Famoudou Konaté
Thomas Ott

Rhythms and Songs from Guinea

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in collaboration with

Thomas Goldhahn
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Frauke Köhler and Alexander Lück

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The texts of the songs were transcribed into the official Guinean orthography, translated and annotated by Mohamed Mancona Kandé and Bettina Kandé.

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How this Book came to be Written

Famoudou Konaté and Thomas Ott met in the spring of 1994 in the West African country of The Gambia, during one of Volker Schütz's "Trips into the Music of Black Africa". Famoudou Konaté is a great virtuoso on the djembé-drum and at the same time an experienced teacher, with a sense of humor, a pronounced gift for proceeding methodically, and the ability to inspire enthusiasm. It was impressive to see the way in which, by demonstration, he was able to convey to the participants the drum music and the songs and dances of his people, the Malinké in Guinea. By his own reckoning, he masters approximately 80 "pieces" – or, as he says, "rhythms" – of this tradition, whereby such a rhythm always encompasses several accompanying and solo patterns. The friendship with Famoudou Konaté led to an invitation to the Hochschule der Künste Berlin (HdK; The Berlin University of the Arts), where, since 1993, Thomas Ott, Frauke Köhler and Alexander Lück, together with many students, had been carrying out the project "Music from Africa in Berlin's Schools". In September 1994 and 1995 Famoudou Konaté came to Berlin and worked with the students. In the spring of 1995 there was a further workshop under his leadership in Gambia; 20 students participated, this time not only future music teachers but also jazz students from the HdK. The result of all these encounters was a certain familiarity with the African style of music propagated by Famoudou Konaté and the grasp of a whole series of rhythms and songs in this tradition. As what had been learned in the framework of these projects was immediately taken into schools and tried out there, we were able to see to what extent this music "came across" for the schoolchildren and pupils of various ages – which was a very positive experience for our students, as they did not have any problems of motivation during such lessons.

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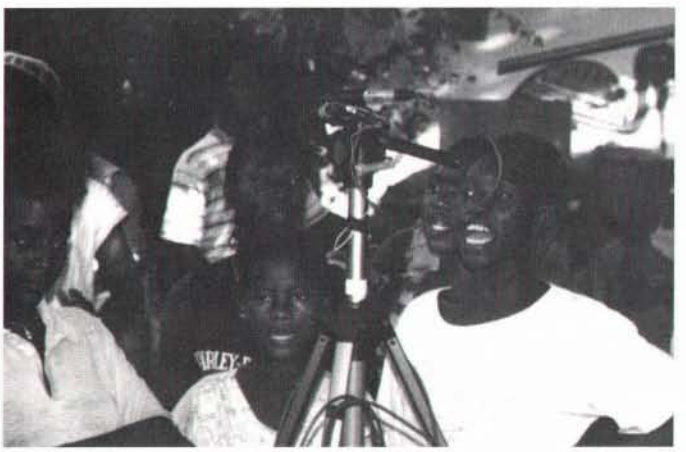
In autumn of 1995 we decided to publish part of the material – with a didactic adaptation. This was, for two reasons, a gamble:

- Can that which one has learned from direct contact with an African master be passed on in writing to colleagues who until now have had little – or no – experience with African music?
- Is it at all possible to transcribe and preserve African music in this way; will it not thereby be robbed of its magic and vital nerve? For this music does not normally exist, like our occidental music, in the form of notes and scores which can be executed an any time without a loss of authenticity.



Recording

African music, more than music from other cultures, thrives on social structures, in which it always fulfills certain functions. Even where it follows musical patterns, the music sounds different in every situation in which it is sung and played. It is, as Volker Schütz put it, "meant for internal use", anonymous and "popular" in the sense that those belonging to a particular culture can perform, understand and hand down their music without any formal theory and without the help of notation (Schütz 1992, p. 17).

One characteristic of Malinké music did aid our project: it is to quite a great extent standardized. Of course, in each individual situation the length, the tempo and the dramaturgy of the musical (and social) event are different from the beginning (and usually by way of several highlights) to the end. But each of the rhythms consists of a series of unchanging figures from which the other players seldom deviate. Combined, these figures make up the particular drive of a rhythm, its specific musical character, which can indeed be produced always and everywhere, if one adheres to the fixed figures. The progression of a piece is also determined by rules. And the soloist's improvisations, however freely they may be developed, are always based on a limited number of patterns. So it appeared to us possible and worthwhile to write down and publish whatever

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of Famoudou Konaté's music could be defined, but only together with recordings which communicate some idea of how this music may sound. The accent must be on "may" – for each recording demonstrates only one single version of a rhythm, a version determined by the situation in which it was recorded.

In December 1995 Thomas Ott and Thomas Goldhahn (a recording-engineer student at the Hochschule der Künste) traveled to Conakry, the capital of Guinea, where Famoudou Konaté lives with his large family. The recording of the CD that accompanies this book was carried out on the Konatés' property, during an unforgettable week full of encounters with music and people. This was of course in no way a studio situation. There were a number of calamities, from the never-ending problems with electricity to sudden downpours or the neighbor's planing of wood. But these problems were all solved the African way: especially with that laughter which (as it is said) is a staple of the African diet. Perhaps something of this atmosphere can be sensed from the recordings. With the help of these, we were able to add more precise details to the notation, which had been done ahead of time. A good – perhaps the most important – prerequisite for the exact notation of this music is having participated in playing it oneself, and if possible having played all parts.

It is not possible to reconstruct all the figures of the music from the "auditory picture" alone, because together they join in complex combinations and are difficult to detect. On the other hand, knowing the "rules of play" should make it possible to follow the recordings in the notation.

Special thanks must go to Mohamed Kandé, who wrote down the words of the songs in the official Guinean orthography and together with his wife Bettina translated them and wrote the short comments preceding each rhythm. Mohamed Kandé is from Famoudou Konaté's home region and studied computer science at the Technical University of Berlin. Bettina Kandé studied rhythmics at the Hochschule der Künste. Frauke Köhler and Alexander Lück are studying music-teaching at the Hochschule der Künste and have participated from the very beginning in the project "Music from Africa in Berlin's Schools". Their expertise and their many and diverse experiences in all levels of teaching have gone into this book which they helped plan. And very much credit goes to Volker Schütz, who was the first one to lead us all to the enticement of African music. His book "Music in Black Africa" (1992) must be mentioned here, as it gave us indispensable impulses.

How to Work with this Book

This book is intended primarily for pupils, students and teachers who, in theory and practice, are already studying or intend to study African music. There are fundamentally two ways to use the book and the CD:

- One can, for instance in high school or college, study the music, its structures and sound by listening and analyzing. In this case we recommend for further study the CD "Rhythmen der Malinké" ("Rhythms of the Malinké", see discography), accompanied by a very informative booklet. It was put out by the "Berliner Museum für Völkerkunde" (Berlin Museum for Ethnology), with recordings done, also in Guinea, under the musical direction of Famoudou Konaté. It includes, among other things, two further versions of Bala Kulandyan (track 2), a song which we have also documented – an opportunity for rewarding comparisons.
- Our material can be used for singing and playing music. Experience has shown that it can be used for this purpose at all school levels as well as in more advanced studies.

Usually both possibilities will be combined, with different emphasis: Whoever wants above all to become acquainted with the music or to deal with it theoretically would do well to experiment with it in practice. Whoever wants above all to play music should however endeavor to know the music in its "original form".

For the purpose of playing this music there are various possibilities, depending on the situation: from singing the songs with simple clap rhythms to easy or more difficult arrangements and progressing further to working on this music in Afro-Percussion groups (either in school or outside school), of which there are more and more these days. Instructions for such work are in the chapter "On Methods" and in annotations to the rhythms documented in this book. One is not necessarily restricted to the original instruments. West African drums – djembés and bass drums – are often available on the market now. But even in simplified versions they are quite expensive. Of course, these drums give rise to a fascination that facilitates teaching. However, the rhythms are also fun to play on other instruments which are normally on hand at school (**xylophones and other bar instruments**, congas, bongos, etc.). It will undoubtedly be necessary to experiment a bit until it "sounds right".

In the chapter " On Methods" the exercises deal with the constantly recurring difficulties that we, because of our non-African music tradition, have with African rhythms. In fact, in most of the pieces we face particular rhythmic problems even beyond the scope of such cultural limitations. For these problems, too, we have worked out special exercises. Our goal was to present material that can be altered for use in various teaching situations. At the same time, we wanted to present material as authentic as possible, so that it can always serve as the basis to which we return.

It is relevant and gratifying to make a personal discovery of music from another culture and to use and transform it in a way that corresponds to one's own talents and routine, to one's own enjoyment in playing music. But it is just as important to learn to understand what is foreign and to appreciate it as it is – in its dissimilarity, in whatever part of it has to remain more or less foreign to us and perhaps precisely for this reason motivates us to ask questions about the cultural circumstances in which it originated. It must be clear to us, however, that a claim to **authenticity** should be accepted with great reservations. Even the notation and recording of this music lead to losses:

- More than the music of other cultures, African music is music of the moment, music of the specific situation – and therefore not reproducible. To capture it in the form of notation or a CD-track ("for posterity") is foreign to the very nature of this music.
- African musicians neither know nor use notation. Our notation techniques, developed for quite different music, do very poor justice to African music.
- When we use the notation texts and recordings – read them, listen to them, play the music ourselves – then we do so in situations which are completely different than those in which the music arose.
- This music appeals to *our* senses, we hear it with *our* ears – which are completely differently attuned than those of people in Africa.

What this Book Does Not Do

1. This book is not an introduction to "the" music of Africa.

We are dealing with only a small, in fact minute, sample of music culture: the music of the Malinké in the West African country of Guinea. And here, even more limited, only the music for a particular ensemble of drums. (It must be added, however, that the rhythmic principles of this music are largely typical for African music in general.)

The music of the Malinké involves considerably more. The Malinké are familiar with and use a wide range of instruments that are widespread in West Africa and beyond: plucked stringed instruments (*Kora, Donso Könin*), bar instruments, such as the African xylophone (*Balafo*), wind instruments (*horns, flutes*), stringed instruments played with a bow, wood blocks and slit-drums, etc. All of these instruments serve not only for tone color, but also for use in well-defined social and practical situations, for example for the activity of the griots, who in all of West Africa fulfill the functions of story-telling and of masters of ceremony. Whoever would like to study *music from Africa* in a broader sense would do well to keep to more generalized descriptions. The following are good introductions:

- For the musicological aspect, the chapter *Africa South of the Sahara* in the first volume of the encyclopedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (new edition); see also: the chapter *Africa* in the *New Grove's Dictionary of Music*, as well as the chapters on West Africa in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Vol. 1*)
- for the study of musical instruments and the social functions of African music, the book *The Music of Africa* by Joseph H. Kwabena Nketia;
- for didactics and practical teaching, the book *Musik in Schwarzafrika* (Music in Black Africa) by Volker Schütz, with many examples on the two accompanying CD's.

In our bibliography there are more details about these sources of information and further aspects of African music.

2. Dance is omitted in this book ...

... although in situations where music is played, people almost always dance. However, it would have enlarged too much the scope of this study to give to dance the same detailed attention which we are giving to music. Indeed, it is difficult to render in descriptions of African dance the complexity of sequences of movements involving the entire body. Of course it is also possible to turn oneself over to the music, to move according to impulse and dance spontaneously. Anyone who has participated in a workshop on African dance will find that the skills learned there can be used here.

3. This book can supply only scant information on the social and cultural background of the music.

"Whoever understands only something about music understands nothing about music" – these words pronounced by the composer Hanns Eisler apply also, and emphatically so, to music of other cultures. Music always has its source in and interwoven with a particular social context. To grasp this context and try to comprehend one on the basis of the other is an ambitious undertaking. Perhaps more than anywhere else, music in Africa has cult functions connected with ritual and sociability. Music is an indispensable part of celebrations related to the cycle of the year. Music mirrors a certain culturally typical perception of life (for instance, a particular perception of time). Music's functions vary; in fact, today the very substance of music is threatened by the social changes taking place.

Whoever is interested in African music and experiences this interest as an enrichment should also pose questions about the people who provide this enrichment. This book can only offer incentives. Some of the song texts, for instance, mirror typically African situations and problems:

Bala Kulandyan (track 2) sings of children, who "are the most important thing in life" and of the anguish which being childless means for a woman – and thus refers indirectly to the vicious circle of poverty and high birth rates which hinders social development in many African countries, including Guinea.

Somba Körö (track 3) mirrors a specific, typically African relationship between children and their parents.

N'yèrèbi (track 4), which sings of parting from the beloved girl friend, refers to traditional marriage customs and particular rituals connected with pre-marital relationships between boys and girls among the Malinké.

Baga Giné (track 5) speaks of African women's unbridled pleasure in dancing.

Kéné Foli (track 6) is sung during a particular phase of the initiation and circumcision ritual (the explosive question of the circumcision of girls in many African countries was a salient theme at the Peking Women's Conference in 1995).

Kè Bendo (track 8) expresses the growing self-confidence of African women, who are no longer willing to put up with traditional polygamous marriage.

Malin Na Kanin (track 9), a tale about the friendship between a child and a hippopotamus, is perhaps a parable about the loss of relatives or friends, a loss for which one must always be prepared. The girl Saran, to whom we are thankful for this song, experienced such loss herself.

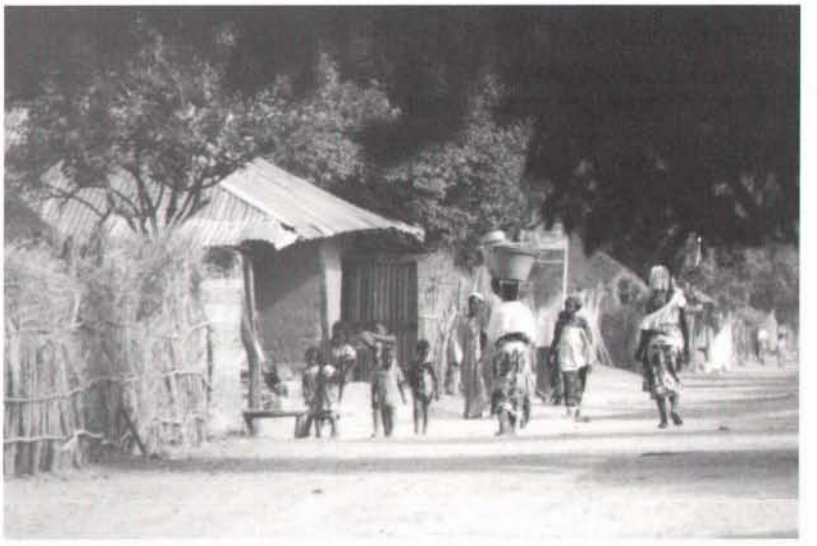
There is more on these themes in the supplementary information on each song or rhythm. For more extensive information on the social, political and cultural state of affairs in present-day Africa, we recommend (as an introduction):

- *Arche Afrika. Ausbruch ins Eigene. Doppelheft Nr. 12/1, Dezember 1995/Januar 1996 der Zeitschrift "du".* ("The Ark Africa. Escape into One's Own." Double issue No. 12/1, December 1995 / January 1996 of the journal "du")
- *Our Grandmothers' Drums* by Mark Hudson, who in the eighties lived for some time in a West African village and reports in detail about his stay there.

Nowadays the media quite often present information and illustrative material on Africa – and on music in Africa. Whoever watches out for such information will find that it can frequently be used in teaching.

The Malinké in Guinea and their Music

The Malinké



The Malinké people, to whom Famoudou Konaté belongs, live in the region bordering the present-day countries of Guinea, Mali and the Ivory Coast. The Malinké belong to the so-called *Manding Group*. The members of this group are called *Mandingo* in Senegal, *Mandinka* in the Gambia, *Bambara* in Mali, and *Djula* in the Ivory Coast; in southern Guinea, in Sierra Leone and in Liberia they are called *Tomamania* and *Koniaka*. They differ from one another, in culture and language, much as in Germany the Bavarians, Swabians, Saxons and East Friesians differ. In Africa the ethnic borders and national borders are almost never identical, as the latter were artificially established by European colonial powers. Present-day African countries are multinational countries. Several ethnic groups often live in the same region – even, in fact, in the same village. Likewise, members of one and the same ethnic group – such as the Manding – live in different countries.

The original land of the Manding group was the present-day border region between Guinea and Mali, which from the 8th to the 13th century constituted the Mandin realm. In the 13th century the legendary king *Sundiata Keita* expanded the Mandin realm to the kingdom of Mali. This huge empire originally comprised vast territories in West Africa, but in the succeeding centuries gradually diminished in size and influence. In the epic song *Sundiata Fasa*, a heroic epic still familiar to present-day griots

through oral tradition, praises are sung of the founder of the empire, Sundiata. And bearers of that name, such as the famous singer *Salif Keita*, still today enjoy a certain prestige.

Famoudou Konaté's family comes from Hamana, a region near the city of Kankan. The Malinké are merchants or farmers (rice, corn, millet, manioc, sweet potatoes). Life in these rural regions of Guinea, far from the coast and poorly connected to road or rail, still today is mainly a traditional way of life, as in similar regions in other West African countries. By contrast, in the capital city of Conakry the "blessings of civilization" have taken root, in a rather chaotic way (see p. 28: "From the Conakry Diary of a Visitor from Germany"). Mark Hudson's book (see bibliography) gives a good picture of life today in a West African village, the Mandinka village of Dulaba in The Gambia. Famoudou Konaté and his large family live today on the outskirts of Conakry. Once or twice a year he visits his native village of Sangbarala in Hamana, where until the age of nineteen he was the village drummer.

Functions of Music

What Chernoff (1997, p. 31) says in summary about African music in general is valid also for the music of the Malinké:

> *"Scholars who study African music have built their most generalized portrait on three key features: one is the rhythmic sophistication that we have noted; the other two are social. At serious musical events in the western world, musicians and audience members are separated. There are often physical boundaries between them. Their demeanor and positions are opposite, facing each other, playing and listening, clapping and bowing, making sounds and being quiet. In African musical venues, in contrast, we might say that artists and audiences enter one another. They form porous and permeable circles. The first noticeable social feature is that African music-making is participatory, evidenced by a relatively large number of people who are musically accomplished or who become involved in musical events through such means as singing, hand-clapping and dancing. The second is that music-making in Africa typically serves a social purpose: music is not a realm apart that exists for its own sake but rather is integrated into many situations of importance in individual and community life."*

For the Malinké, too, weddings, baptisms, and circumcision ceremonies are unthinkable without drum music, without song and dance, and without performances by the griots with their ceremonial songs and their hymns of praise. The Malinké have further important ceremonies during the course of the year (see Beer 1991):

- *Sunkaro sali*, a festival at the end of the 30-day Ramadan period of fasting;
- *Donkin sali*, the "Feast of the Sheep" during the month of the pilgrimage to Mecca;
- *Belanla* and *Baradossa*, ceremonies at the beginning of the millet harvest in August and the rice harvest in October;
- *Dalamön tolon*, a ceremony performed while fishing in the sacred lake belonging to the village.

