the west here. And we think it will be difficult to have a jali like Mfamara because of the task he has been taken in this jaliya and the strong and powerful miracles he was doing. Because he was the only jali who could stand in front of a sea and sing for the sea and fish would come out from the sea to him. You are from a hero. [CD, track 14]

All what I'm saying here I learn it from Manley Saho. He is my teacher. If somebody going alone by himself comes to you and say: 'I met God yesterday', you cannot deny him.

Damansa Wolengding and Damansa Wolengba are hunters from the Trawally family. The first son of Sunjatas father is called Dangarang Toman. Dangarangs mother is Sasuma Berete. Next to Dangarang Toman is Kanjata Suko. The other wife of Sunjatas father had a daughter called Sogolon Jamaro. She is the daughter of Sogolon Konte. Damansang Wolengding and Damansang Wolengba lived as hunters in Manding. They eat from nature, clothes from nature, all they do is hunting. One day there was a message from the region of Sankarang calling for hunters to help them with a big buffalo which is attacking the people and killing them.

It was a human being who turned herself to this animal: the sister of Sankarang Madiba Konteh. Her name is Sankarang Djumafing Konteh. But there was a problem that happened between Djumafing and her brother Sankarang Madiba Konteh. By hiding all the secrets of the family from this woman she then feel like she is not part of the family and gets very angry. She was a witch, she turned herself to be an animal and attacks people from Sankarang. Even in the work on the rice fields. When the time of harvesting comes she goes in these fields and spoils all the fields. The people of Sankarang suffered and suffered. That was the time they called to all the hunters to help them. Hundreds of hunters have been killed by this animal. Hundreds of them were wounded. Madiba Konteh promised anybody who killed this animal will be paid anything you want in Sankarang.

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Damansang Wolengding and Samansang Wolengba decided to go to Sankarang and try a chance. [CD, track 15] When they left for Sankarang after walking for some days they approached the village of Sankarang. As soon as they start the journey, this woman notice that there are some men coming to fight her. She went out of the village not as an animal but as a human being, waiting for these two men. When they approach Sankarang she was crying. 'Who is going to give me food, who is going to give me water. I'm thirsty, I'm hungry.' When these two hunters where passing her, the younger feel sorry for her. He came back to her, opened his small bag which was containing some grilled meat and gave it to her. The big brother came back to her, opened a small bag with water and gave it to her. When they were about to leave Djumafing said to them 'you are so kind and I know who you are and I know where you are going to. You are here to fight the animal that is destroying Sankarang but I want to ask you if you know who this animal is.' They said no.

She said: 'not because of you are good hunters or you are heroes, but because of your kindness I am the animal. And you will be the successful hunters who will kill and get the reward of Sankarang. There are many hunters that came here to fight me, but they always passed me here while I was doing the same cry of food and water, but they just passed by not giving me anything. You are so kind. And after you killed me I know the reward the Sankarang people have prepared for the hunters. I will tell you about it. This reward is a wife. All the young and beautiful ladies of Sankarang will be gathered together for you to choose by yourself but don't look at the beauty. There will be a woman very ugly among these, but you will see a cat coming inside the people and going directly to this woman. This is the woman you have to choose. This is the woman who will give the birth to the hero of Manding which will never be forgotten forever and forever. For my side I will give you myself because of your kindness and I want you to get this reward from Sankarang but to give your life to somebody is not easy. I will show you all the necessary things you have to do before killing me. There is a forest called Worang Tamba, this is where you are going to wait for me in the night. As soon as I am ready to appear the whole place will be very dark but don't be afraid, it is me. The place will then turn to red with a lot of big noise. Don't run away, it is me. The place will turn to bright. There you will see this animal with a gold ring on the tail. That is me. Any animal you saw without this gold ring is not me.'

She cried. She then gave them a weaving stick and one egg. 'Take care of these two things. This is to help you. This is the time of showing all what I know. I am a woman but a very, very strong woman. The reason of this egg is that if you shoot and if I want to attack you because of the pain, just break this egg to protect yourself. If you break the egg you will see what happens. The weaving stick, you should always remember to put it inside the gun together with the bullets. There is a word you should say before shooting. This word is 'Fala Mbala' which means 'we shoot you and we will never miss'. Don't forget all what I told you. If you forget one word that I told you this is going to be a big problem for you in the forest.' [CD, track 16]

This word 'Fala Mbala' is always used still when we do our annual chasing of animal in the forest. If you suddenly got something or catch a bird in this chasing of

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animals you will shout 'Fala Mbala'. The people will know you got an animal or you got a bird and it is yours.

