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In this issue...

The Sacred Bala Ba of Maniselia

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The Bala Ba of Maniselia is a sacred Malinke traditional percussion instrument created by the descendants of Djeli Balafassike Kouyate in the late 16th century, during the rule of the Mali Empire. *Djeli* are West African traditional singers of praise; historians and storytellers responsible for the oral transmission of accounts of historic events; and those charged with the care and oversight of the sacred Bala Ba of Maniselia. This paper provides an overview and a timeline of events surrounding the construction of the Bala Ba and its rediscovery and restoration in Maniselia Village, Guinea, by the AfricaWrites research team in 2011.

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Message from the Editor

Happy Fall Everyone!

What a crazy beginning of the school year here in New England with Hurricane Irene rolling through—I am sure some of you are still dealing with the aftermath. I am excited that the conference this year is basically in my backyard at Bridgewater State University. Bridgewater did an outstanding job hosting the conference back in 2002 and I expect 2012 will be as successful.

I realize that with universities and colleges experiencing budget tightening and the economy not doing well some of you might be thinking about skipping the 2012 conference. If you are, however, I hope you will reconsider. It is the small professional organizations that are key to providing a comfortable venue for a real exchange of ideas among academic and applied anthropologists as well as with students at all levels. The NEAA is a special organization with a history of being welcoming to all who are interested in or practicing anthropology. Please include the conference in your plans for 2012.

I hope to see you all there. Remember we are always looking for submissions and ideas for the NEAA News.

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Message from the President
Rare Opportunities Lost or Gained: Science Education

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This is to encourage anthropologists attending the upcoming Northeastern Anthropological Association's 52nd Annual Meeting in March 2012 at Bridgewater State University in Bridgewater, MA to contribute sessions that critically examine the diverse skill sets applied and taught by anthropologists. The NEAA continues to be a forum for reviewing research results, engaging students and debating future directions in anthropology. Here archaeology and science are briefly considered in light of current national science education reform proposals. Such topics are well worth debating at the NEAA.

Science as a Key Skill

Each semester at the start of class on the first day, I collect basic information from the 30 students enrolled in my introductory archaeology class in this manner:

Prompt: *Imagine that you are an archaeologist (based on what you know today).* ***What skills are most and what skills are least important?*** *Use all or as many as you can of the following words once to briefly describe the most and the least important skills to an archaeologist:*

Collector	*Historian*	*Manager*	*Scientist*	*Teacher*
Entrepreneur	*Humanitarian*	*Performer*	*Sociologist*	*Writer*

When I began this thought exercise decades ago it was designed as an ice-breaker, a device to open up discussions about the discipline of archaeology at beginning of the semester that would continue over the next three or so months. Initially, my goal was to use terms to illustrate the broad range of skills used by archaeologists. However, as I looked at individual responses, it was obvious that public perceptions of my discipline were narrow and normative. For example, most students entering my introductory archaeology listed "science" as a most important skill, as illustrated in two student responses recorded on 8/31/2010:

Student	Most Important Skills	Least Important Skills
1	scientist, collector, writer, humanitarian, historian, sociologist, teacher	entrepreneur, manager, performer
2	I believe that all could play a significant role in the archaeology field. Each could bring different information to add to the findings. The typical ones that I would identify with the field include collector, historian, scientist and sociologist…..	

or, these two student responses from the current fall semester, collected on 9/6/2011:

Student	Most Important Skills	Least Important Skills
1	historian, teacher, writer, collector, scientist	humanitarian, performer, manager
2	Having the skills of a scientist is the most important skill to come to valid conclusions. Using unscientific methodology would render all research, conclusions, etc. invalid.	An archaeologist does not need to be a humanitarian. Being a humanitarian is nice but is not required to study humans.

At the start of every semester for the past twenty years students have consistently identified archaeologists as historians and scientists. This semester is no different (Figure 1).