Sunkaro sali and *donkin sali* are Muslim festivals (large regions of West Africa were converted to Islam in the 13th century). All of these festivals have their own special music. The information on the rhythms documented in this book, as well as the detailed commentary in the booklets accompanying the CD's with the music of the Malinké (see discography), give a further idea

of the many other occasions on which music is played – for each occasion a specific music. It is not surprising if Famoudou Konaté says he knows approximately eighty different rhythms, and they are by far not all the ones that were once in active use or still are. Here a few examples:

Mendiani: A dance mastered always by only one woman in the village and which she dances during a special Mendiani ceremony and on many other occasions. When she becomes older, she trains a young successor in the dance – at night and outside the village.

Diagba: A young and exceptionally beautiful woman is chosen "queen" of the village and carried through the village on a raised palanquin.

Soko: This rhythm is played before a circumcision, after the initiates have had their heads shaven.

Sofa: This was originally a dance by warriors on horseback, who in the case of a war were summoned together by large message drums. The mounted horses were trained to dance various steps to the drum music. (Famoudou Konaté experienced this himself during his youth.) Sofa is played today for the burial of men of esteem.

Kassa: A rhythm played during work in the fields. When a large-scale farmer wants to plant his fields, he summons young men from the region and gives them food and lodgings in a camp. The drummers follow them from field to field, accompany their work, and finally, when all the work is done, play for a large celebration (kassaladon) rejoicing in the work accomplished.

Dununbè: The Dununbè group of rhythms and dances forms a particularly rich stock in the store of Malinké drum music. Dununbè is the "Dance of the Strong Men". The dances and rituals of this group of rhythms symbolize and stylize social hierarchies, rivalries and power conflicts. Characteristic of the Dununbè are special choreographies (dances in circles and groups), dance steps with particular and imposing body language and accessories associated with violence (the occasional clashing of adorned axes, the occasional cracking of adorned whips, both making their threatening noises in rhythm). Mamady Keita and Famoudou Konaté recently recorded 12 versions of the Dununbè on an impressive CD ("Hamana", see discography).

Instruments

The music of the Malinké is not only drum music, of course, although the latter certainly does form the focal point of their music culture. The Malinké, too, use the full range of West African instruments. The use of an instrument is often connected to very special situations.

The **Kora** is a harp with 21 strings and is the main instrument of the *jeli (griot)*. The griot accompanies his own song with it, frequently together with a griotte (a woman – often his wife) who sings with him in alternation. A griot has important functions in the social life of a community. He hands down the old myths and fairy tales and keeps history alive (as the African cultures have no written language, he is a sort of "wandering library"); furthermore, he is counselor and justice of the peace and master of ceremonies for family and village festivities. He often has one or more patrons, prominent personalities (formerly kings and nobles), and sings praises of them on festive occasions. The office of griot is inherited: the father passes it on to his eldest son, whom he instructs from an early age on. Among the Malinké, it is traditionally the blacksmiths who most often perform the functions of griots.

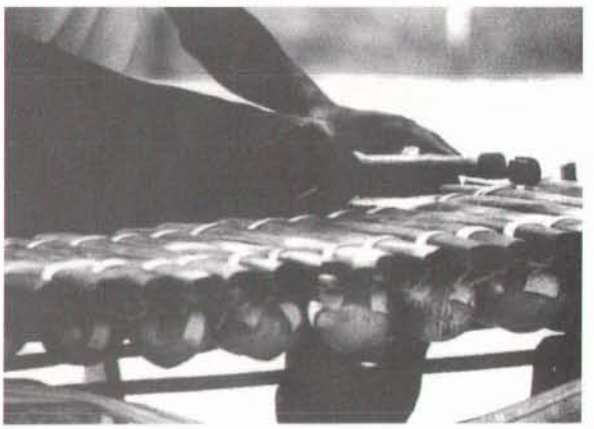
The **Balafo**, a wooden bar instrument, is a further instrument of the griots; it has calabashes as soundboxes. (It is the historical model for the Orff xylophone.)

The **Soko**, a small stringed instrument with a round body and a "string" made of a strand of hair, played with a bow. The singer usually sings in unison to the melody played.

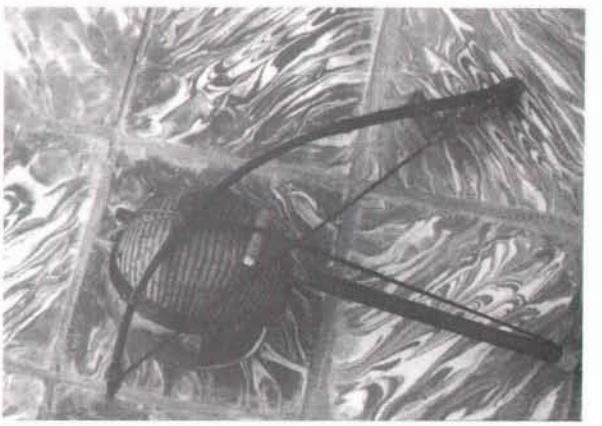
Donso könin, Bölön, Koworo: deeper-sounding plucked instruments with five or six strings. They are used to accompany solo songs or alternate singing. The donso könin is the traditional instrument of hunters. The bölön is played to increase or to ward off voodoo magic. (Famoudou Konaté says that the bölön player leads a dangerous life – he must be well armed against sorcery.) The koworo (also called dan) is used in some villages for weddings. It is played in the evening, before the girl is led to the bridegroom.

Kora

Koworo



Balafo



Soko

FLUTES – for example transverse flutes such as the Fulé. They are played with distinctly audible sounds of blowing and of overblowing. Often the player uses in addition his own voice, which alternates in rapid rhythm with the flute.

KOLOKOLO (wooden slit-drums): They are used, for example, to keep animals away from fields when the corn is ripe but can not yet be harvested. Then the slit-drums – whose sound causes a panic fear in monkeys – are played round the clock.

Donso Könin

Fulé

Kolokolo

Kudén

The **Kuden**, played especially by women, is a dried bottle gourd with openings at the top and bottom. Dry sounds of varying pitch are obtained by repeatedly placing the thick end of the gourd against the thigh and simultaneously opening or closing by hand the hole at the other end.

The **Kèrè budu** – a wind instrument made from the horn of an animal called sénsén. It is mostly used together with the rhythms Konkoba and Soro, which (like the Kassa – see above) are played to accompany farming work.

The **Dyi dunun** is a water drum. A large half calabash (or today often just simply a tub) is filled with water; another smaller calabash floats on the water with its opening downward. It is hit with a stick padded with cloth at one end. The water drum is played particularly on two occasions: at the turning of the year and for an eclipse of the moon. (On our CD a water drum accompanies Saran singing "Malin Na Kanin," track 9).

Kèrè Budu

Dyi Dunun

The Drum Instruments of Malinké Ensembles

The drum ensemble consists of one or two djembé solo drums, one or two djembé accompanying drums and three bass drums of different sizes, each with a small iron bell.

The Djembé

The djembé has a goblet-shaped body with shorn goatskin stretched over the top. It is traditionally made from the wood of a lenké tree. The skin is stretched tightly – the solo djembé particularly must have a clear, penetrating sound. Formerly, twisted strips of hide were used for tautening. Nowadays prestretched sailing rope is used; it is much more durable and can be tautened better. The player can play the djembé comfortably in a sitting position, tipping the drum slightly forward. However, it is worn fastened to a strap for dance festivals, so that the player can move around. When it is played this way, there are usually three tin rattles attached to it, which sound at every beat on the drum and are sometimes struck directly.

Famoudou Konaté tells us about the traditional ritual involved in making a djembé:

> *"First of all it is necessary, with the help of an oracle, to consult the demon who lives in the lenké tree. If the demon's answer is positive, he will protect the djembé player for as long as he plays on the instrument made from that tree. If the demon's reaction is negative, another tree must be asked. This ritual makes for an intensive bond between the djembé player and his instrument. In earlier times such a player would keep his instrument for years and years, and no one else played it."*

The djembé has three basic sounds, which are produced with certain techniques:

Bass beat

Tom beat

Slap beat

1. *The bass beat.* The arm is extended, the elbow slightly bent; the lower arm and the hand form a straight line. The fingers are slightly stretched and touch each other. The hand beats the drumhead with a brief, bouncing movement, producing a sound that is full and round.
2. *The tom beat.* In principle it is like the bass beat, but on another part of the drum. The line dividing the palm from the fingers lies approximately on the edge of the drum. Here, too, the movement is rapid and rebounding, like testing a hot burner on the stove.

3. *The slap beat*. The hand is in the same position as for the tom beat. But the beating technique is different. There is less tension in the fingers; they are curved downward slightly and not necessarily touching each other. The hand hits the edge of the drum along the line dividing the palm from the fingers. This motion causes the tips of the fingers to hit the drumhead as if thrown from a catapult and to rebound immediately from the force with which they hit. The result is a clear, bell-like sound. Sometimes the slap beat is muffled. To achieve this, the hand which just then is not performing the slap beat lies on the drumhead in the bass-beat position.

It is difficult and requires a lot of practice to play the principal sounds of the djembé distinctly and melodically. A virtuoso such as Famoudou Konaté masters many more nuances; he himself estimates that he can produce approximately 25 distinguishable sounds.

The basic "motor design" of all djembé patterns is a regular, pulsating right-left movement of the arms and hands, resulting in the "handing" [as in fingering] of a pattern. The player feels not only the beats which make up the pattern, but also the intervening, inaudible values of the pulsation. He is aware of them with his inner ear, as an impulse for movement or as a movement actually carried out silently. This results in the metronomic precision of his playing.

The Bass Drums

The bass drums are made from hollowed tree trunks cut to a cylindrical shape and covered with cowhide at both ends. The right hand beats the drumhead with a stick, while the left hand (also with a stick or with a metal rod) plays on a small iron bell attached to the drum. The three drums are of different sizes and pitches. The names of the drums – KENKENI, SANGBAN, DUNUNBA – imitate onomatopoeically the quality of their sound.

From left to right: DUNUNBA, KENKENI, SANGBAN

From left to right: DUNUNBA, KENKENI, SANGBAN

As the three drums play correlating, intermeshing patterns, the rhythmic-tonal result of their ensemble playing is, as Famoudou Konaté puts it, a "melody". The solo djembé-player unfolds his improvised playing against the background of this complex bass-drum pattern – into which, in addition, are woven the patterns of one or two accompanying djembés.

The figures of the bells and of the bass drumhead beats are congruent, though the drumhead pattern uses only a "selection" from the strokes of the bell pattern. The bell pattern is thus a sort of lead for the drum: the left hand leads the right and enables a more precise setting of the drumbeats.

The Drum Rhythms

The various Malinké rhythms, however much they may differ, nevertheless adhere to certain rules that determine their progression and their use by the instrument ensembles. The three bass drums and the accompanying djembé drums produce the melorhythmic, basic pattern, repeated constantly and generally with no changes. This basic pattern imparts to the rhythm its special character, and it is thus by means of the basic pattern that all participants immediately recognize the rhythm. On top of this is the improvised playing of the soloist, who leads the whole of the musical event: with a short and characteristic pattern (*"bloquage"*) he marks the beginning and end of breaks in the course of the music, and he communicates with the (usually women) dancers. His work together with the dancers (women or men) is very intense, an action forming such a unified whole that it is hard to tell who is giving impulses to whom. Climaxes occur again and again when the drum ensemble – following a signal from the soloist – plays the *échauffement*, a particularly intense passage. The dance, too, reaches its highest intensity during the *échauffement*, usually followed by a change of dancers. The situation determines how long a rhythm is played and how many (women) dancers participate. If there are two or more exceptionally good djembé players present, they take turns in the function of soloist, and whoever has finished his solo takes over the part of accompanist.

So the music not only follows its own rules. It is "molded into" the situation in which it is played.

Famoudou Konaté: How I Became a Drummer

In 1962, when I was 22 years old, I joined the troupe *Ballets Africains*. I traveled six times around the world with them and played in a great many countries. This troupe had been set up at the time of the revolution, when Guinea freed itself from French colonial rule. My family was from Kankan, the second-biggest city in the country. My grandfather left this city and went to Kouroussa. Like many others, he fled Kankan to escape Alemamy Samoury, a despot who killed many people. In Kouroussa my grandfather lived near the Margo River. He had many workers, and with them and his children he planted rice – `fursa´ rice, the best sort of rice there is and very scarce now.

At that time there were no artificial fertilizers, so when the soil was exhausted a farmer moved elsewhere to plant anew, while the old fields lay fallow until they could be used again. So I was born in Manina, a village about 100 km from Kankan. The village no longer exists. My father later returned to his old village.

Why did I become a drummer? Drums are normally played only in blacksmiths' or griots' families. My father did not descend from blacksmiths or griots; nevertheless, he always enjoyed making drums for his family: djembé, dununba, sangban and kenkeni. So all of his children played drums at an early age. My father loved me very much, and when I was only a few years old he made me a very small djembé, on which the drumhead was attached by small bamboo rods (this method of attaching the drumhead is no longer in use today). I was one of 45 children – my father had seven wives. He was very well-to-do. There were 15 or 20 houses in the village, but on the occasion of big festivals the people from the village always came to my father's house. He had many cows and goats, and he had enough rice. So on festive occasions it was at his house that the butchering and feasting took place.

The women in the village built a house (the boulou) for their meeting. It was a lovely house with a large foyer through which one entered into the courtyard. When the house was finished, they wanted to open it officially with drum music. My big brother played the djembé very well at that time. I was eight and could not yet carry the large djembé – it was heavier than I was. The women came to my father and said, "We want your son Famoudou to drum for the opening of our newly-built boulou-house." My father said to the women, "But he is too little to play the big djembé!" But the old women answered, "We will manage it!" At that time, if one wanted a drummer to play at a ceremony, it was necessary to donate ten kola nuts. This is still true today. So the women gave my father the kola nuts and I went to their ceremony. I played the drum while they talked and danced and sang. Of course I was playing fairly simple rhythms. And that is how the ceremony went. Afterwards the women thanked my father.

When I was 18, there was a liberation movement against colonial France. There were two factions – one wanted Guinea to continue under French rule, the other strove for

independence. Both sides wanted me to play for them. So I was torn back and forth. One of my brothers was not for the revolution but for those adhering to France. Another brother, who played the djembé very well, was for independence – and I, too, played for independence. But the others were stronger and had much more money, and sometimes they tried to bribe me with it. They came at night and said, "Don't play for the others! Play for us! We'll give you money."

In 1958 we finally achieved independence. Keita Foudiya, a man from Guinea, was living in France at that time. He had put together a group of musicians from various African countries: Benin, the Ivory Coast, Togo and Guinea. They called themselves the *Ballets Africains*. The new president of Guinea, Sékou Touré, appointed Keita Foudiya defense minister. When Keita Foudiya returned to Guinea he organized a new group and called it *Ballets Africains de la République de Guinée*.

I was recruited – indeed really conscripted as if for the military service – when the ballet came back from its first tour in Europe. A big festival was held in every region, the members of the ballet had all sorts of musicians play for them, and they registered the names of the good ones. I found the prospect wonderful that I might be able to travel to Europe – I had never even been in the capital city of Conakry.

All the drummers and dancers of the region were there, and all of them, like the members of the Ballet, wore neckties. We lit the fire for the drums and tightened them tauter and tauter to a higher and higher pitch. Then all of us – certainly about 12 drummers – played our rhythms. There was so much noise that it was impossible to distinguish anything any more. So the order was given that everyone should play his own solo, one after the other. Everyone played. Then they announced: Famoudou from Sangbarala! I played and played, and soon the entire Ballet stood up. A great dancer, Laiba Soko, began to dance like crazy. While I played, he suddenly made a giant backward somersault from a standing position – with his necktie. He was very pleased with my djembé-playing and wrote down my name. So I was called upon to join. But I began to have some misgivings when the people in my village kept saying: To the Ballet? Isn't that dangerous, traveling so far? However, I had to go, it was a sort of summons. So in December 1962 I went to Conakry. I was to play the dununba, sangban, kenkeni and djembé – and dance. I did everything – even danced! And, as I have already said, I saw most of the countries in the world during my many big concert tours. I stayed with the Ballet until 1987. Then I was invited to Germany, to perform solo there and to teach. I did not return to the Ballet after this experience.

During the 26 years with the Ballet I had forgotten many traditional rhythms. We did play in the traditional style with the Ballet, but even so, in a very altered, concert-like way. I didn't really like it, but I was powerless to do anything about it. I had to conform, as I was not

the leader. After having left the Ballet, I began gradually to recall the traditional rhythms or to learn them again, as well as many old songs, from the people in my native village of Sangbarala. The Malinké have a very differentiated culture. One life is not long enough to learn all the rhythms – there are too many. I once wrote down the names of all the rhythms I know and arrived at more than 80. Moreover, there are of course the rhythms of the Susu, the Fula and the other ethnic groups of my country.

When I go to the village, I always hear rhythms that I don't know yet. These many, many rhythms are still played today. But little by little there are problems. In the meantime we, too, have discotheques, and television is becoming more and more widespread. When the villagers move to Conakry they slowly become estranged from their old culture. My children, for example, who live with me in the city, would no longer know much about it, but I teach them: I take them with me to the village, and of course when I hold workshops in my house, they learn a lot about the old culture. However someday, when there are no more people like me, our traditional culture – including the music – may be lost. Someone once asked me if I mind it that Europeans come and want to learn my music. I said, "For us it is a good thing! It helps us a lot – it helps to make our music known and to keep it alive."