The hunters then went to Madiba Konteh and said: 'we heard you call to the hunters. Here we are to answer to the call. We are here to kill the animal who is destroying Sankarang'. Madiba said: 'I give up. A lot of hunters have been killed by this animal. Don't even try.' They said: 'we want to try.' When these hunters were given the go ahead they went to the forest of Woreng Tamba to wait for the animal.

When the time comes for the animal to appear as she told them the whole place was very, very dark. The younger brother said to his brother 'this is dangerous'. The big brother said: 'remember this is what she told us. Don't be afraid my brother'. The place became red. The younger brother said 'my brother it is too red, I can't see anything'. He said 'just relax, we will make it'. After a while the place became bright. Then appeared this animal - or this woman - with the gold ring on the tail.

When they saw the animal they were very frightened. They use all the necessary things but when shooting they forgot to say 'Fala Mbala'. When they shot the bullets went in, but the animal still is able to fight them. Then she attacked them. They start to run. The younger brother said 'I told you this my brother, how can one egg help us'? The brother said: 'ah we forgot, they break the egg'. When they break this egg it turns to a big lake. This animal jumped in this lake because of the pain of the bullets. She starts to drink the water. That was the time they shoot again and remembered the word 'Fala Mbala'. And they killed the animal. After they killed the animal the younger brother said: 'how can we make Sankarang Madiba Konteh to believe us'? They then cut the tail of the animal and took it to him.

This was one of the biggest moments in Sankarang. All the beautiful young ladies dressed themselves properly, thinking to be chosen by the heroes to take them for marriage. All the hunters of Sankarang gathered to give all respect to Damansang Wolengding and Damansang Wolengba as the master hunters of all. All these women were smiling. Suddenly Sogolon came out. There a cat came running to Sukulung, jumped on the lap of Sogolon. The big brother said to his young brother 'that is her'. The younger brother said 'oh my God, she is very ugly'. The big brother said 'remember she is giving birth to the hero of Manding'. They said to them: 'now comes the time to give you the reward of Sankarang. Choose from this group of women the one you like and take her away for your wife'.

The bigger brother then stood up and went directly and take Sukulung by the hand and said 'this is what we want'. And the whole Sankarang went laughing and falling on their backs. 'Oh, they are heroes, but they are very stupid'. Some said 'are they blind, she is very ugly'. The younger brother then starts to feel bad again about their wife. Madiba Konteh said to them: 'before you take her away we must give a promise. What promise can you give me?' Damansang Wolengding and Damansang Wolengba said to Madiba: 'we promise no Trawally family will ever hurt the Konteh family again'. Madiba cried. He said: 'how do you know that the animal you killed was my sister?' They then took Sogolon away. [CD, track 17]

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They then came with this wife back to their home to tell this message to the king who was Sunjatas father. By then Sunjatas brother Dangaran Toman was eight years old. 'We came back home from Sankarang after being through a big fight and we succeeded. Before doing anything, this is the message we have for you, the king of Manding. Because we are under you.'

That time the great grandfather of the Koyatehs whose name was Nyankoma Ndua Koyateh known as Balafa Sege Koyateh was present. Sasuma Berete, the first wife of Makang, the father of Sunjata, was present and Sunjatas brother Dangaran Toman and the king himself, Makang was present. That time Makang, the king of Manding, a marabout throwing kori shells was sitting beside him. He ask him to throw these kori shells for him. He then took out the kori shells, 12 of them, and throw. The first thing he said 'Makang you have very big strangers today. But after receiving these big strangers I have seen a light so far away and this light is approaching your village and it will reach this village and this light cannot be destroyed'.

Makang said to the marabout 'tell me clearly, don't talk indirectly, I am a Mandinka like you. What is this light'? But the marabout was talking about the birth of Sunjata which will happen in Manding and cannot be destroyed. The marabout said 'I have seen a woman in this which you might not like because she is very ugly. This is your wife. And she will give birth to the hero of Manding. Even the last generation of Manding will know about him'.