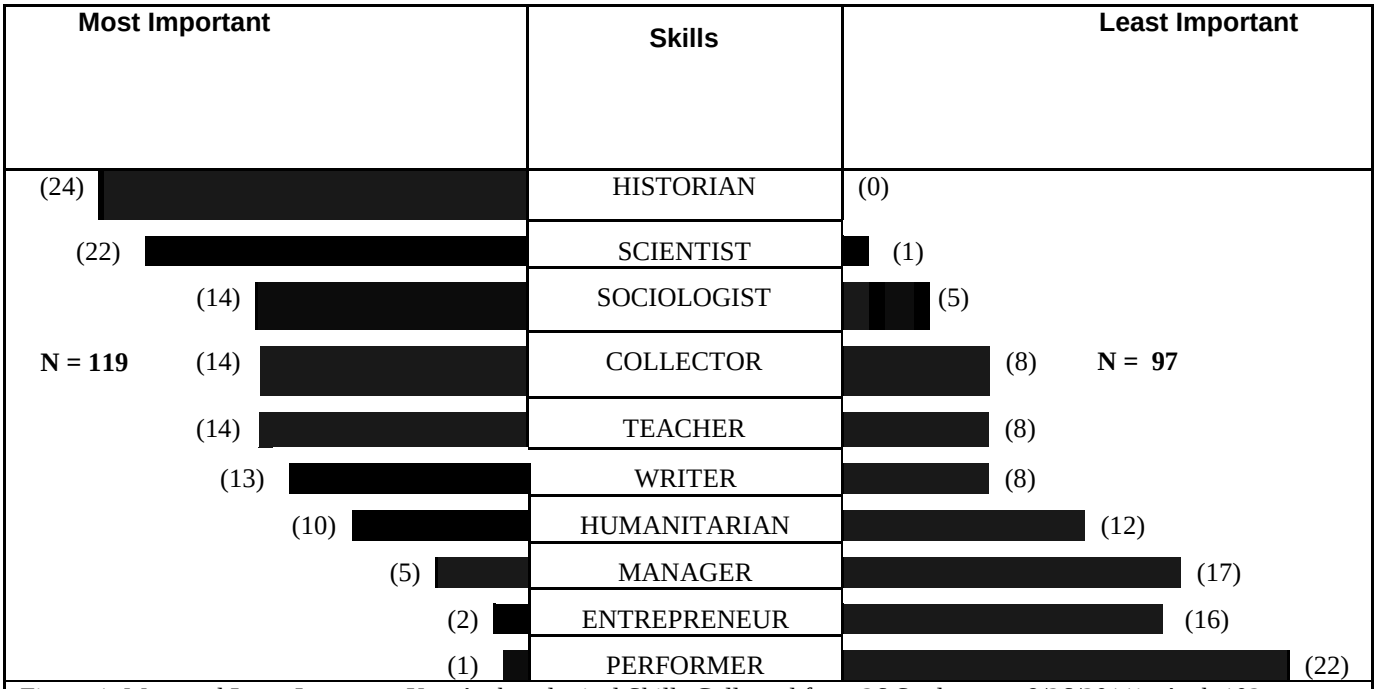

Figure 1: Most and Least Important Key Archaeological Skills Collected from 26 Students on 9/26/2011in Anth 102, Section 1 (Introduction to Archaeology), Rhode Island College.

For example, 22 of the 26 respondents cited "scientist" as a most important skill (one cited it as least, while three did not list science in their responses). In contrast, performer was a least important skill for 22 respondents (one cited it as most and three did not use performer in their answers). For decades, performer, manager and entrepreneur have been uniformly listed as least important skills for archaeologists. Entering students this year remained ambivalent about the importance of other skill areas, including: collector, teacher, writer or humanitarian (Figure 1).

These individual word choices will be examined throughout this semester, as we work through case studies that contest the stereotypes that each word might imply. In a few weeks, when we review Cultural Resource Management (CRM) projects or discuss the range of job opportunities available to CRM archaeologists, I will remind the class that most listed "manager" or "entrepreneur" as least important skills at the start of this semester.