Johannes Beer

Music and Dance in Ceremonies

All private ceremonies (weddings, baptisms, etc.) have to be organized by the relatives concerned. A cola nut is given symbolically to the solo drummer, and in this way he is engaged for the day fixed upon. The griottes, too, have to be invited, the women who master the old songs and dances. On the appointed day all those invited, friends and relatives, come to the designated place, which is surrounded by all sorts of seating possibilities. At first the griottes stand directly next to the drummers and begin singing whatever songs fit the occasion. After a few seconds the drummers join in. The solo drummer must know all the songs, as the rhythm depends on the song. There are several songs for every rhythm, so the variety of songs is vastly greater than the variety of rhythms. When such a celebration is in full swing, a rhythm seldom lasts more than a few minutes, as the griottes – vying with one another – soon start singing a new song, which immediately entails a change of rhythm. It is thus the griottes who determine the musical course of the ceremony.

Here I would like to bring an example from my own experience. When I visited with Famoudou the village of Sangbarala, where a circumcision ceremony was taking place, every woman wanted to sing in honor of the "white" visitor, so that the rhythms often lasted less than a minute. When a rhythm begins, so does the dance. There are a number of rules, which are observed spontaneously and freely, in the interplay between music and dance. A drum soloist needs to be very experienced to play the patterns appropriate to the dancers' steps. On the other hand, the dancers know the various rhythmic signals to which they must react. Many dances begin with a group and end with a short solo by each dancer. On the ground in front of the drummers is a bowl into which is put the money donated by relatives and friends. This usually happens as follows: The spectators give money to a dancer who particularly pleases them, and the dancer then passes the money on to the drummers. The more successful a celebration, the more generous the participants. The money in the bowl is the reward for the drummers. During the course of the celebration water is sprinkled on the ground now and then to prevent too much dust from rising. It can happen that the enthusiastic spectators crowd together too much and no room is left to dance. Then a sort of "supervisor" drives the people back by hitting their feet with a branch.

For a wedding the ceremony lasts about one or two hours. Bigger celebrations may last several days. Sometimes a griot appears at the end of a ceremony. He knows the old stories and traditions of the people and narrates them vividly to his audience (Beer, 1991).

Guinea Today - Spotlights on a Country in Poverty

Source: CIA: The World Factbook 1999

*(*http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/gv.html; *2/2000)*

Area: total: 245,860 sq km, land: 245,860 sq km, water: 0 sq km

Area comparative: slightly smaller than Oregon

Government: Chief of state: President Lansana CONTE (head of military government since 5 April 1984, elected president 19 December1993)

Climate: generally hot and humid; monsoonal-type rainy season (June to November) with southwesterly winds; dry season (December to May) with northeasterly harmattan winds

Natural resources: bauxite, iron ore, diamonds, gold, uranium, hydropower, fish

Industries: bauxite, gold, diamonds; alumina refining; light manufacturing and agricultural processing industries

Land use: arable land: 2%, permanent crops: 0%, permanent pastures: 22%, forests and woodland: 59%, other: 17% (1993 est.)

Agriculture products: rice, coffee, pineapples, palm kernels, cassava (tapioca), bananas, sweet potatoes; cattle, sheep, goats; timber

Economy overview: Guinea possesses major mineral, hydropower, and agricultural resources, yet remains a poor underdeveloped nation. The agricultural sector employs 80% of the work force. Guinea possesses over 25% of the world's bauxite reserves and is the second largest bauxite producer. The mining sector accounted for about 75% of exports in 1998.Long-run improvements in government fiscal arrangements, literacy, and the legal framework are needed if the country is to move out of poverty. The government made encouraging progress in budget management in 1997-98. Except in the mining industry, foreign investment remains minimal but is expected to pick up in 1999.

Natural hazards: hot, dry, dusty harmattan haze may reduce visibility during dry season

Environment current issues: deforestation; inadequate supplies of potable water; desertification; soil contamination and erosion; overfishing, overpopulation in forest region

Population: 7,538,953 (July 1999 est.)

Ethnic groups: Peuhl 40%, Malinke 30%, Soussou 20%, smaller tribes 10%

Religions: Muslim 85%, Christian 8%, indigenous beliefs 7%

Languages: French (official), each tribe has its own language

Age structure:

0-14 years: 44% (male 1,640,158; female 1,653,184)

15-64 years: 54% (male 1,974,849; female 2,068,221)

65 years and over: 2% (male 83,859; female 118,682) (1999 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.82% (1999 est.)

Birth rate: 40.62 births/1,000 population (1999 est.)

Death rate: 17.3 deaths/1,000 population (1999 est.)

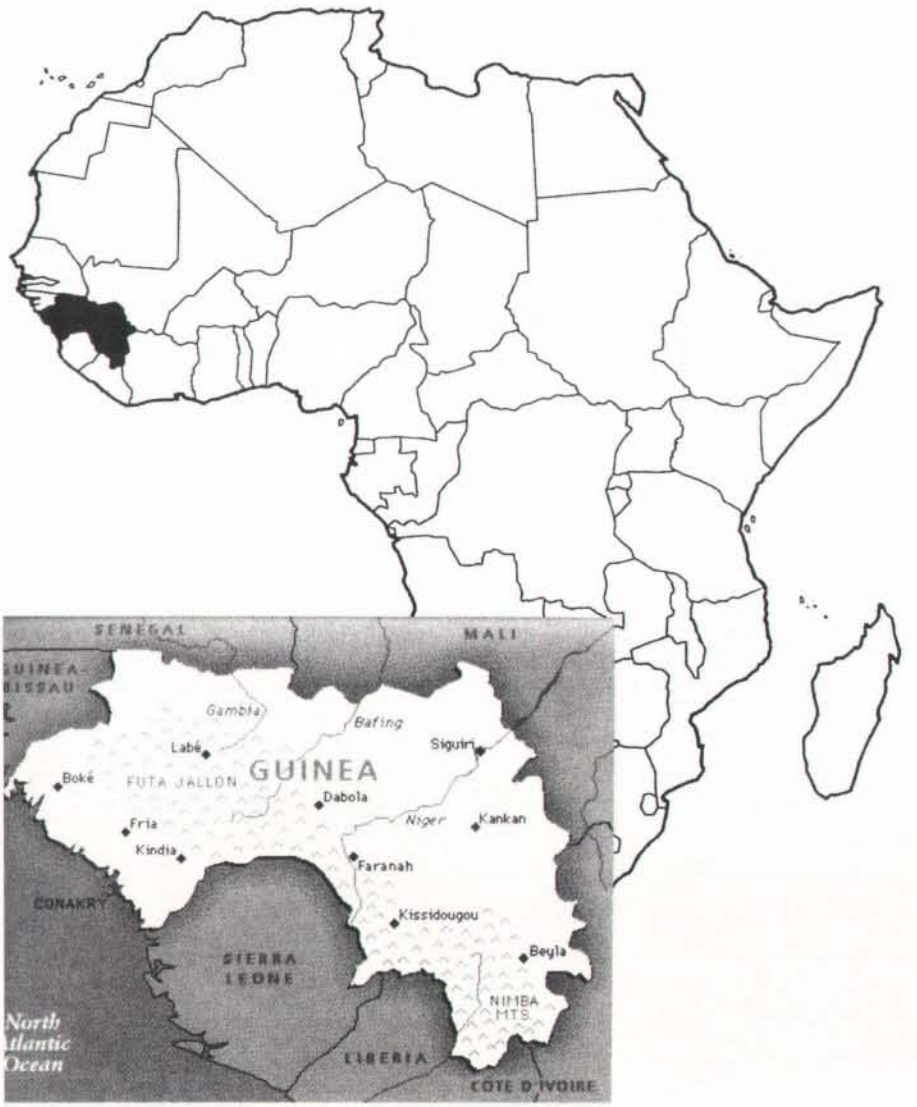
Net migration rate: -15.12 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1999 est.), note: over the years Guinea has received up to several hundred thousand refugees from the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, some of whom are now returning to their own countries

Infant mortality rate: 126.32 deaths/1,000 live births (1999 est.)

Life expectancy at birth: total population: 46.5 years, male: 44.02 years, female: 49.06 years (1999 est.)

Total fertility rate: 5.53 children born/woman (1999 est.)

Literacy (definition: age 15 and over can read and write): total population: 35.9%, male: 49.9%, female: 21.9% (1995 est.)



From the Conakry Diary of a Visitor from Germany

Today we drove on a four-lane road (about the size of our highways) from the outskirts where we live to the center of Conakry. Most of the vehicles we encountered were very old (some of them 30 or 40 years old), imports from Europe which would be in a car dump there. They were mostly taxis and buses. Africans are very inventive and skillful in repairing these old rattletraps. The tires of many of these old-timers no longer have any tread. Some of the small buses are still painted with German signs such as "Gardinen-Schulze, Heppenheim" ("Schulze Curtains, Heppenheim"), and once we were passed by a double-decker bus from Berlin with the destination "Rathaus Spandau" ("Town Hall Spandau") on the front. The road was built by the Russians. It was apparently laid through crowded living areas. The huts made of boards and corrugated iron sometimes come right to the edge of the road. In the midst of the noise and the smell of gasoline, women sit tending their cooking-pots and little children play in the heavy reddish-brown sand.

The taxi driver stops at a "gasoline store." Fuel is sold here in plastic bottles; children pour it from jerry cans into the plastic bottles and a lot runs down the outside. A glance into a side street: yesterday it was full of market stalls. Our companion, Sékou, explains that – as often happens – the military drove the street-traders away in a lightning operation. We find ourselves in a traffic jam, and vendors surround the car, selling cheap digital watches and pocket calculators from Europe, and bright plastic buckets and brooms. The nearer we get to the city, the more plastic rubbish, especially blue plastic bags, we see lying around. Parallel to the road, a bauxite train tooting and clanging noisily carries the raw material from upcountry directly to the port for shiploading. There are market stalls along the railroad. At one point there is a "rubbish incineration plant" – someone is burning whatever a truck now and then dumps there, a lot of it plastic. The black clouds of smoke with their multifarious stenches spread over the market scene where there are thousands of people. Sékou warns me not to take photos: If the police see you, they will take away your camera immediately.

We come to a huge mosque and a big meeting hall – buildings from the era of Sékou Touré – their former splendor flaking off. At the port the large, round presidential palace. It is in ruins; a few weeks ago the military organized a coup d'état against President Lansana Conté and then broke the coup off after a few days. We seldom read about such things in our newspapers. Outside the harbor is a container ship, fully loaded with cars from Europe. Out on the sea are fishing boats with picturesque sails made of colorful strips of cloth sewn together. In spite of a good wind, the sails do not seem to impart much speed. In the midst of the fishing boats a French luxury racing boat, its bow in the air, navigates noisily back and forth throwing spray in the air.

On the sidewalks of the wide main street one shoeshine boy after another, none of them older than 14, each with a different joke to catch my attention. Unfortunately, I have only one pair of shoes with me. We spend hours in an enormous covered market – oriental abundance. Spices, vegetables, household goods, electric and electronic articles, and above all shoes, textiles, fabrics, and tailors, tailors, tailors, sitting at their old treadle-driven Singer sewing machines and surrounded by their families of eight, ten or more swarming cheerfully around them. Sékou says business is bad for them recently. Why? Because of the old clothes, collected in Germany and elsewhere, which are sold cheaply and with no competition here at the market.

It is pitch-dark when we drive home on the four-lane road, and we barely find our turn-off. When I get out of the car I fall into the deep cement-lined ditch next to the road. An arm and my back hurt. Later I lie on my straw mattress and stare into the dark. I am close to tears, thinking back on certain impressions of the past day. And I ask myself: Where do these people get all their vitality, their cheerfulness, their joy in singing and dancing?

(We thank Otto Paul for the permission to print this excerpt from his private diary.)

African Rhythm

A Few Basic Terms - Explained on the Basis of Malinké Drum Music

Most people experience a spontaneous fascination with African rhythm. It enters the body directly, often bypassing any conscious perception, and inspires an irresistible incitement to motion. Famoudou Konaté says that a well-chosen rhythm can bring a sick person to jump up from his bed and dance. The physical effects cannot be separated from the mental ones. The elation which one feels from giving oneself over to this music is invariably a greater shared elation as well, for African music brings people together. Situations where there is African music are situations of intense communication.

The first European musicologists who concerned themselves with African music were deeply rooted in the bourgeois 19th-century practices and concepts of music. African music seemed to them a primitive, rudimentary, early form of what mankind might later develop in the way of a culture of music. The "wild" native tribe dancing, in all their array, to thudding drums around a totem remained for a long time the widespread cliché concept. Even in adventure movies of the 50's, "the African" still appears as a sort of creature of nature, with the urge in his blood to pound on drums – not very far removed from the gorilla threatening his enemies by rhythmically pounding on his chest. Fortunately, the picture has since changed. It is not "the African" who is and was primitive, but the colonial propaganda of conquest, which fabricated such distorted images until far into our century. Ethnologists and authors such as Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Michel Leiris and Frantz Fanon, and politicians such as Léopold Sédar Senghor were early contributors to a revision. Modern possibilities of travel and communication, television and, last but not least, the many African musicians performing in the West have done their part. We know today that Africa is a continent that has its own (not just colonial) history and that has been shaped throughout this history by cultural, social and political diversity. There is a growing awareness of Africa's inherited political and economic problems, for which we share responsibility. The further western musicians and ethnomusicologists have immersed themselves in African music, the more the idea of a "drumming" culture stuck in cultic practices has blurred and the more a clear picture has emerged of a rich musical culture. It involves intricate – and most intricate – musical structures, which at least as far as rhythm is concerned often appear more differentiated than those in western music. We realize today that the impact of African music does not derive from some sort of native, primitive, visceral process, but depends on professional standards and artistic skills which can only be achieved through a long and intensive learning process. This is reflected in the terminology which western ethnomusicologists have developed during the past decades to analyze and explain adequately the structures of African music. In the field of rhythm, which concerns us here, these are, among others, terms such as elementary pulsation, form number, beat, pattern, time-line pattern, polyrhythm, polymeter, etc. By and large, these terms can be applied plausibly and relevantly to the Malinké music presented in this book, for most of the phenomena to which these terms refer can be found here. It must be seen, though, that this terminology comes from an external approach which carries over to music of a different nature the understanding we have acquired of our own rhythmic, musical structures. In contrast to African musicians, we have learned to rationalize musical connections. Two techniques play a role here that are foreign to African musicians: conscious counting (aloud) – and visualizing

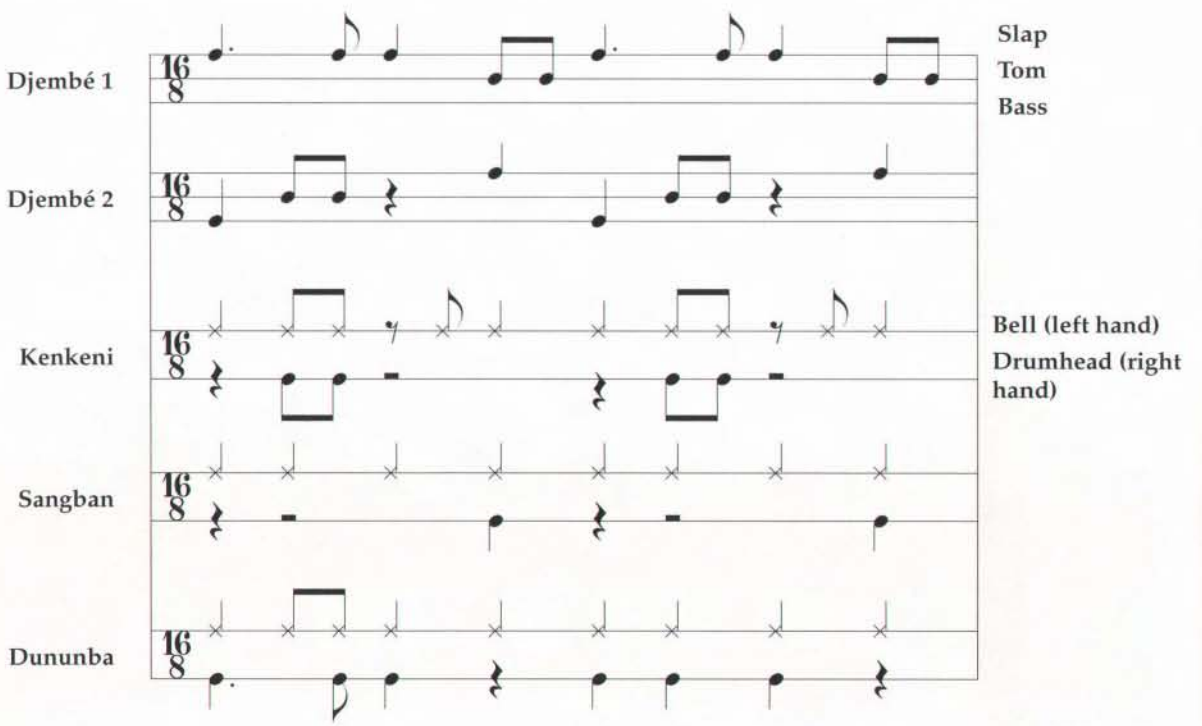
(writing down notes). Whoever has made the attempt knows how hard it is to explain to an African musician terms such as "polymetric" or "cyclic", even if this musician (in our opinion) constantly presents such structures himself. However, we ourselves often enough reach the limits of our comprehension – exemplified by the dispute among experts over how African musicians *experience* polymeter. It is a good thing that these cultural limitations are reciprocal.

African Rhythms - A Few Basic Terms

We will define here in summary a few important terms in African rhythm theory, using as an example the accompanying parts to BAGA GINÉ (track 5). We go into more detail on the following pages.

1. The beats of the drums and bells form musical structures which we call **patterns**.
2. **Melorhythm**. Many **patterns** have not only a rhythmic but also a melodic structure, resulting from different pitches and tones. The patterns of djembé 1 and djembé 2 here have a distinct melorhythmic character.
3. **Elementary pulses** are the smallest time units of a structure (in this case written as eighth notes). Due to them, the **pulsation** is a sort of absolute time framework for the entire piece.

Baga Giné



4. The excerpt shown is a **cycle**. It is constantly repeated, in principle without alteration. The structure of African music is usually cyclic (repetitive, "circular"). The cycle is the smallest element of a musical piece. The number of pulses in a cycle determines the **form number** (in this case 16). Other form numbers commonly used in Africa are 6, 8, 9, 12, 18, or multiples of these numbers.
5. A cycle is perceived as being divided evenly, in sections of 2, 3 or 4 pulses, and consequently as a series of **beats** (points of reference, metric centers). In our example the beats are felt on the first pulse of a unit of four eighth notes (in a slow tempo, rather on the first pulse of a unit of two eighth notes).
6. An important principle in the structure of many African patterns is the **offbeat** arrangement. Offbeats are all the notes or sounds of a pattern which are not on the beat, but before or after a beat (even a silent one). In our example the patterns of djembé 2, kenkeni (bell and drumhead) and sangban (drumhead) have an offbeat structure.
7. The combination of different patterns heard simultaneously is called **polyrhythm** or **correlation rhythm**. In our example, eight patterns being played at the same time produce a complex, melorhythmic overall "picture", in which new patterns (resultant patterns) can be heard.
8. **"Polymetric" structures** are a special case in polyrhythm. The patterns being played seem to be based on different subdivisions of the cycle, resulting in the different beat sequels coming from these subdivisions.