By then Makangs first wife Sasuma Berete was beside him and his son Dangaran Toman. Sasuma then gets very angry and jealous of what the marabout is saying. That was the time the hunters present Sukulong to the king Makang and said 'this is the reward we got from Sankarang after killing the animal'. Makang said to them: 'I would like you to give me these gifts and I will also give you everything you want because you are heroes'. The hunters said: 'we will never disagree with the words of our king'. Sogolon was then given to the king Makang and Makang said: 'take her to my aunt's home'. This was where they made the necessary marriage between Makang and Sogolon. [CD, track 18]

The first night Makang slept with Sogolon this is the night we, the jalis, believe Sogolon got pregnant with the hero. This pregnancy took a long, long time until the jealous wives of Makang goes around the village telling people: 'Makang is crazy, this woman is not pregnant, she is sick in the stomach. Pregnancy takes nine months, but this is more than 10 or 12 months'. Makang got worried again and called upon the kori shells man to throw again. When the kori shells man came he threw the kori shells and said to Makang: 'a tree that you planted and the tree that grows by itself, which one is stronger?' Makang said: 'the one that is planted by itself'. They said: 'there is nothing to worry about, the hero will come'.

When the jealous women of Makang heard this, they contacted all the women in Manding and the master of the witches to destroy this hero and to do all what they can to make this not happen. The day Sogolon was giving birth to Sunjata in the house of Manding nobody knows how all the witches are informed, because hundreds of witches came in the house. When the baby came, he came with a small beard and some

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teeth in his mouth. The witches get very confused by seeing something that they have never seen before. They said 'we cannot be quiet with this, something strange has happened here. Sogolon has given birth to a baby with a beard and a mouthful of teeth'.

After they have said this, a big, strange thing happened again. People who said this, their mouths remained open. Houseful of women are unable to run, unable to talk, unable to stand up even. Makang Konate, the father of Sunjata called his jali Balafa Seke Koyateh and said go to the house and see what is happening there. 'It was a lot of voices in that house, but now everything is quiet and I heard a baby cry before. Hope my son is not dead'. When Balafa Seke came to the house he found the baby lying down alive. But the house was full of women and all the witches where quiet and cannot say anything. He said: 'nothing has happened to the hero'.

This is where the praising of the jaliya started. [CD, track 18, 2.18]

Balafa Seke then started praising Sunjata shouting: 'the hero of Manding, the hero of the heroes, the braver of the bravest, the witch of the witches, everything has been tried not to make you come, everything has been tried to destroy you. There you are, still alive. We have seen your light before you come and we believe you are here to save Manding. The son of Sogolon, the son of Makang Konate Narena. Can you please forgive the witches and the women in the house for what they have done to you'.

Then the women unable to close their mouths, their mouths were closed and they where able to stand up and talk. The jali said again 'now we have something to say in the birthing of the hero'. The master or the leader of the witches was a woman. She said to the baby Sunjata: 'I am on my knees together will all the witches. We are here to eat you. But you are bigger than us, but we will give you a present of a miracle that is a big secret in the family of the witches. Nobody will ever try something like this anymore'. And they gave one egg to the mother of Sunjata and said: 'this is the present for the hero of Manding from the witches'. Then Sunjatas' mother said 'what can I use this egg for?' The witchmaster said: 'break the egg and see'. She broke the egg, come out a chameleon from this egg. And she said: 'what can I do with this chameleon?' The witch said: 'this is to tell you Sunjata can be anything in war if you want to capture him. He can escape. But lets kill now this cameleont'. The witch killed the cameleont in front of Sunjatas' mother and in front of all the witches and cut the stomach, comes out a horn of goat. The witches said: 'go and give this horn to Sunjatas' father. This is a protection for the whole family of Sunjata. No witch can harm them anymore'. That horn was brought to the west here by Mansa Jalali. [CD, track 19]

**Thank you very much Kebba.**

(Kebba) Thank you very much Alagi. We are now stopping here. Education is very wide and open, you will know something but not everything. The rest others will know that also. This is how the hero came to Manding. This is what we know about Sunjatas birth. After Sunjata was born and been through all this catastrophe when he

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was a baby this is where we are going to stop. By giving this to Alagi Mbye he knows it all.

But if a horse is running, if you hit the horse small it means to run more. And because of he and his friends are here to help all of us, all the jalis in the Gambia for the benefit of our children tomorrow we are ready to give him all what we know to be able to develop this idea. On behalf of my brother Ahmadu the women of the compound I Kebba Kanuteh in the name of the house of Manding I say thank you all.

**Thank you very much Ahmadu, thank you very much Kebba. This is not a study for only the children but for both the children and the grown ups, You have said things that I don't know about this tradition. I thank you very much. On behalf of my colleagues Anders Åhlin and Eva Sæther we thank you very much. Now, where we stopped, Sunjata is now born in Manding. What is left is what he was doing in the Manding society during his life and we are thinking of continuing this work to know more about ourselves in future.**

*The interview ends with a song. [CD, track 20, Sunjata Simbon]*