In spite of the prominence of "science" as a key archaeological skill, first year students arrive in my introductory archaeology class with limited experience about how the sciences work. They are full of fears. For example, many state that "science" is hard, technical, incomprehensible and boring. Where did they develop such views? Entering students holding such fears or hoping to avoid science altogether cannot be pleased to discover in the first week that nearly everyone in this classroom presumes that science skills are most important in archaeology.

They may be relieved to discover that archaeology is also a social science and humanity. That is, not all of archaeology is science. My pitch to these young scholars is that <u>all</u> disciplines are broader than what

you have been taught to believe. Science information and thinking is everywhere, but so is social science information and artistic thinking. Thankfully every discipline has many niches to fill.

Current Science Reform

Periodic reforms, as outlined in *A Framework of K-12 Science Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas* (National Academy of Sciences 2011) are too infrequent, but well worth the effort. And, there is much to applaud in this report produced by the Committee on a Conceptual Framework for New K-12 Science Education Standards for the National Research Council of the National Academies. Unfortunately it does not go far enough: its reluctance to fully embrace the social sciences, humanities and arts I fear represents a squandered opportunity.

As a practicing archaeologist who regularly teaches undergraduate students at Rhode Island College, I read the on-line advance copy that was released on July 19, 2011 with interest. Since archaeology is typically first encountered in college, the qualities of all K-12 education are essential. Archaeology is not a perspective considered in this report, but the effects of this report on archaeology are consequential. Science preparation matters to everyone. Science preparation – among many other "literacies" – ultimately is helpful to those interested in pursuing advanced study in archaeology.

The new emphasis in this report on practices (Chapter 3) is timely, as illustrated in the *highlighted* practices that this report lists and the following paragraph describes. First year students entering an introductory archaeology class should not fear *asking questions* (or *defining problems*), which are important practices listed in this document. Other helpful practices include familiarity with *models and model building, designing research, analyzing and interpreting data*. It would be great if every entering student was familiar with bar graphs and tables, or could read the maps that punctuate each section of many archaeology texts. Knowing *scales of measurements*, quantitative and qualitative, are handy, because archaeological information is often listed, counted or plotted, and frequently in the metric system.

Constructing explanations, engaging in argumentation, evaluating and communicating information are other good practices identified in this report. If anything, Chapter 3 would benefit from more attention to viewing science through other social science and humanities disciplinary lenses. In the case of archaeological research, much of what gets done – whether pure or applied - is a public process. The human record that we recover and interpret is our public history. Most archaeological funding is public. Archaeologists need to be familiar with computer technology, but skills and interest in writing, photography, illustration and public speaking are encouraged. Communication, as broadly conceived through technologies, the visual and performing arts, are terrific backgrounds for disseminating information. Additionally, archaeological audiences include many "publics" and communities – indigenous communities, for example, which may question our work.

Science is not separate from culture. As this report argues, science and engineering are "significant parts of human culture (1.1)." This perspective should not be understated, because science changes the way we all think, how we organize and interact. Science, as part of our culture, is transformative even to our everyday ideas and practices. Science, as outlined in this report, touches every human culture. Here the perspectives of anthropologists could be helpful. It is no surprise that indigenous peoples question alien knowledge, whether they are members of a Native American community that objects to the way archaeologists describe their origins or are members of a fundamentalist religious mega church that demand acceptance of creationist arguments. The effects of science education are a big deal! And,

practices that have been developed in disciplines like psychology, social anthropology, linguistics and cognitive science can be applied to questions about how science fundamentally transforms human culture.