From left to right: djembé 1, djembé 2, kenkeni, dununba

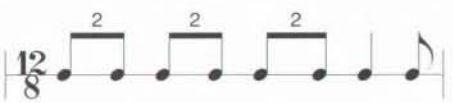
Patterns

The English word pattern has gained general acceptance to define the rhythmic structures which recur cyclically in African music. A pattern's essence as a model may be that

- it is not confined to just one region and plays a role in a whole variety of musical styles and contexts (as, for example, the time-line patterns of West Africa which are usually played on bells);
- it is a sort of universal expression tied to a regional or ethnic style of music – such as the signals and most of the accompaniment patterns in Malinké drum music;
- within such a regionally or ethnically defined music style it determines (as do many of the bass-drum and solo patterns of the different Malinké rhythms) a specific rhythm, a specific type of dance.

Pattern Examples

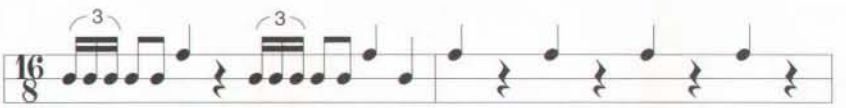
Example 1



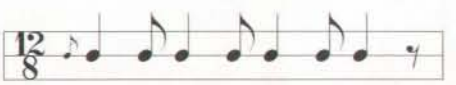
Example 2

Example 3

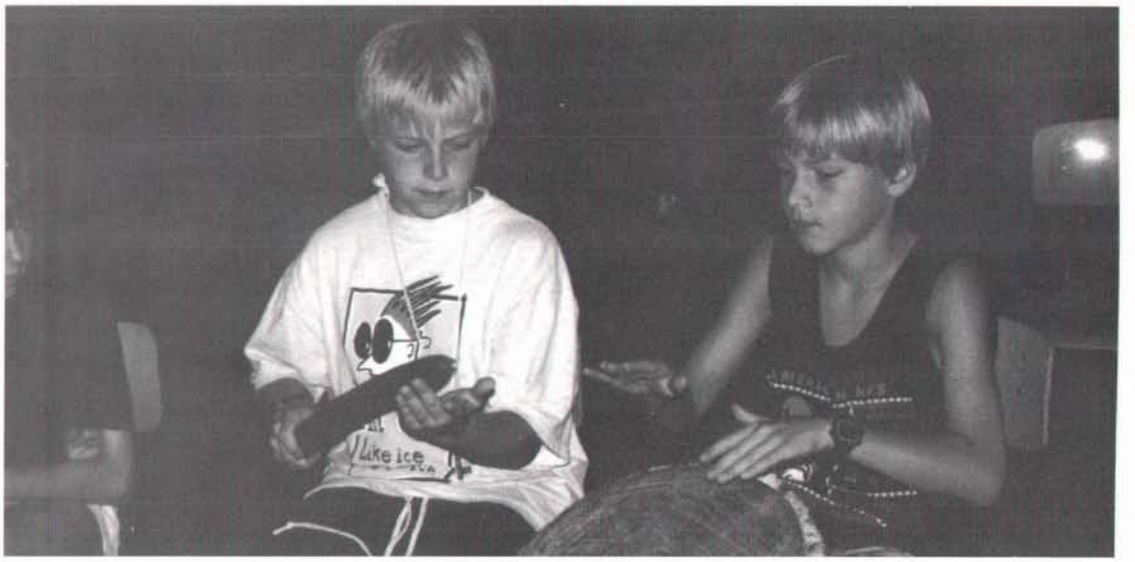
Example 4



Example 5



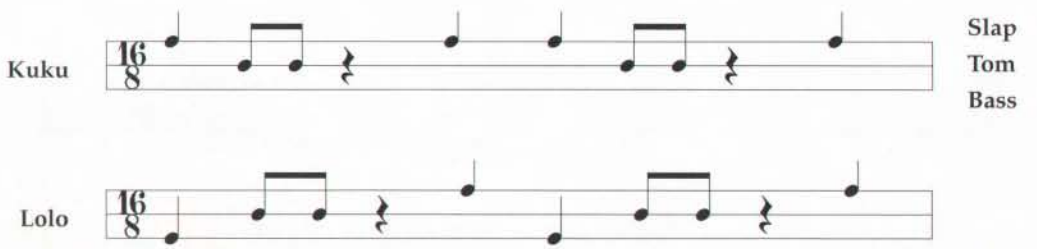
Example 6



Melorhythm

Many patterns of African drum music have not only a rhythmical but also a "melodic" structure, though the melos of such rhythm patterns has nothing to do with the tonal systems of the melody-based vocal and instrumental music of Africa. Melorhythm means that drums differ in the quality of their sound – especially in their "pitch" - and that through variations in the striking technique, differences of pitch can be produced on one and the same drum.

In this sense, the accompaniment and solo patterns on the djembé drums are melodic figures which result from the alternation between bass, tom, and slap beats. If the melos changes while the rhythm remains the same, the pattern is often unrecognizable. For example, the djembé 1 accompaniment patterns of LOLO (track 1) and KUKU (track 7) have the same rhythmic structure but different melodic structures – the audible effects are completely different.



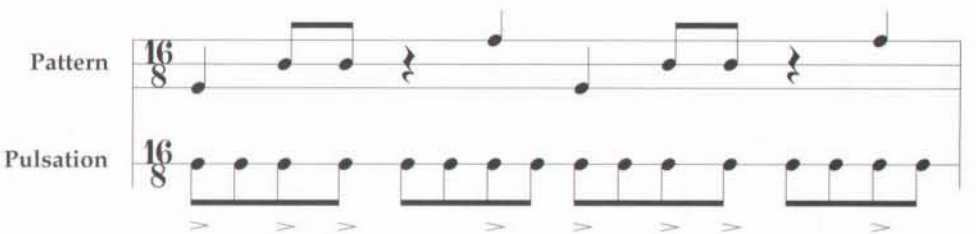
On the bass drums the muffled beat (◇ = the tip of the drumstick is set on the drumhead and held there) has a higher sound than the open beat (♩ = the drumstick beats the drumhead with a sideways, rebounding motion).

Famoudou Konaté always speaks of the "melody" of bass drums. He means by this the pitch pattern produced by the combination of the three bass drum patterns.

Elementary Pulsation

"All of the structures and forms in a piece of music, all essential components of a rhythmic or melodic nature, consist of a number of elementary parts of the smallest size, all uniform, i.e., of the same size. They are not unlike the small uniform elements of a digital system; they are a sort of smallest common denominator by which all the components of an African piece of music are divisible" (Dauer 1983a, p. 175f.).

Elementary pulsation is a line of impulses consisting of the smallest time values in a rhythmic structure. This line runs constantly through such a structure, sometimes heard only by the inner ear. It is, figuratively speaking, the millimeter graph paper on which musical connections are inscribed and set in a precise time relationship. There is, in contrast to western music, a *smallest time value.* While we can always divide further into sixteenth notes, thirty-second notes, etc., in African music this smallest time value is a bottom limit below which we cannot go (except in certain embellishments). It has become customary, when our system of notation is used for African music, to write this pulsation as a series of eighth notes.



The elementary pulsation running along in the mind guarantees precise playing. There is no *rubato* or *espressivo* as, for example, in classical music, where a rhythmic-melodic figure is sometimes a bit protracted in order to articulate it more clearly or to give it more swing (for example moving the "two" toward the "one" in the Viennese waltz). There is, to be sure, a "drawing out", a microtiming in African music – especially in the solo (see Polak, *"Jenbe Music in Bamako"*) – but here it is a question of very fine, precisely measurable offbeat articulations. African musicians are better than many of their European counterparts in being able, with absolute confidence, to put the accents of their rhythmic patterns on the right elements of the pulsation. The American music-sociologist Richard A. Waterman coined for this ability the term "metronome sense" (Waterman 1952).

"What is meant here is the ability of musical people in Africa to experience a pulsation with such intensity that it withstands conflicting superstrata and inversions, unwavering like the ticking pendulum of a metronome" (Dauer 1983a, p. 41).

"Once this metronome sense is 'turned on', there is nothing in the world that would ever be able to make it falter or even miss a step. The gyrocompass inside an African musician is absolutely precise and cannot be disturbed by any outside influence" (Dauer 1983b, p. 167).

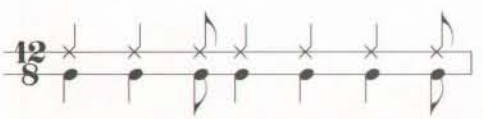
Non-African musicians generally have trouble attaining this precision. (Famoudou Konaté: "They often manage to get just the 'one'!") But one should be skeptical about the theory that Africans have a metronomic feeling in their blood or even have a gene for it. If one observes how intensively babies participate in rhythmic activities – carried on their dancing mothers' backs – then the famous question "inherent or acquired?" is again open. The African playing of instruments, singing and dancing make a most efficient learning field for the acquisition of a precise feeling for time structures and time proportions. A learning field for non-Africans, too!

Cycles and Form Numbers

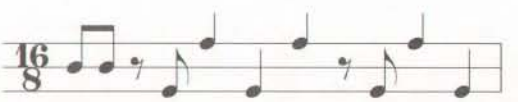
African music is organized in cycles. Melodic and rhythmic figures repeat themselves constantly; they seem to go in circles. The length of the resulting *cycles* is measured in *form numbers. "Form number 16"* means: in this particular musical structure, the figure regularly begins after 16 primary pulses. The individual figures generally comprise 16 pulses. In this respect, African music shows great regularity: the form numbers really determine the form. The cycles may comprise 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18 or more pulses. The Malinké rhythms in this book have either the form number 12 (SOMBA KÖRÖ / track 3, KÉNÉ FOLI / track 6) or the form number16 (all the other rhythms). Listening to them, and especially playing them, one quite rapidly acquires a clear feeling for the cycles and their length.

However, one important aspect of the music is obviously not restricted to this cyclic principle: the part of the solo djembé. The master drummer expands his improvisations freely and far beyond the bounds of the cycle. The patterns on which he improvises (in our notation the soli) often go beyond the cycle, for instance in BALA KULANDYAN (track 2): The beginning of the cycle divides solo 1 in two parts; solo 2 and solo 4 comprise two cycles each. With the help of this improvisation material and by other musical means, the solo drummer creates a sort of larger framework which is organized throughout in a way that is dramaturgically most effective: there are intermediate climaxes (the *échauffements*), accelerations, and emphatic closures. If, as many speculate, a culture's music is the expression of the spirit of the age, then clearly the African (cyclical) and the occidental (linear, steadfast) spirits permeate each other in the music of the Malinké.

Our notation takes into account the cyclical character of the music: the vertical lines are not bar lines; they denote cycles, not measures. This results in meters which are unusual for us: 16/8 instead of 4/4, 12/8 instead of 6/8. We have used the same notation for the songs.



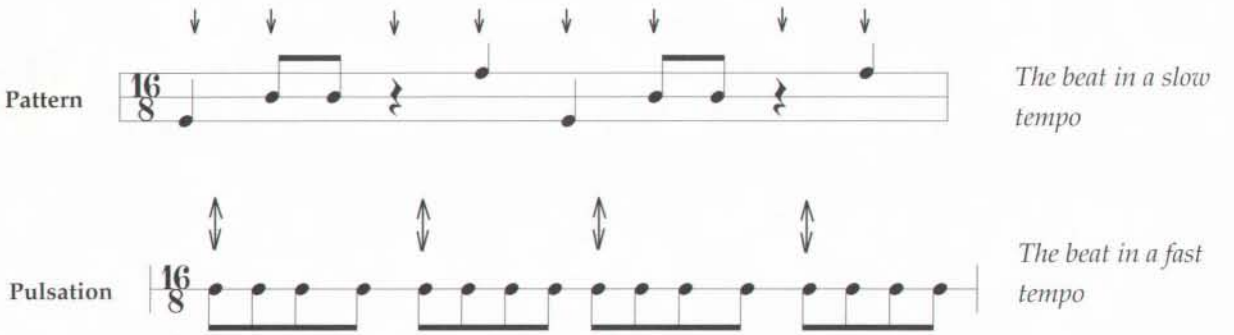
Cycle with the form number 12



Cycle with the form number 16

Beat

If the pulse sequence of a cycle is divided into equal segments, the result is a further regular sequence of phenomena. The lengths of most cycles offer several mathematical possibilities of regular subdivision. For example, the 16-cycle can be subdivided into 2 x 8, 4 x 4, or 8 x 2 pulses; the 12-cycle can be subdivided into 2 x 6, 3 x 4, or 4 x 3 pulses. We take the first pulse of such a segment as the time reference. The English word beat has established itself as the term used in this context. The number of beats we discern per cycle depends on the tempo, among other things. In the 16-cycle this would be 4 beats in a fast tempo, but rather 8 beats in a slow tempo.



In traditional African music, the beat – as the first pulse in a new group – is usually not accentuated by special emphasis. On the contrary, it is often omitted.

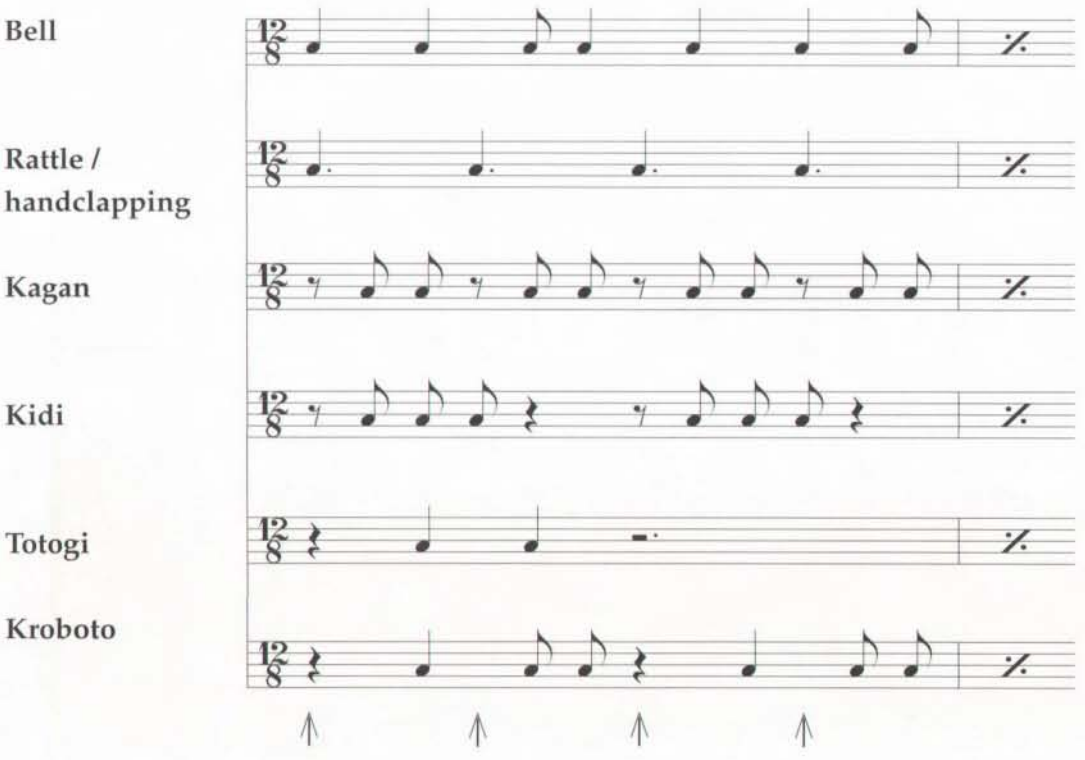
In John Miller Chernoff's book, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (1979, p. 49), there is a nice example of the African attitude in regard to beat: the "Agbekor" dance of the Ewe in Ghana (see p. 37). The four drums, kagan, kidi, totogi, and kroboto play figures which consistently omit the beat. It is marked by sounds which rather remain in the background: rattles and handclapping. At the same time, the bell plays one of those beautiful figures which are widespread in Africa and apparently have the purpose of giving to such musical structures a clear time orientation (see 'time line pattern' below). Here we have the special appeal of this music: that the beat is clearly felt, and danced, but remains acoustically unemphasized.

In the drum music of the Malinké, the beat is often marked throughout only by the bells and the smallest bass drum, the kenkeni. On the basis of our European experience, we would rather expect that the beat would be emphasized by the most explicit of the sounds, such as the slap beat on the djembé or the drumhead beat on the dununba.On the contrary: the beat is more often omitted than played on the dununba (Lolo / track 1, N'yèrèbi / track 4, Kéné Foli / track 6, Kuku / track 7, Kè Bendo / track 8). So here again we have that typical state of suspension in African music: the overall impression is one of flux.

African Music Avoids the Beat

"Western rock music and to some extent today's popular music in West Africa are strongly related to the beat, and for this reason the term beat music has been used correctly. In this music, the beat is ever-present and clearly felt, in fact insistently "hammering". The art of an African ensemble, especially in West Africa, is to conceal the beat. This means it is not evident in the foreground, but is hinted at in the background with accompanying percussion or other instruments (e.g. rattles or the deep notes of a guitar). Accompanying drums playing the beat must remain acoustically weaker than the lead drummer, who is the focal point of the ensemble and plays 'over' the beat. For this reason, the accompanying drums are often smaller and of a simpler construction. Only the foot and leg movements of the dancers clearly follow the beat. It is therefore not surprising that western listeners often sense the beat in the wrong place; and if furthermore they dance to what they think they hear, they can sometimes totally irritate African musicians. A rhythmic structure of this kind should convey a sort of state of 'suspension' and generate a constant rhythmical tension. This is reinforced by the fact that there is no metrical structure in the sense that it exists in European music, with fixed metric strong and weak beats" (Kubik/Simon, 1993, p. 102).

