

Roots of Life – Intro to West African Dance and Drumming

Vocabulary:

Djembe (jem-bay): Acoustic instrument that originated out of the Mali Empire of West Africa in the countries of Mali and Guinea. It migrated from the Mali Empire to Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso. There are three basic sounds produced from the djembe by using different hand techniques – Bass, Tone, and Slap.

The djembe is made by carved wood, the drum head is made from goat skin that is held with three metal rings and tuned with a tension system made of braided nylon rope.

Dununs (doons): Three drums that make up the bass section of the djembe orchestra and provide the heartbeat or melody of the rhythm. Carved from wood, covered with cow-hide, and played with sticks.

Kenkeni (Keen-keni): Smallest of the three dununs that produces the highest sound.

Sangban (Song-bah): Mid-range drum

Dundunba (also called the doundoun) (doon doon bah): Largest drum, producing the deepest sound.

Culture: The cumulative experiences and expressions of an individual and/or community of people. In West Africa artistic culture is expressed through an oral tradition (storytelling), music, song, dance, drumming, masking, visual arts, and more.

Kuku: A popular rhythm and dance at festivals originating in Forest Guinea and Ivory Coast. It was traditionally played when women returned to the village after a day of fishing. Today, Kuku is a popular dance and rhythm played and danced for various celebrations across West Africa and beyond.

Additional Resources:

Article on West African Dance

<https://www.britannica.com/art/African-dance>

Maps of Africa:

https://www.google.com/search?q=Map+of+Africa&tbm=isch&chips=q:map+of+africa,g_1:labeled:ZinWBAHZcWc%3D&client=firefox-b-1-d&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjLz6f6-pfxAhUS8VMKHxpVBZoQ4IYoAHoECAEQGQ&biw=1265&bih=624#imgrc=4-mQLeyKbyfxaM

Bibliography

Billmeier, Uschi. Mamday Keita. Arun-Veriag, 1999.

Oral traditions shared by Mamday Keita during his residency at the Global Education Center, October 2004.

Djembe Traditions, Global Education Center Handbook, prepared by Shannon Holland and Ellen Gilbert.