A Framework of K-12 Science Education lists a number of crosscutting concepts in Chapter 4 that are very familiar to the archaeological community. These concepts are *highlighted* in this paragraph. *Pattern recognition* is essential to the spatial modeling we apply to places; we study sites that are not always easy to see. Attention to the *scale of analysis* extends from the attributes along the edge of a chipped stone artifact to the global distributions of food systems. *Stability and change* are certainly critical concepts that students face in every archaeology course that examines simple hunting and gathering or complex agricultural and industrial human systems. Yes, there is much to the proposed framework that is familiar and welcomed to archaeologists who might hope that every high school student will graduate with a firm science foundation. Such a foundation would enhance their performance in and their enjoyment of every inquiry that follows. Science is for science, as well as for each social science, humanity and art.

A Framework of K-12 Science Education argues that science education "should show that new scientific ideas are acts of imagination (3-22)." Discovery and understanding make inquiry both exciting and satisfying. If my entering students held such views, then they might applaud my claim that archaeology is a science, as well as many other things. Certainly a tough problem solved can be as rewarding as a slam dunk. What makes someone decide to labor through an athletic training camp, but not sweat through laboratory analyses or writing revisions? The emotions triggered by elegant solutions must be shared by athletes, scientists and poets. Tapping familiar human emotions enables us to appreciate why anyone might want to pursue a career in sports, science, creative writing or anthropology.

Anthropology in Science Education

A Framework of K-12 Science Education offers a broad view of science, arguing that the idea that "there is a single scientific method… is a myth [and]… fundamentally wrong (3-22)." So, could skills learned in anthropology or sociology research based classes satisfactorily meet the scientific education goals outlined in this framework? Your answer may depend on how you view science. Regardless, I believe that incorporating a broader range of disciplinary thinking into this document would generally strengthen science education. This new framework pays slight attention, for example, to ethics, law, civics, public policy, and values or to social and political processes. These are areas that students study as they move from understanding their neighborhood to the world in K-12 social studies education. Why not think laterally and use the associated skills and concepts that students learn in social studies or history curriculum that are taught in tandem to the sciences? Certainly science and social sciences research involves teamwork (Jones, Wuchty and Uzzi 2008), which is an orientation that would benefit the humanities and arts. Emphatically, the social sciences, humanities and arts teach practices and concepts useful to doing science and engineering research. Whole disciplines have devoted decades to topics of organization, learning and now cognition.

The committee that produced this admirable document decided not to incorporate social, behavioral and economic sciences more fully into this new science education framework for a number of reasons, as discussed in *limitations of this framework* (1-3 to 1-6) and *Appendix A*, which includes public commentary (A-3 toA-4). That the social sciences are missing from this preliminary report has been noticed (Mervis 2011). This document took two years to produce, and certainly a broader program would have taken much longer. Thus, while important gains have been achieved, creating a science

education program that links broadly to student learning, interests and creativity will require further changes.

As every teacher and student who enters a classroom knows, the revision of educational standards is a continuous process, and should not be a series of positions that are separated by years of inactivity. *Revising* could be added as another educational practice. *Social models*, including civic engagement could become new crosscutting concepts, and student assessments could be incorporated into an ongoing version of this document. Rather than change this document in another decade or so, consider it a draft in a many-year outline. I do intend to emphasize several of the skills and concepts highlighted in this document within research, explanation and problem solving lessons in up-coming Introduction to Archaeology courses.

That science is an essential part of the thinking and processes of archaeological research has been assumed by most students in my introductory archaeology classes at the beginning of every semester for several decades. Science remains critical to our curricular discourses and many research practices. The institutions where we work and our departments will be affected by science education reform. How anthropology should and will respond to these proposed reforms are questions that should be examined at sessions proposed for the 52nd Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association in March, 2012 at Bridgewater State University.

Sources:

Jones, Benjamin, Stefan Wuchty and Brian Uzzi (2008) *Multi-University Research Teams: Shifting Impact, Geography, and Stratification in Science*. Science: 322: 1259-1262.

Mervis, Jeffrey (2011) *Report Alters Definition of What Students Should Learn.* Science: 333: 510.