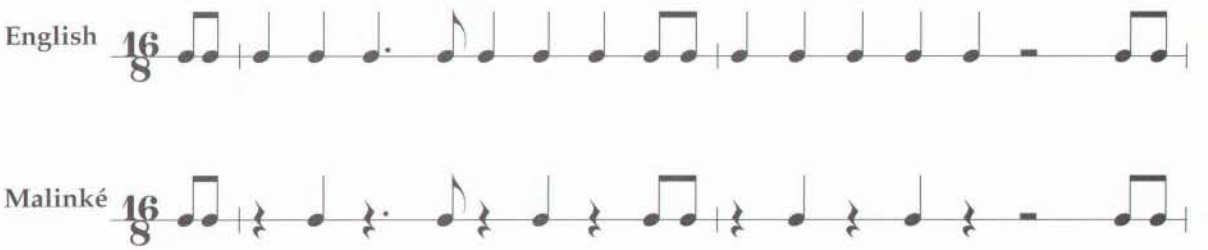
The Agbekor Dance of the Ewe in Ghana



Offbeat Patterns

The consistent or occasional avoidance of strokes on the beat is not only a characteristic of complex musical relationships (as in the Agbekor dance of the Ewe), but in addition an important principle of structure for individual patterns How far removed this offbeat playing is from our musical usage becomes evident if we try to put the rhythm of "I come from Alabama" in a 16-cycle. In a four-beat system, a note of the song rhythm falls on each beat, as is typical in occidental rhythms. If we remove precisely these notes from the song rhythm (and always leave just the note on the first beat), we end up with a pattern which seems authentically African.

"I come from Alabama" in English and in Malinké



Sometimes the avoidance of one or two 'onbeat notes' in a pattern leads to very characteristic figures – as with the signal of the 16-rhythm (other good examples: the sangban pattern in Lolo / track 1, the solo patterns 2 and 3 in Bala Kulandyan / track 2, solo 1 in Baga Giné / track 5, solo 5 in Kuku / track 7). Other patterns avoid the beats even more rigorously: the prelude and interlude and solo 3 in N'yèrèbi (track 4), the three bass patterns of Kuku, the solo 3 and the patterns of sangban and dununba in Kè Bendo (track 8), etc.

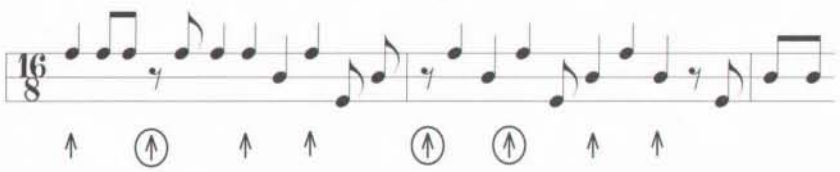
But we mustn't think that the policy of avoiding the beat invariably leads to musical vacuums. In Africa, too, the rests are an integral part of music. As the beat is always subconsciously heard, imagined, experienced, "caught on the inner nerve," the offbeats have a very special tension potential: the asymmetrical patterns and the regular pulsing beat values form a dynamic combination which our senses register most clearly where there are offbeats.

The African offbeat is not synonymous with what we call in occidental music and music theory **syncopation** (from the Greek "synkoptein" = to beat together, cut short). Syncopation is the anticipation of the strong part of a measure within the weak part of a measure, in other words a moving forward of the accentuation. A weak part is furnished with an accent that draws its force from the following strong part. The term syncopation is not apt because, while we indeed experience time focuses – the beats – we do not really feel "strong" and "weak" parts of measure in African music. So the offbeat here does not have the effect of anticipating the beat; it is just simply an accent falling next to the beat, while the beat itself remains free (for further information see e.g. Dauer 1983b, p. 184 f.).

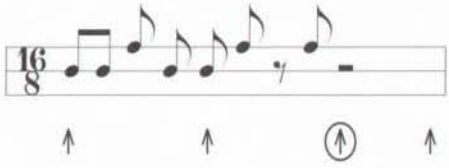
It could be added: In European music syncopation is rather an exception, while in African music the offbeat is a fundamental structural principle. Statistically, there are probably as many offbeats as there are beats.

Examples of the offbeat

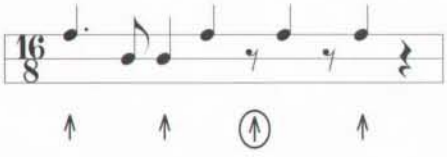
Kè Bendo: Solo 3



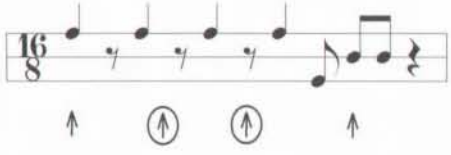
Bala Kulandyan: Solo 3



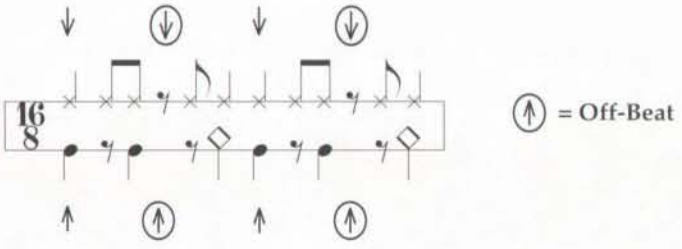
Baga Giné: Solo 1



N'Yèrèbi: Solo 3



Lolo: Sangban



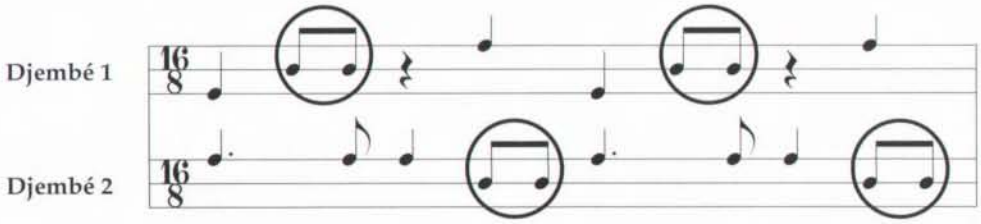
Polyrhythm - Correlation Rhythm - Interrhythm

As elegant and beautiful as some patterns may appear to us and as gratifying as it may be to play them and assimilate them, their full import only becomes apparent in combination with other patterns.

In the drum music of the Malinké there can be – including the bell figures – as many as eight patterns heard simultaneously, and above this melorhythmic "polyphony" the soloist's sweeping improvisations. *"It is precisely from these different rhythm patterns, working together and at times almost diametrically opposed, that African music derives a considerable part of its energy and tension,"* writes Volker Schütz (Schütz, p. 36).

This combination is more than just an addition. The patterns relate to each other in such a way that new and relevant figures of quality result. Meki Nzewi coined the word "interrhythm," and in the same vein Volker Schütz proposes the term "correlation rhythm," which is more suitable than the conventional term "polyrhythm."

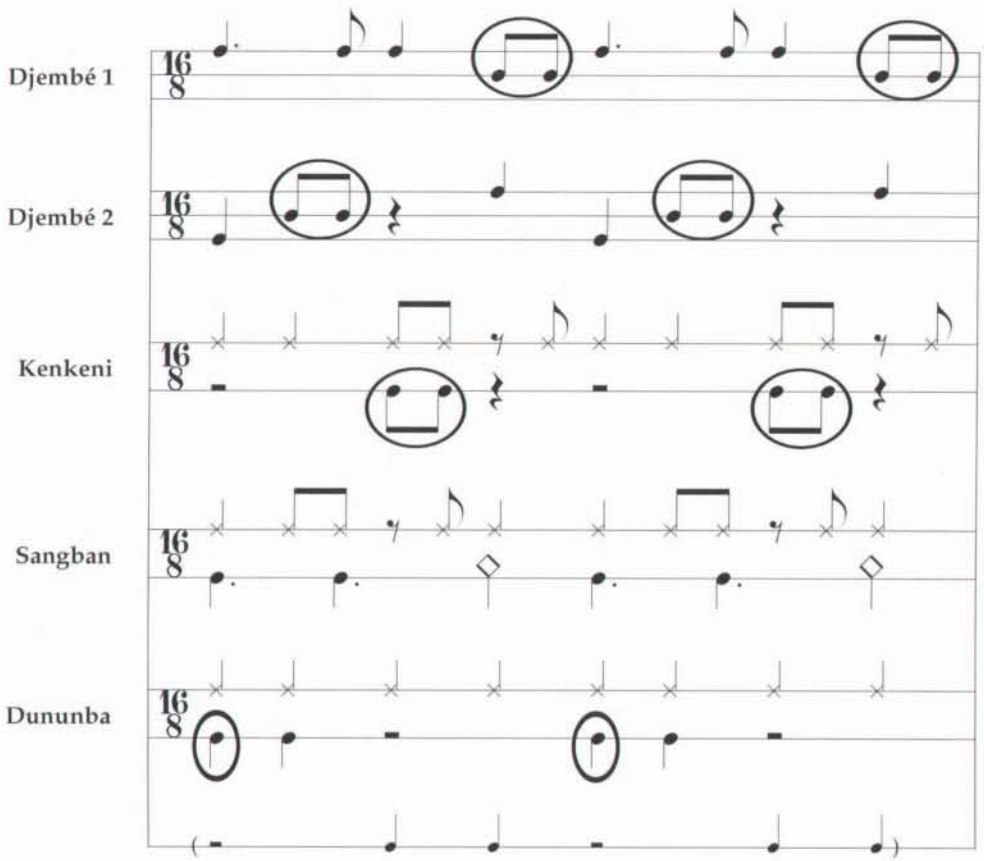
The djembé accompaniment patterns1 and 2 of the BALA KULANDYAN rhythm (track 2) give us an example of such a combination. Each is in itself, together with the (silent) beat, a figure full of motive energy. If they are heard together, it is as if there would be mutual reinforcement between these two sources of energy. This is because they fit into each other perfectly; they revolve symmetrically around a common motive center: the "rest" in pattern 1 on the beat of the "third fourth".



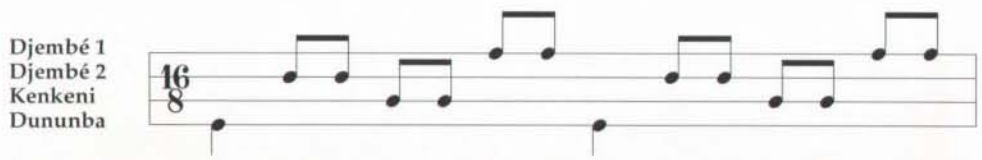
The combined playing of the accompanying instruments (djembé 1 and 2, kenkeni, sangban, dununba and bells) produces a complex effect, a unique curve full of motoric and melodic tension. Often it is not possible to recognize in this aural picture the pattern of one drum alone. If, for example, one wonders "Where is the kenkeni?", it may not be possible to identify it. It is only when one tries to follow the pattern, tapping it lightly, that one suddenly hears it. On the other hand, one often hears fascinating patterns which seem to be coming from *one* instrument, while in reality no one musician is playing them. They are the product of the combined playing of several patterns and are called **resultant patterns**.

In the accompaniments to LOLO (track 1), certain striking and well audible drumbeats combine to form a new "resultant melody" or a new "resultant pattern." A person not playing, but just listening, hears this pattern clearly and may look for the drummer who is playing it. But in vain! None of the drummers is playing it alone.

Lolo



The "resultant melody"

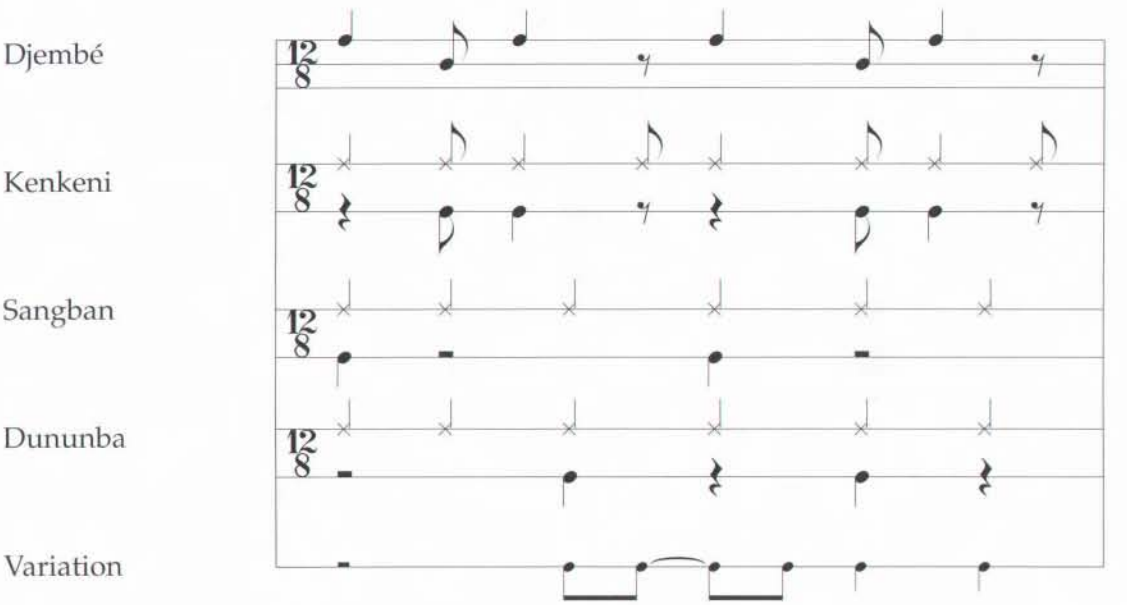


„Polymeter"

One uses the term polymeter when patterns which can be heard at the same time in a musical context seem to be based on different subdivisions of the pulse sequence. ("Polyrhythm", on the other hand, is used to designate a combination of patterns which all relate to just one subdivision of the pulse sequence.) The term polymeter is not very well chosen, since "meter" reminds us of our weak and strong parts of measure, while the African beat is rather a regular sequence of pulses.

The rhythm KÉNÉ FOLI (track 6) illustrates what we mean by the term "polymetric".

Kéné Foli



If we listen to each accompaniment pattern of KÉNÉ FOLI individually, three different subdivisions of the 12 pulses seem practicable:

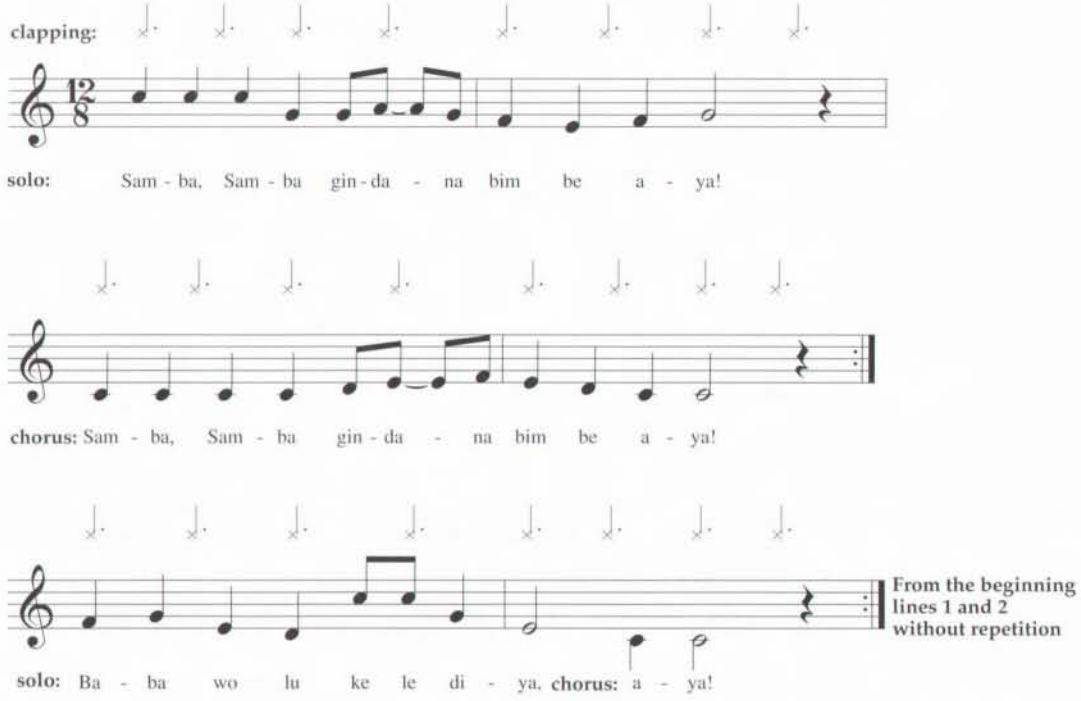
Djembé and kenkeni:	4 x 3
Sangban:	6 x 2 = 2 x 3 x 2
Dununba:	3 x 4

The text to this rhythm appears to follow the instruments indecisively: the first part seems to relate to the subdivision of the dununba (or perhaps to that of the sangban), the second part to that of the djembé and kenkeni.

The échauffement sticks clearly to the 4 x 3 scheme, which makes even more delightful the "falling back" into indecisiveness after the signal – an indecisiveness charged with tension.

Samba-Song

Even children have no problem singing and clapping a song in the "6 x 2 scheme" while the drum ensemble plays a "4 x 3 scheme". During our recordings in Conakry in December of 1995, Famoudou Konaté's children once sang and clapped such a song (in Susu; the text says, *"Samba, samba, please open the door, let me in! I have lost my father and mother – open the door!"*). Later Famoudou Konaté had the SOKO rhythm played to it (a rhythm in the 4 x 3 scheme, corresponding to the children's clapping).



It is exciting for us to experience the overall phenomenon. Dauer (1983b, p.170) puts into pertinent words the impression produced by such structures:

"The effect is surprisingly pleasant and at the same time bewildering. There is a continual gliding back and forth, provoking an irresistible urge to set the body in motion so that the inner energies released can take effect. On further observation, we notice that our body reacts in a split manner: each meter, i.e., each basic form of movement seeks another part of the body for its expression; the center of the body is the pivot for the diverging motions of the extremities... One of the particular attractions of polymetric music is in this ability, during a performance, to 'jump' inwardly from one meter to another."