National Academy of Sciences (2011) *A Framework for K-12 Sciences Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas*. Advance Copy (7/19/2011). Committee on a Conceptual Framework for New K-12 Science Education Standards. National Research Council of the National Academies. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

NEAA 2012 Conference hosted by Bridgewater State University Bridgewater, Massachusetts

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The 52nd Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropology Association will be held at Bridgewater State University from March 8 – 10, 2012. Appropriate to the year in terms of the Mesoamerican calendar systems, marking both a 52-year cycle and the end of the 13th baktun, the theme of the meeting will be "Cultural Constructions of Time." We have invited Dr. John Carlson, a renowned expert on the Mayan calendar, as a keynote to speak on the December 21, 2012 event. The conference is co-sponsored by the Bridgewater State University Anthropology Department, the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, and the Greater Boston Anthropology Consortium. The meeting will open with a reception and tour at the Massachusetts Archaeological Society's Robbins Museum of Archaeology on the evening of

Thursday, March 8th. Paper and poster sessions will take place at the Bridgewater campus on Friday and Saturday, March 9th and 10th. The keynote address will be preceded by a banquet. Papers and posters on topics from all of the subfields of Anthropology are welcome; the submission deadline is February 15, 2012. Bridgewater State University is easily accessible via commuter rail from South Station in Boston; a station on the Middleboro-Lakeville line is located right on campus. The Silver Line bus provides frequent shuttles to South Station from Logan Airport. For further information, please contact Dr. Curtiss Hoffman at c1hoffman@bridgew.edu.

Continued from page 1 Gorham *The Sacred Bala Ba of Maniselia*

The Origin of the Sacred Bala Ba of Maniselia

The sacred Bala Ba of Maniselia is a Malinke musical instrument of West Africa and is known today as the ancient and sacred Bala Ba, or "big Bala." Rarely displayed publicly, the sacred Bala Ba may be played or sounded only by those of special lineage and heritage among the djeli of the Kouyate family of the republics of Guinea and Mali. This account of the history of the sacred Bala Ba of Maniselia is provided in accordance with the oral history of the association of djeli known as the Djeli Tomba and the Kouyate family.

In 1205**,** nearly 20 years before the Kirina War, in present-day Sosso, Mali, the sacred Bala Ba of Sosso was acquired by an ambitious mystic and hunter of Bamana origin known as Soumaoro or Sumanguru Kante. In the years that followed and with the aid of the sacred Bala Ba, Soumaoro raised a mighty army and began a war of conquest against the surrounding chiefdoms, establishing the Sosso Empire and becoming its king.

Soumaoro's reign continued until his defeat at Kirina, estimated by the Djeli Tomba Association to have taken place in 1235. After being wounded in battle by his enemy, Sundiata Keita, Soumaoro fled, leaving behind his many talismans and totems of spiritual power, including the sacred Sosso Bala Ba.

With Soumaoro vanquished, his armies were soon defeated. After the battle, the Sosso Bala Ba passed from Sundiata Keita to Soumarou Kante's former djeli, Djeli Balafasseke Kouyate.

After the Kirina War and under the reign of Mansa[1] Sundiata Keita, Djeli Balafasseke Kouyate would father three sons. The three sons of Djeli Balafasseke were Batrou Mory Kouyate, Misaman Kouyate, and Moussa Kouyate. In 1271, in the compound of Mansa Sundiata Keita at Niani, in present-day Guinea, Djeli Balafasseke Kouyate died, and the sacred Sosso Bala Ba passed to his youngest son, Moussa Kouyate.

Djeli Batrou Mory Kouyate had 15 sons, one of whom was Namamodou Kouyate. Namamodou fathered a son named Famouroba Kouyate. In time Famouraba Kouyate fathered a son named Djebourama, or Djeli Bourama Kouyate. At the Malian capital of Niani, having observed the sacred rituals of the Sosso Bala Ba, Djeli Bourama Kouyate was encouraged by his father and grandfather and by the elders to create another sacred Bala Ba, which he did in the late 1500s, in Niagassola, in present-day Guinea, under the reign of Nassira Madi Keita, a descendent of Sundiata Keita. Once Djeli Bourama's Bala Ba

[1] chief

had been completed, a series of rituals was prepared, and the Bala Ba was blessed by two spiritual entities called Soro. The Soro then granted Djeli Bourama's newly created Bala Ba spiritual power that rivaled that of the sacred Sosso Bala.

Centuries later, and through the migration of Djeli Batrou Mory Kouyate's descendants to Gnagassola, Manarena Banankoro, and Binko, in present-day Guinea, the Bala Ba created by Djeli Bourama came to rest in Maniselia Village, where it was cared for by the descendants of Djeli Batrou Mory Kouyate, passing quietly in succession from one generation to the next, long forgotten by nearly all except the Konkoba Djeli of Maniselia, Djeli Tomba of Niagassola, Kankan and a small number of West African elders.

Over time the Bala Ba fell into a state of ruin, the solemn rituals; elaborate ceremonies, and praise of this once mighty instrument of power ceased; and the beating heart of the ancient spirits of the Bala Ba grew silent.

Restoration of the Sacred Bala Ba of Maniselia

In February 2011, while documenting Malinke cultural traditions of the Tokonou region of southern Guinea and surrounding villages, the AfricaWrites team learned of the existence of the Bala Ba in Maniselia Village. Working closely with the community of Maniselia Village, its elders, Kankan Djeli Tomba, and surrounding villages, the AfricaWrites team began documenting the ancient origins and history of the sacred Bala Ba and worked with the Maniselia community to restore it. Work to restore the sacred Bala Ba was conducted by members of the donzoya, noumou and djeli societies, as well as the Maneselia elders, in strict accordance with the sacred Bala Ba's ancient traditions. Malinke traditional hunters, or *donzo,* provided the Konanin or Fori (sacred animal skins) used to bind the components of the sacred Bala Ba. The *noumou,* or blacksmith, provided the special tools needed, including the *leselin,* for shaving and chiseling, and the *loui*, a piercing tool.

Nearly two months later the sacred Bala Ba had been physically restored. Kouyate family members, village officials and the chief of the village conducted meetings to organize the Bala Labo ceremony, known as the "coming out" ceremony for the Bala Ba, during which the sacred Bala Ba would be seen publicly for the first time in generations. Among the meetings held was the Dembaya Laden, a special gathering of the Kouyate family for the purpose of planning the exposition of the sacred Bala Ba during the Bala Labo ceremony. After all arrangements had been made and agreed upon by those responsible for the ceremony, the *belena,* the spokesperson for the chief of the village, gave the chief's proclamation that the Bala Labo ceremony for the sacred Bala Ba would be held on June 25, 2011.

On June 25th the Bala Labo ceremony was held and the fully restored sacred Bala Ba was presented publicly in Maniselia Village. The Bala Labo ceremony for the sacred Bala Ba was attended by Maniselia elders, Konkoba Djeli, Kankan Djeli Tomba's representatives, Niagassola Djeli Tomba's representatives, donzo, various Konkoba mask entities, Balatigui Adama Kouyate, the AfricaWrites team, Kankan University faculty and students, representatives of the Guinean government, and nearly 1,500 guests from Maniselia, Gnaldou, Toumaniya, Deledou and the surrounding villages.

Since the discovery of the Bala Ba by the AfricaWrites team, both the existence and restoration of the Bala Ba have been officially recognized by Guinean governmental authorities of the Tokounou region, Kankan University, the Kouyate family, and the ancient Djeli Tomba. Research continues into the origins

and history of the Bala Ba and rituals associated with it.

Acknowledgments
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For more on Patrick Gorhman:
AfricaWrites facebook page http://facebook.com/pages/AfricaWrites/76816002267?v=info

How to Tell a Great Story The African Chronicles - Interview with Patrick Gorham Lanfia Toure (May 23, 2009) http://howtotellagreatstory.com/byot/byot128.html

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