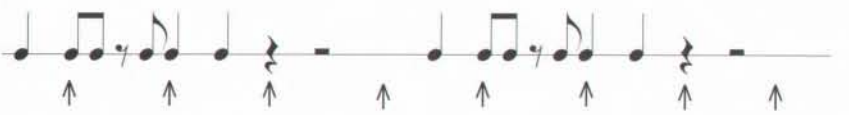
Beat Change, Beat Shift

It is a particularity of African patterns that they can relate to completely different beat sequences and that each time the outcome is another valid form. On first learning a pattern, non-Africans often find that a certain beat structure imposes itself – until they suddenly rediscover the pattern in a new context relating to the beat in a different way.

For example, if we hear:

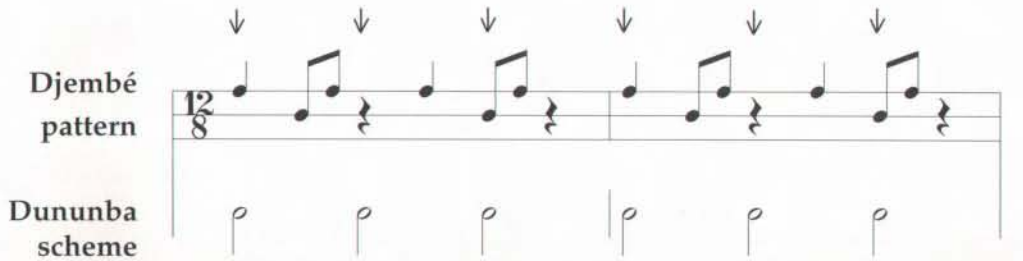
then we tend to think of the beat as follows:

But the following is also possible:



We find both versions (track 8): The first corresponds to solo pattern 1, the second to the men's parlando line ("N'nye mun de kèli i nyè" etc.) in KÈ BENDO.

Such observations bring us perhaps closer to the African feeling for so-called polymeter. In KÉNÉ FOLI (track 6), for example, the djembé accompaniment pattern actually follows a 4 x 3 scheme. But if one hears it, so to speak, "with the ears of the dununba", which follows a 3 x 4 scheme, then the djembé pattern acquires a different beat and therewith a different rhythmic sense.

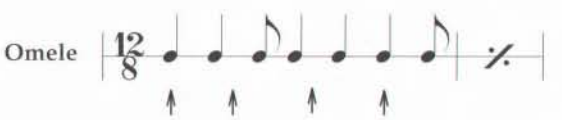


This results in a puzzling effect of iridescent constellations of accents. Some further patterns in our material show how much the African sensibility enjoys such playing with accents. In LOLO (track 1, similar to KUKU, track 7) the 4th solo pattern consists in its first half of five motifs that are identical in their melody (tom-tom-slap) and that contain three pulses each and are therefore "at odds" with the beat of 4. Each of these 3-pulse motifs is accentuated differently by the beat of 4.

Time Line Patterns (Bell Patterns)

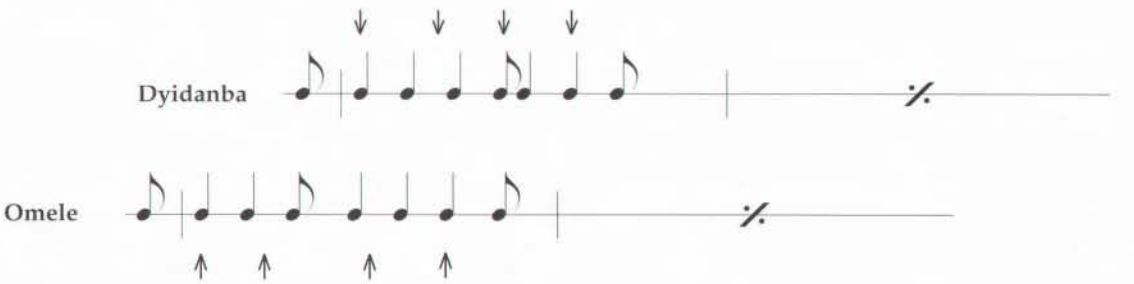
Time line patterns are rhythmic formulas which are usually played by an instrument with a penetrating timbre, for example a bell, and which due to their characteristic structure represent a sort of regulating, orienting element in complex rhythmic contexts. Orientation of this sort is needed, for example, if *"a player, through variations in his basic pattern, has stepped outside the unilinear structure of the overall sound and wants to find his way back to the point of entry. Then he orients himself by the pattern of the bell"* (Schütz 1992, p. 55f.).

A figure found in all of West Africa has entered the ethnomusicological literature under the name of the **Omele formula** (as it is called by the Yoruba in Nigeria) and covers a cycle of 12, marking unambiguously its beginning and its end.



Depending on the length of the cycle and the musical context, there are many similar formulas in African music, all of them structurally related to each other.

There is a particularly interesting example in our material. The rhythm DYIDANBA to the song SOMBA KÖRÖ (track 3) is based entirely on a bell pattern of 12 pulses that is closely related to the "Omele formula". It is played in constant repetition by the bells of the kenkeni and the dununba. By making, as it were, a "selection" from the bell strokes, the drummers create variations with the drumhead beats on these two drums.



If the bell pattern of DYIDANBA is compared to the "Omele formula", then the sequences of strokes, in continued playing, are identical in terms of physics. The differences come from the fact that the beginning of the cycle in the "Omele formula" is in another place in the sequence of strokes than in the DYIDANBA pattern. And the beat, too, differs: it shifts by one pulse. These two – the changed point of entry and the shifted beat – make of what are really identical sequences of strokes two completely different structures. Furthermore, in DYIDANBA a situation arises which heightens even more the musical appeal of the use of the bell pattern: at determined intervals the dununba plays a variation that corresponds exactly to the **Omele formula**. It is like a dialogue: one variation of the bell pattern answers the other.

On Methods: Exercises, Working Models, Arrangements

Typical Problems

African music confronts non-Africans with a number of typical problems. And experience shows that it hardly matters whether someone has had any practical musical experience or not. Even schooled musicians (and sometimes they especially) meet with difficulties for which they are not prepared:

- African music puts high demands on one's sense of time and exacts absolute rhythmical precision. But we are usually far removed from the Africans' "metronome sense."
- African musicians experience their music not just on one, but on two, three or more physical levels. Constantly present, aside from the part just being played, are at least the elementary pulsation and the beat – as additional movement (feet, legs, trunk, or head), as innervation, and/or as inner listening.
- The frequent offbeat structures are often performed imprecisely by beginners and thereby easily lose their appeal and cause confusion. We tend to draw the accents "beside" the beat over to the beat, or vice versa. This leads readily to fluctuations in tempo (usually an increase in tempo), and the inner tension of the pattern is lost.
- In contrast to African musicians, when we play music we are primarily preoccupied with ourselves. But African music is always an intense means of communication – between the musicians themselves and between the musicians and the community. Such an attitude is not generally in the nature of musicians in our culture (unless they happen to be accomplished jazz or rock musicians).

Even those who have been intensely interested in African music for some time will often be amazed if they compare their own activity with that of African musicians. And the difficulties mentioned above actually have to do only with the fundamentals of playing music. On top of these come instrumental virtuosity, the high art of improvisation, and the ability to render happy a whole music-making, dancing, singing community.

> Famoudou Konaté:
> *"I repeatedly notice that German pupils cannot move properly to the music, that they can't follow it with their whole bodies, neither in music-making nor in dancing. This is a big problem in trying to make African music more accessible to them. They are somewhat like trees – they just stand there. When I experience European music on television or in a concert, it is often completely non-physical. But European music has other qualities. It is music that one can listen to very well, that one must listen to quietly, that helps one to relax. There are lovely melodies, but it is not possible to dance to most European music."*

Principles of Practice and of Working out the Music

1. Among the basic prerequisites for participation in this music and for playing it as an ensemble, *rhythmical precision* is the most important. A song, a pattern, or a polyrhythmic structure must have been played and heard for a while in a steady tempo and with precise pulse and beat rapport, and only then can the impressions they make take effect.

   It often takes a while until a group attains such precision. At the beginning of a lesson the many diffuse everyday rhythms which the pupils and the leader carry around with them must be calmed – by individual concentration on the internal rhythm of one's own body (breathing, pulse) or by concentration all together on a beat and a simple pattern.

   One must also be able to put aside the perfectly normal "have-no-time-feeling". This is true especially for the teacher: a worried glance at the watch (only 20 minutes more!) or in the agenda (only five more weeks until the school concert!) can lead to all too hasty practice and an all too hasty cutting it short.

   A practice session should not end before (or as soon as) it begins to "groove". In African musicthere is a specific feeling for tempo and playing which doesn't take hold until one has surrendered to the pulse for a while – with no fear of monotony. When this happens, one has accomplished something that is far more than just the learning of a rhythmic structure.
2. One should always *practice* – and if possible *play* – music *with the entire body*. This corresponds to the way Africans perform and perceive their music and is a big help when it comes to experiencing the different levels of the music – pattern, beat and pulsation – simultaneously.

   For this reason, all the exercises are performed walking or swaying, speaking or singing, and using the hands to play instruments or to clap – all at the same time. When exercises done in this manner begin to "groove", one may receive further impulses from the music and be amazed at what an intricate instrument one's own body is.
3. *Practice in itself is music*. The alternation between call and response, between solo song or solo playing and group song or group playing – this is a principle of structure in African music and a principle of method in practicing. The interchange between the leader and the group allows for flexibility in correcting errors and in rendering the playing and singing more precise; and it allows for the gradual step by step construction of a complicated structure without having to interrupt the flow of the music. The interchange between the leader, single students and the group permits individual feedback. The interchange between one group and another makes communication a vivid experience.
4. *The exercises should* always, if feasible, *be built into the form schemes (the cycles of 16 or 12 pulses)*. This makes it possible to comprehend and to sense physically that the pulsation, beat sequences, and patterns always "circle" in clearly recognizable units of time; there is a gradual development of feeling for the time proportions of the music.
5. *It is better to work without notes*! Whoever works with African music should not regard the lack of writing in African cultures as a deficit, but rather recognize and make use of the great advantages which forgoing writing and notation offers. Indeed, a sheet of music gives many musicians the feeling that they have in the hand "something black and white to take home" and which they don't have to bother about immediately. In our culture, to "possess"

music is linked to possessing notes and recordings – is, in fact, one and the same thing. In a culture without writing, quite the contrary: there someone "possesses" music only if spiritually and bodily imbued with it. This is only possible in learning processes which anchor the music firmly in the cognitive, emotional and motoric memory. Whoever learns music this way can always reactivate it: one really possesses it, because it has become part of one's own person. So the exercises and rhythms notated in this book should not be on a blackboard or an exercise sheet. They are here for the leader who prepares his lessons – but not for the pupils until they have learned the music without the crutch of writing.

Becoming Calm - Perceiving the Rhythms of One's Body

Stand up straight, the feet slightly apart – feel the ground through the soles of your feet. Close your eyes and give in to your own breathing and its timing. After a while, let the timing of the breathing be transferred to the whole body, which may perhaps begin to move – circling, swaying.

Feel your own pulse at your wrist or your neck. Give in to the breathing if it wants to "synchronize" with the pulse. Or pay attention alternately to the breathing and the pulse and experience the asynchronous "polyrhythm" of the two.

Become aware of your breathing. How is the cycle of breathing divided? Does it "start" with inhaling or exhaling? Are there further (silent) time markers between the reversal points in your breathing?

Let your own breathing, your own pulse be heard softly – with claves, bells, etc. (for your breathing) or with your voice (for your pulse). Concentrate on your own rhythm and from the depth of this concentration become aware of the rhythmic web being formed in the group.

Pass your own rhythm on to the group and let them take part in it.

Swaying and Walking in the Basic Measure

In most of these exercises the feet mark the beat alternately. This sounds easy – and usually is. But even the easiest things can be done the wrong way.

Actually the sequence of movements is rather complicated. It has four phases in which not only the feet actively participate, but also the entire body with all its weight.

Starting position	Stand firmly on the left foot with the knee straight but relaxed ; the right foot can move freely.
1	The entire sole of the right foot touches the ground, but the weight of the body is still on the left foot. The left knee is straight, the right slightly bent.
Transition	The weight is transferred gradually from the left to the right foot. The right knee straightens, the left knee bends slightly. The hip moves toward the right.
2	The weight of the body arrives entirely on the right foot. The hip reaches its farthest position to the right. The left foot can now be moved freely; it is lifted slightly (or, if moving very slowly, put down next to the right foot while the weight remains on the latter).
Transition	The left foot is put back in its starting position. Everything is repeated in reverse (beginning with the weight on the right foot).

There is an overall flowing, swaying motion with two precisely determined points: 1 and 2. In the cycle of 16:

Pulsation:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Movement:	1		2		1		2		1		2		1		2	
Feet:	O				O				O				O			
	ri				le				ri				le			

(= right / left)

In the cycle of 12 (4 x 3) the partitioning is as follows:

Pulsation:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Movement:	1		2	1		2	1		2	1		2
Feet:	O			O			O			O		
	ri			le			ri			le		

(= right / left)

The signs we use in the exercises for the motor patterns of the feet (O O O O) always mark the beat and the placement of the foot before the shift in weight (1). The shifting point (2), which is actually felt to be the „stronger" part of the measure, falls – not notated – on the offbeat. This

meets the offbeat structure of African music and the tendency to conceal the beat (see above in the chapter on rhythm). It also facilitates working out offbeat patterns.

Working with Spoken Syllables

For the values of the pulsation and for structuring the patterns, spoken syllables are a help, e.g.:

2 syllables:	PA	TI		
3 syllables:	PA	TI	KI	
4 syllables:	PA	TI	FU	LA

African first names, place names from Guinea, or the names of some of our rhythms also work well for this:

2 syllables:	BIN - TOU / FO - DÉ / KA - DÉ / FA - TOU
3 syllables:	FA - MA - DOU / NAN - KOU - MA / BA - LI - A
4 syllables:	BA - GA GI - NÉ / KE - NE FO - LI / DJEM - BÉ - FO - LA*

*(*word for drummer in Malinké)*

African musicians are extraordinarily imaginative in inventing such spoken syllables for patterns:

gung gada - gi gung gada - gi ...
ga - kada kidi ga - kada kidi ...
kukuka kukuka kukuka kukuka kukuka ...
bong kodong kibudu bong kodong kibudu ...

Often such syllables and syllable combinations are "sound paintings", sometimes words (or for longer, complex patterns, whole sentences) from their own language. They are usually spoken melodically and thereby reconstruct the melorhythmic structure of the drum patterns. Many African languages are so-called tone languages: the syllables of the words and parts of the sentences form a pitch contour , a sort of speech melody as additional conveyers of meaning. If this melody changes while the sequence of the syllables remains the same, the words and sentences can have completely different meanings.

Some melorhythmic drum patterns refer to special meanings of words or sentences or let particular connotations of meanings come to mind; the talking drums, widely used in many African cultures, are based on this phenomenon. So, inversely, it seems natural to set melorhythmic drum patterns to speech.

African musicians use spoken syllables as markers in learning patterns (ethnomusicologists even refer in this case to *oral notation*).

Walking / Swaying and Speaking: Basic Models

The basic models are spoken alternately by the leader and the group (call / response). They are always at the beginning of a practice phase and should be repeated until the tempo is steady. During the call phases, the leader has the possibility of correcting repeatedly any wavering in the tempo. After complicated exercises there is a return to the basic model – to rest and to again become conscious of the tempo and steady it.

Cycle of 16 pulses (simpler version)

Spoken:	PA	TI		PA	TI		PA	TI		PA	TI					
Feet:		O			O			O			O					

Cycle of 16 pulses (complete version)

Spoken:	PA	TI	FU	LA	PA	TI	FU	LA	PA	TI	FU	LA	PA	TI	FU	LA
or:	PA	TI	PA	TI	PA	TI	PA	TI	PA	TI	PA	TI	PA	TI	PA	TI
Feet:	O				O				O				O			

Cycle of 12 pulses

Spoken:	FA	MOU	DOU		FA	MOU	DOU		FA	MOU	DOU		FA	MOU	DOU	
or:	PA	TI	KI		PA	TI	KI		PA	TI	KI		PA	TI	KI	
Feet:	O				O				O				O			

Working out Simple Patterns

Patterns are arrived at by highlighting two or more in a line of pulses. There are different ways of achieving this:

- the pulses of the pattern are accentuated by speaking or singing them at another pitch;
- only the highlighted pulses are spoken, the others are whispered or "swallowed";
- in addition to being spoken, the pulses are accentuated by clapping or by using claves;
- they are only clapped or played;
- these various possibilities are combined – in succession or simultaneously.

An example:

Clapping / Claves:			x			x					x			x		
Spoken:			TI			PA					TI			PA		
	PA				TI				PA				TI			
Feet:	O					O			O					O		

The normal sequence of practice is as follows:

Basic model (speech): call (leader) / response (group), several times alternately

In addition:

pattern: (Clapping / claves): call / response, several times alternately

As soon as the group masters the pattern, the call and response can be dropped: the pattern is "played through". If it begins to waver, then immediately the basic model and the call / response alternation will be taken up again.

Variant: The students play the pattern solo in turn – the group answers.

Creating Patterns

Famoudou Konaté is often surprised that his European students are not more inventive. "Why don't you compose your own rhythms? Once you have grasped how African rhythms are built up, it can't be all that difficult!"

So, dear teachers: Create your own (exercise) patterns – and have your students, too, be creative. Even in the simple "pa ti pa ti" scheme there are no limits to a fertile imagination. With accentuation or selection, a large number of figures can be made from the eight pulses:

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

Here a few helpful tips:

- We can decide on a certain number of strokes which we distribute along the cycle. Any number is possible – except perhaps 1 or 8. For example, if we decide on seven strokes, then we have to leave a "hole". Wherever this may be, the result is in any case a valid figure:

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

- We can put most of the strokes in the first half or in the second half – or distribute them more uniformly:

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

- We can give preference to the beats (PA) or the offbeats (TI) – or prefer here, too, a balance:

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

PA TI PA TI PA TI PA TI

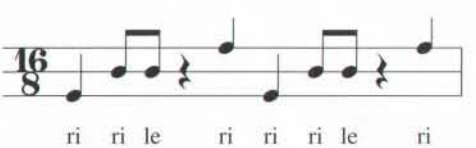
We can proceed in the same way with the other basic models (see above: Walking / Swaying and Speaking: Basic Models). It is helpful, especially at the beginning of the work, to have rules of composition such as these. The musical language into which we are led in this way should soon be spoken intuitively. In improvising and creating patterns, one can go along with the flow of the music and no longer think about what one wants to "say".

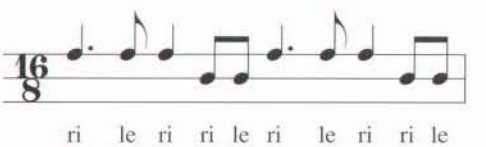
Hand-by-Hand Drumming and Improvising

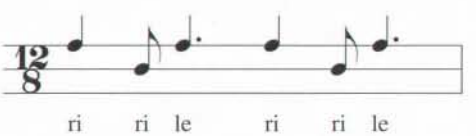
The djembé is usually played "hand-by-hand", i.e., the right and left hands alternate in the pulse measure. In the cycle of 16:

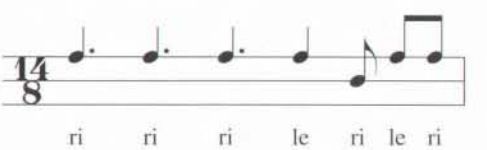
Hands:	ri	le	ri	le	ri	le	ri	le	ri	le	ri	le	ri	le	ri	le
Beat:	O				O				O				O			

This scheme is present in the background of every djembé pattern. It determines the handing for the drumming. A beat which falls on the 5th pulse will always be played by the right hand, on the 10th pulse always by the left hand, etc. This is the key to the correct handing for all djembé patterns in this book.









There are very few exceptions. The first accompaniment pattern to KUKU (track 7), for example, would be "leaning to the right" if this rule were rigidly followed and would lead to an over-exertion of the right arm. If a pattern is drummed with the correct handing, the basic measure not only pulsates in one's imagination but is also felt in the body. If the soundless pulses, too, are played silently (the right-left movement is always carried out, but only the strokes of the pattern touch the drum), one can feel physically, through the impact of motion, the precise measure of the pulsation. After becoming accustomed to this kind of playing, the motions no longer have to be carried out – they remain present as inward energy.

Hand-by-hand playing is also a help in inventing and improvising patterns. We carry out the right-left pulse movement over the drum (the thighs, the tabletop, etc.) and decide which pulses we want to make audible. As the offbeats are always in the left hand, we can consciously determine the beat-offbeat structure by the way we move.

Additional Exercises on Patterns from Malinké Rhythms

In our material here there are patterns that are rather simple and some that seem rather complicated. We grasp many patterns more or less intuitively just by listening to them and are soon able to speak them or play them. In listening to and playing certain other patterns, however, we run up against difficulties – through a pronounced offbeat structure, or because the main accents are made inconspicuous ("where is the 'one'?"), or through ambiguity in connection with the beats. Strictly speaking, though, both kinds of patterns present problems. What is crucial is that we fit them with precision into the cycle, with its pulsation and its sequence of beats. This is not easy, even with the less complicated patterns. Good examples of this are the two djembé accompaniment patterns to be found in several of the rhythms in this collection:

In the case of both patterns, we tend to shorten the values of the notes: in pattern 1 the value written as a dotted fourth and in pattern 2 the value of the third or seventh fourth. A group which does this constantly will inevitably play faster and faster, since the regular shortening of a value results in a gradual accelerando.

The only thing that helps here is the conscious experiencing of the metronomic pulsation which lies "like millimeter graph paper" behind all rhythms. This means, for our accompaniment patterns, that we must actively "perform" the two pulses in the pauses between the strokes so that we hear them inwardly. Only in this way can we be aware of the pause as an important, energetically charged element of the articulation, an element that loses its tension if shortened and that is not just an empty space to be raced over because it interrupts us in our drumming.

So in some "simple" patterns, too, it is important to practice with the whole body, for example djembé pattern 2:

Clapping /				
Claves:	x x x	x PA TI	x x x	x PA TI
Spoken:	PA TI	PA TI	PA TI	PA TI
	PA TI		PA TI	
Feet:	O	O	O	O

Approximate sequence of exercises:

1. The pulsation (PA TI PA TI ...) is spoken to the beat (feet) evenly and on one pitch. The tempo is slow (O = metronome 45) and remains slow: speaking in call/response alternation helps the leader to keep guiding the students back to the tempo .
2. The pulsation is spoken continuously in unison. While doing so, the leader builds up the pattern (first three beats, then four, etc.) from one time to the next (with clapping or claves) and the students participate. The aim is to play the pattern "clear through". When the tempo is lost: return to speaking the pulsation in a call/response interchange.
3. Even if the pattern is finally played through with precision it should be stopped after a while and built up anew.
4. When the pattern is correctly played and spoken rhythmically, let the "superfluous" syllables gradually become fainter (whisper or articulate silently) and melodize the pattern syllables PA - PA TI - - PA - PA - PA TI - - PA - (speak or sing at three different pitches).
5. Sing or speak the pattern with other syllables which suit the tone quality and the dynamics of the pattern, e.g., gung - ga dang - - ging - gung - ga dang - - ging -.
6. Perhaps fill in the pauses on the 3rd and 7th fourths with a soft pulse accentuation: t t or tsch tsch. Alternation between claves, clapping, and speaking.
7. When all is stable the leader plays a complementary rhythm as "second voice". Very suitable here: the pattern of the kenkeni bell in LOLO.

The pattern should not be played on instruments before completing the foregoing sequence of exercises. In principle, this is also the way to work out more complicated patterns, for example time line patterns with strokes alternately on and off the beat. There is such a pattern in Somba Körö (track 3). The leader must be absolutely sure to master the pattern beforehand and not be obliged to read a sheet of music while practicing with the students!

Working out Double Patterns of the Bass Drums

In the parts for the bass drums there are different patterns that have to be played simultaneously with the left and right hands, which might at first glance appear difficult. But closer inspection shows that the bell and drumhead figures do not have a more or less complicated "correlation" (in the sense of polyrhythm, see above), but that the drumhead beats usually just mark certain beats of the bells. To put it another way: the bell pattern, which is more complete and can therefore be played more easily with greater precision, is a sort of guideline for playing the drumhead strokes. In effect, without playing the bell simultaneously, it would be more difficult to beat the drumhead with precise timing. Robert Schumann's rule for playing the piano, "Let the right hand teach the left!", is true here – but in reverse. In the beginning the coordination of the hands may present some difficulties, which will have to be overcome with special exercises. First work out just the bell pattern methodically according to the rules in the last section. When the bell pattern is securely mastered, then build up the part for the drumhead.

As an example the rather complicated sangban pattern in Loro: When the bell pattern has been worked out, we can develop out of both patterns a pattern of spoken syllables that accentuates audibly the beats on the drumhead. For instance:

Clapping / Claves (drumhead pattern):	x				x				x				x				x					
Spoken (bell pattern):	ga	-	gu	ga	-	gu	ga	-	ga	-	gu	ga	-	gu	ga	-						
Feet (beat):	O				O				O				O									

When speaking the syllable pattern to the beat is successful, we build up the drumhead pattern to it during several repetitions (with clapping or claves, see above. Now the hands take up the patterns, striking for example the thighs (left hand) and the tabletop (right hand), or the edge (left hand) and middle (right hand) of a drum. The feet should always mark the beat, even when we practice in a sitting position.

Working out Whole Rhythms

Working out whole rhythms takes a lot of time. If one can work for half or whole days – in other words, in compact units – much more can be accomplished. Whether one can play on original instruments or others that are already available for teaching, we recommend using the same work principles and practice models. This is the procedure Famoudou Konaté uses in teaching:

- As a rule all the participants learn all the patterns. In the long run, this makes it more interesting to play the music, because the parts can be interchanged and this method corresponds to the way music is learned and played in Africa. There every player masters all the patterns, so he hears not just his own part, but the overall context.
- When the students can play the first two patterns that have been worked out, they learn the signal. Then pattern lines with inserted signals are played in order to practice the rapid alternation between the patterns. For example:

4 x pattern 1 – signal - 4 x pattern 2 – signal – 4 x pattern 1 – etc.

As soon as playing this is stabilized, the patterns can be combined. For example:

Group 1: 4 x pattern 1 – signal – 4 x pattern 2 – signal – 4 x pattern 1 – etc.

Group 2: 4 x pattern 2 – signal – 4 x pattern 1 – signal – 4 x pattern 2 – etc.

- It is helpful to work out first the bass-drum parts, then the djembé accompaniment patterns, the solo patterns, and finally the échauffement. The bass-drum melody is the foundation of the entire musical structure and gives each particular rhythm its special drive. Thus, practicing the other parts to the accompaniment of the underlying bass-drum parts, it is possible to get the satisfying feeling of really making music at an early stage of learning a rhythm.
- In working out whole rhythms, the same is true: practice is music in itself! And: mistakes are part of the learning process – and can even be fun.

Arranging the Music for One's Own Teaching

In African music there is never a definitive version for all time ("the composer's final version"), as in works in the cultural tradition of Europe. Even if the standards are differentiated and complicated – as in the music of the Malinké – the musicians are extraordinarily flexible when it comes to adapting to special situations. It is therefore not an offense against the spirit of the music to practice it with modifications according to the circumstances: the ability of the students, the particular teaching situation, or the instruments at hand. It is possible to work with the rhythms in this book at completely different levels, with varying degrees of difficulty:

1

Sing the songs in a call/response interchange, as on the CD, and use a simple accompaniment:

- Use rattles throughout (maracas, caxixi, etc.): pulsation with light accents on the beat.
- Clap or use claves: beat, offbeat ('two' and 'four'), or an easy pattern or "partial pattern" (see indications given in connection with the songs).
- Work out the songs in a call / response interchange, walking or clapping the beat. It is also possible to proceed by sections or motifs, e.g., as in Baga Giné (track 5):

Teacher	*Students*
"Eee lai-la"	"Eee lai-la"
"baga giné"	"baga giné"
"fa-re bo-ron ma"	"fa-re bo-ron ma"
etc.	etc.

Repeat and combine such motifs over and over with the flow of the music until the right sequence "sits".

While working out the songs the leader may very well (if he can) play a suitable accompaniment pattern on a drum whose sound is not too penetrating (e.g., a conga). This gives even more the feeling of actual music-making while still in the practice stage.

2

Play selected, not too difficult patterns (e.g., djembé accompaniment patterns, individual bell or drumhead figures of the basses, perhaps one of the solo patterns) from the rhythms to the particular songs on appropriate instruments such as congas, bongos, bass chime bars, bells, etc.

3

If there are no original instruments available and one would like nevertheless to play the rhythms in the whole of their complex poly- and melorhythmical structure, there are two possibilities:

Transfer the patterns to other instruments:

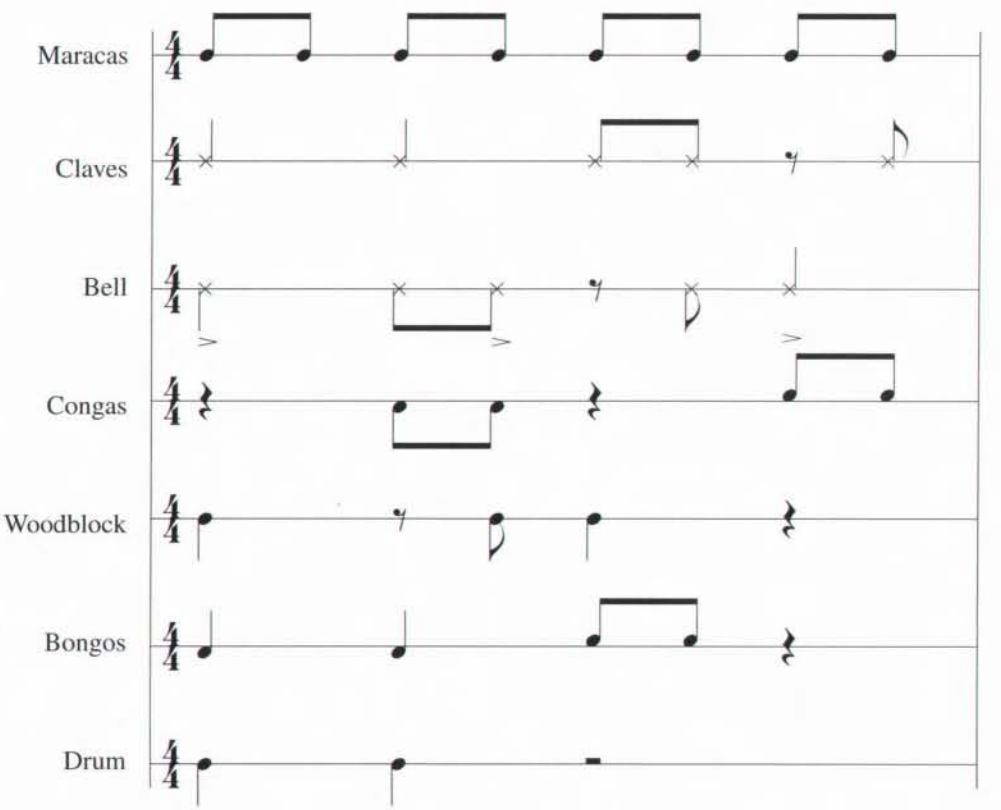
Play the individual instrumental parts, as they are written, on other instruments. Congas are best for the djembé patterns, even if the bass beats sound weaker and the slap beats less penetrating than on the djembé. The open beats on the conga – corresponding to the tom beats on the djembé – are very colorful and emerge distinctly from complex combinations of sounds. For this reason they are good for playing the signals and for marking offbeats. If several congas of different pitches are used, the resulting sound effect is very melodious.

For the bass-drum parts timpani of various sizes can be used. In this case the timpani player plays the bell pattern with the left hand (whereby the problem must be solved how to attach handily the bell instrument or the equally suitable wooden chime bar, unless the player just simply strikes the frame of the drum). The bell pattern can also be taken over by another player, in which case, though, the "guideline function" of the bell pattern is lost (see above: Working out Double Patterns). The bass-drum parts can also be played on bass chime bars. But then one must cope with the problem that tonal, harmonious combinations result that bother some people in listening to this music.

Rearrange:

If the instrumental parts are broken up and the resulting figures newly arranged, different – and often more interesting – sound combinations result. In the following arrangement for Lolo (accompanying djembés and bass drums) the clearly audible resultant melody of the African arrangement is played by similar-sounding instruments (open beats on congas and bongos). The dotted figure of the 1st djembé (very penetrating slap beats) is played by the wood block. The bell patterns of the bass drums are divided between claves (kenkeni figure) and a double bell (sangban figure). Here the characteristic offbeat pattern of the sangban drumhead beats is made audible through accentuation; if this is insufficient, the pattern can be played simultaneously on a deep drum.

Arrangement for LOLO



Of course the elementary dynamism of the original sound is not attained in such arrangements. But one wins through one's own experimentation attractive and transparent "sound pictures" in which the African melorhythm is retained without a loss of substance. That a soft, transparent sound is anything but "non-African" is well known to anyone who has heard the music of African plucked, bowed and wind instruments.

The Rhythms and Songs

How We have Notated the Music and How It "Functions"

As the music is structured according to a sort of building-block principle, that is the way we have written it. The blocks are:

1. The signal (solo djembé)

(also called **bloquage**, from the French *bloquer* = to block, close in)

The signal is played exclusively by the solo djembé. It is the sign for the beginning and end of the music and – within the piece – for the beginning and end of the échauffement (see p. 63).

- All *rhythms* in the 16 cycle have the same signal. Six of "our" rhythms are in the 16 cycle, with the signal:

- The other two rhythms (SOMBA KÖRÖ / track 3, and KÉNÉ FOLI / track 6) are in the 12 cycle, with the signal:

or:

2. The accompaniment complex (accompanying djembé 1 and 2; kenkeni, sangban, dununba)

These parts are played on two – or sometimes just one – accompanying djembé(s) and the three bass drums.

The players are usually restricted to these accompaniment figures; as a rule, there are no free improvisations. The accompaniment complex produces the special rhythmic *drive* – and something more: the *resultant melody*, which is not brought forth by one player alone, but by the combination of the figures being played on all the instruments together. Particularly significant here, because clearly audible, are the drumhead beats on the *kenkeni* and *dununba* and the *toms* and *slaps* on the accompanying *djembés*. Listening, it is sometimes impossible to follow the part of one individual instrument in our notation. There are two possible explanations for this:

- either this part is so blended into the *resultant melody* that it can hardly be heard individually
- or it is "covered" by the sound of the other instruments.

However, this is not due merely to technical problems in recording. In the live situation, too, the "sound picture" is often inextricably tangled.

3. The solo patterns and solo improvisations

The virtuoso and often beautifully and artistically articulated improvisations of the solo drummer float above the whole of the music like – to speak again in our terms – the singer's voice above the piano accompaniment or the solo part in a concert above the orchestra. To be sure, the soloist is free in his improvisation, but must respect two things:

- the dancing, where there is often such intensive communication between the solo drummer and the individual dancers that it is hard to tell who is giving impulses to whom;
- for each *rhythm* a certain typical and restricted "vocabulary", made from specific patterns – which can be quite freely modified.

When Famoudou Konaté teaches, he sees that these (3, 4 or maybe 5) solo patterns are meticulously practiced. Then they are played in sequence. Each pattern is repeated several times. The transition from pattern to pattern is denoted each time by the *signal*. This is exactly the way we have written down the solo patterns; we have not specifically added the notes for the signal. But in the recordings the connection between the soli and the signal can be heard distinctly. In most of the recordings Famoudou Konaté plays

- during the first round the solo patterns – always connected with the signal – the way we have written them;
- in the second round he improvises freely – and the solo patterns, sometimes easily recognizable, are the substance of the improvisation.

Famoudou Konaté also improvises to the singing – a bit restrained in our recordings, so as not to drown out the singers. We omitted writing down the free improvisations – because of their complexity and because they would broaden too far the scope of this book. As these improvisations are unrepeatable – and shall not be repeated by others – an exact notation would have been at best of scientific or documentary value.

4. The échauffement (French échauffer = to warm up, heat up)

This passage is heard after the solo patterns or solo improvisations and at the end. The solo drummer prepares for it and leads the playing of it. It is as if the solo drummer were saying: *Now it's really starting!* Or: *Watch out! Now I'm finished with my improvisation!* Or: *I want you to sing now!* Or: *Finished now – the dancers are exhausted!* The *échauffement* has the substance and effect of a semicolon, a dot, a double bar or a final chord. An intensification takes place

- due to the constantly beating pulses ("eighths") of the solo djembé;
- due to the dense succession of mostly syncopated beats on the *dununba*, sometimes on the *sangban*, too, while the other drums continue to play their figures;
- and due to a general accelerando and an increased fervor in the playing.

The *échauffement* is always introduced and ended by the *signal*. But since, on the other hand, the signal does not always mean the beginning of an *échauffement*, it is sometimes astonishing that the players do not err, but really do manage to always begin the *échauffement* together and with accuracy. This is due to the clear body-language of the solo drummer, and in addition to a clear awareness of the musical happening as a whole of which the dancers are also very much a part.

Rules of Notation

We have written all the figures for the **djembé** drums in a three-line system:

top line:	*slap* beat
middle line:	*tom* beat
bottom line:	*bass* beat

In regard to the **handing** for playing the djembé, see the section "Hand-by-Hand Drumming and Improvisation" (p. 54).

We have written the figures for the **bass drums** on two lines:

top line:	bell (left hand)
bottom line:	drumhead (right hand)

For a better optical differentiation, the **bell-patterns** are written with x-notes.

In the notation for the **échauffement**, the **dununba** bass drum is on only **one line**; the bell and drumhead are *almost always* played simultaneously here, so separate notation for the bell is unnecessary.

The **drumhead beat on the bass drums** is sometimes **muffled** by touching the drumhead with the point of the stick and leaving it there until the next beat. The sound becomes clearer but softer. The notation for this is as follows:

 = muffled sound (point of stick on the drumhead)

 = full (normal) sound

Notes in parentheses are not played in the last repetition of a pattern:

 = is omitted in last repetition

Strokes written as an **upbeat** are drawn into the previous measure.

"Building Blocks" and Progression - as Illustrated by our Recording of Kuku (Track 7)

0:00 The *claves* play – until the end! – a figure drawn from the signal:

0:06 a *wood block* joins in with regular "fourth" beats, and *maracas* with the "eighth" pulsation

0:12 *accompanying djembés 1 and 2* join in

0:21 *signal* and *solo 1*,
at the same time entry of dununba, sangban, and kenkeni; the resultant melody of the three bass drums is distinctly audible – it is somewhat reminiscent of an "Alberti bass" (a typical accompaniment figure of Mozart's):

0:27 *signal + solo 2*

0:50 *signal + solo 3*

0:59 *signal + solo 4*

1:20 *signal + solo 5*

1:30 *signal + solo 6*

1:50 *signal + échauffement + signal*

2:00 *song* with accompanying *improvisation on the solo djembé*

3:09 after the singing, *free improvisation on the solo djembé*

3:33 *solo 5 (3 x)*

3:39 *signal + échauffement + signal* (a bit modified)

3:50 *song* with accompanying *solo improvisation*

5:00 after the singing, *free solo improvisation*

5:22 *signal + échauffement + signal*

5:34 *song*, with only *accompanying djembés 1 and 2, maracas, claves, solo djembé* with *solo 5*

6:07 *signal + end*

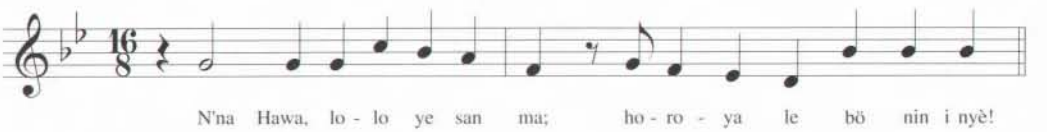
Lolo
The Star

 1

Mother Hawa has gone to see a fortune-teller. He has consulted her star and found out that she has a good star and will live a long life. She will be wealthy and give birth to many children. The song says:

N´na Hawa, lolo ye san ma;
Horoya le bö nin i nyè!

Mother Hawa, the star is in the sky;
The day of your freedom has come!



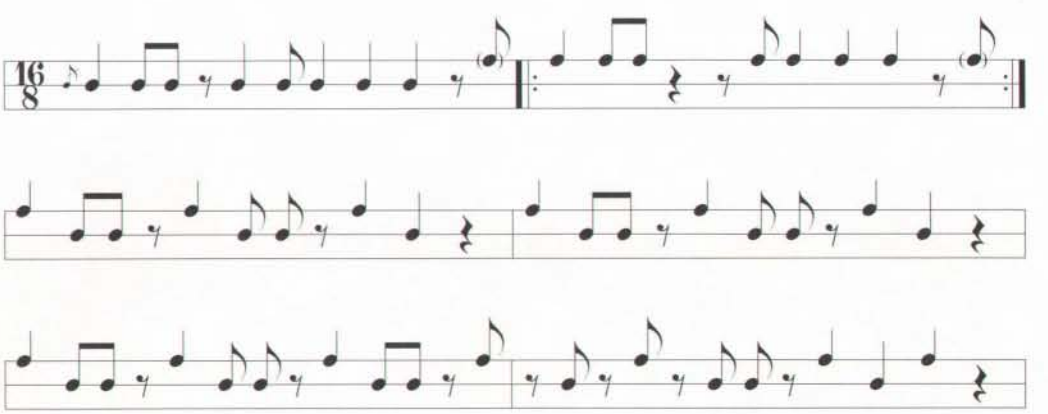
Pronunciation:
N´na Hawa:"Nahwah" (a as in "far")
le bö nin i nyè: "le bo nee yeh" (le: e as in French "pré"; bö: o as in "soft"; yeh: e as in "yes")

The language of speech and song differs from the written language, just as colloquial English often differs from correct written English, e.g.: "s'pose t'be" for " supposed to be".

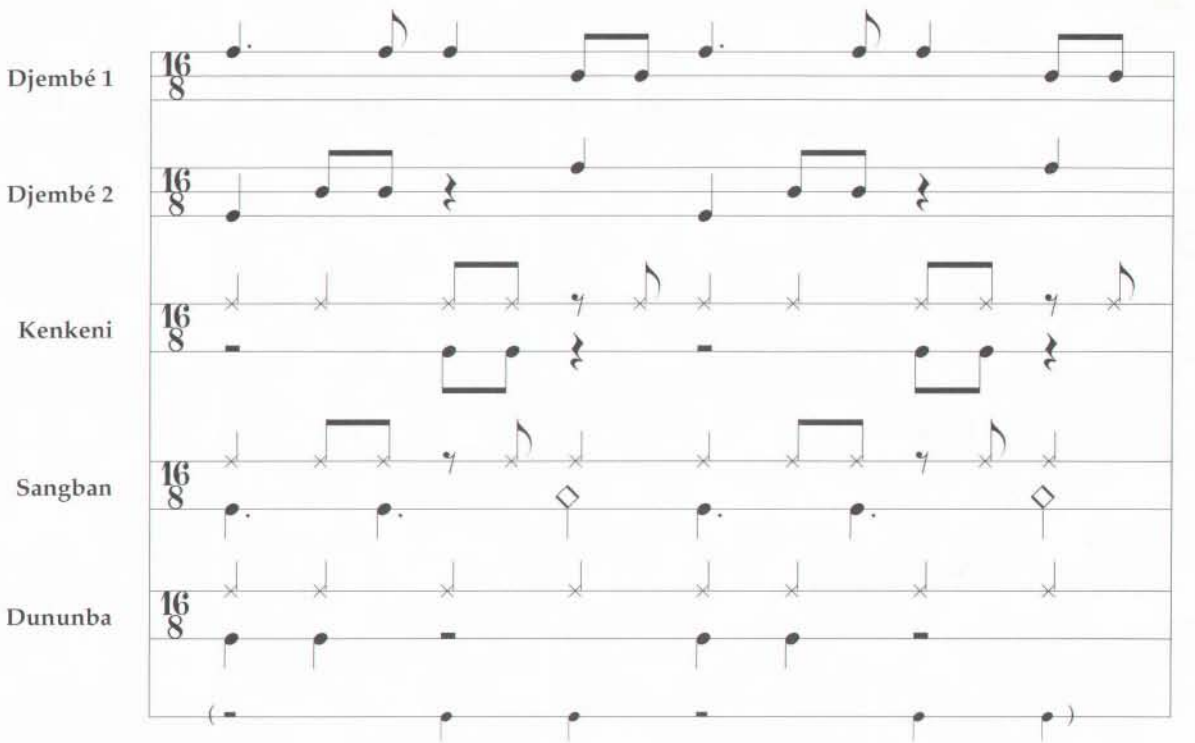
Prelude and Interlude

Signal: Solo djembé

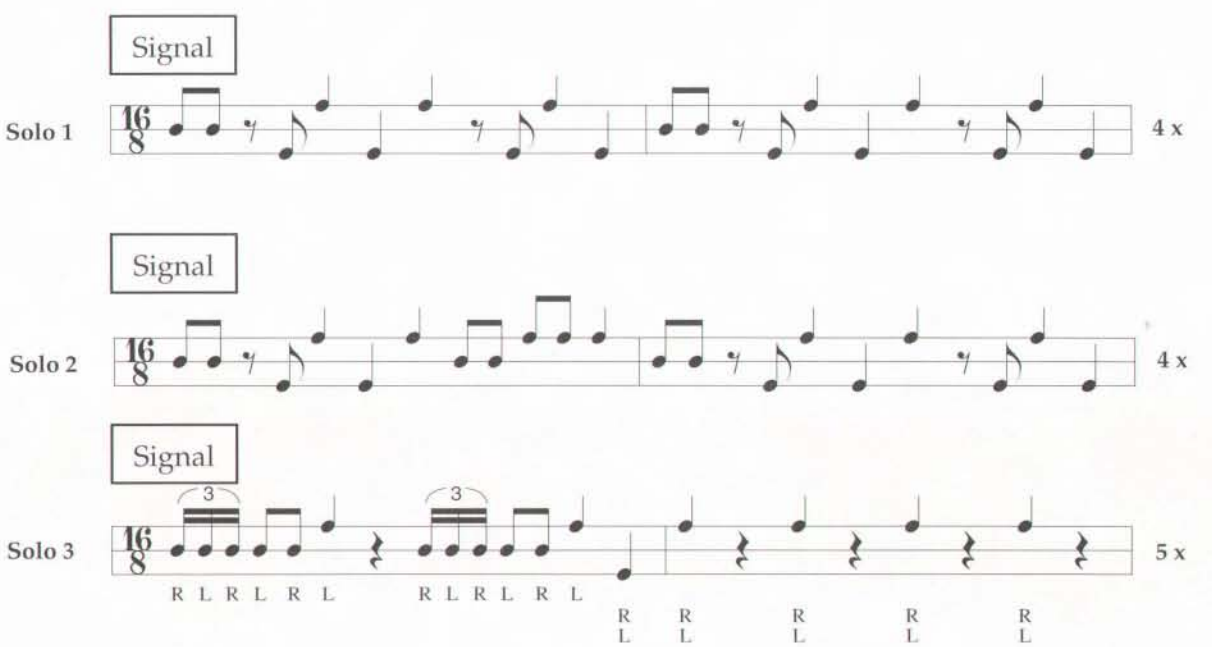
All instruments: a high and a low tone each

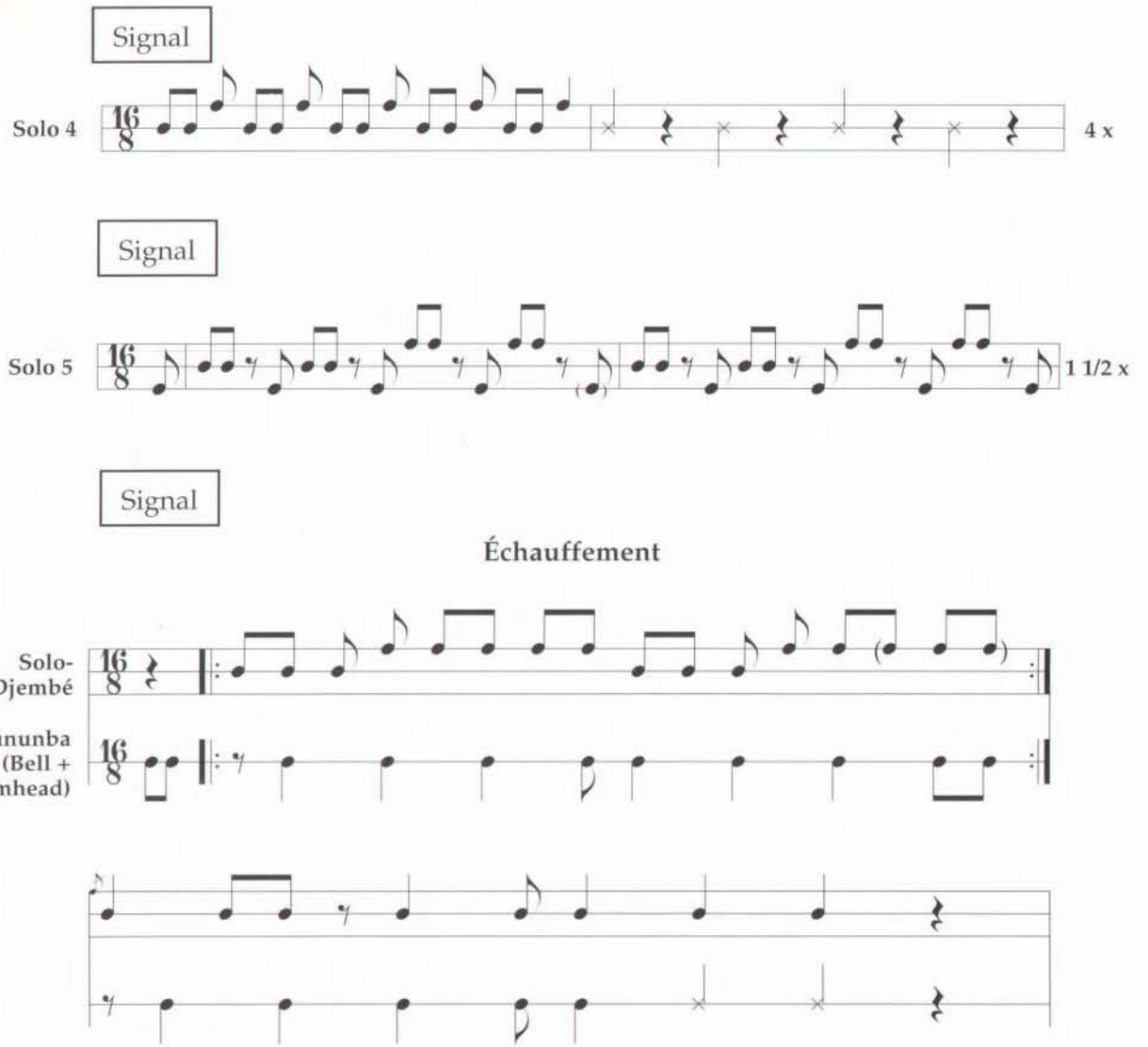


Accompaniment Patterns



Solo Patterns





Information

Famoudou Konaté:

"I learned the song Lolo *from my son. He had heard it in the village. When I was ten years old an old man told me: There are very old songs everybody knows. Other songs are like an animal that every year loses its horn, and then every year grows a new one. Such songs are suddenly present – and are just as soon forgotten. They often arise spontaneously in certain situations. Maybe there was once a real Mother Hawa who was doing poorly for a long time – and the prophecy was taken up and sung by everyone to support her recovery. I put together the drum rhythms to this song myself."*

Working on the Prelude and Interlude

Practice pattern:

Clapping / Claves:	x	•	x	x	•	x	•	x	x	•	x	•	x	•	•	•
Spoken:	ga					ga					ga					
			gu	gu				gu	gu				gu			
Feet:	O				O				O				O			

Clapping / Claves:	x	•	x	x	•	x	•	x	x	•	x	•	x	x	•	x
Spoken:	ga					ga					ga					ga
			gu	gu				gu	gu				gu	gu		
Feet:	O				O				O				O			

Clapping / Claves:	•	x	•	x	•	x	x	•	x	•	x	•	x	•	•	•
Spoken:				ga					ga				ga			
		gu				gu	gu				gu					
Feet:	O				O				O				O			

Procedure

1. The feet mark the beat, while the students simultaneously clap the pattern of the signal (or play it on claves).
2. The syllables are spoken (melodiously) in a call/response manner to the (clapped or tapped) signal.
3. The teacher lengthens the call/response phase to two cycles. The beats and the spoken syllables are added, step by step, to this phase. Each new addition should be repeated several times.
4. Finally, the pattern is practiced directly after the signal. Then the "building blocks" that have been worked on are put together.

Particularities

For the playing of soli 3 and 4 Famoudou Konaté adds a few lively details: In solo 3 the slap beat in the 2nd cycle is always played with only one hand: in the 1st round the right hand, 2nd round the left hand, 3rd round the right hand, etc. The bass beat (immediately preceding) is always played by the hand which afterwards plays the slap beat. In the 2nd cycle, the free hand is raised up in front of the chest; the elbow of this bent arm rises to the height of the hand at each beat and falls again during the rests. In solo 4 the x-notes written in the 2nd cycle are not played. Instead, there is an alternate right and left snapping of the fingers, with the hand raised each time to the level of the head.

Bala Kulandyan

2

The Bala Kulandyan („Bala": sea; "Kulandyan": a long legged bird) is hunting for fish in the sea. This bird has said to the humans:

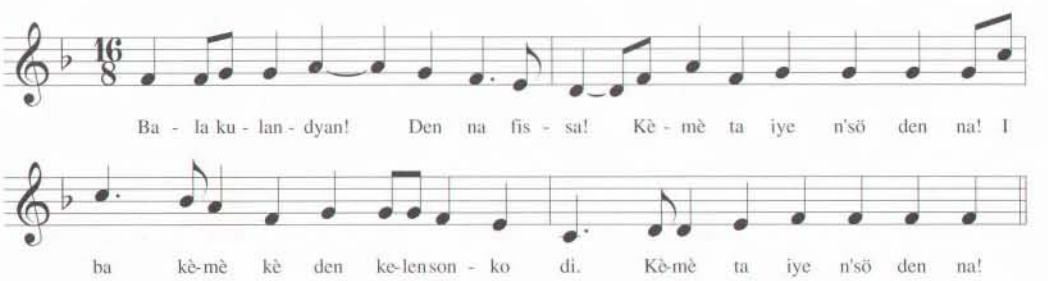
"I will tell you a story: I fish in order to eat. I fly in order to move. Thus I unite these two works of creation: the sea, in which I find my food, and the sky, in which I fly.

I will give you the following advice in order to help you lead your lives.

I tell you: Children are the most important thing in life. Women who do not bear children can ask for my help. Bring me a hundred things – and I will help you." (By the "hundred things" symbolic gifts are meant, for example kola nuts, which in West Africa are often offered as a gift to one's hosts during a visit.)

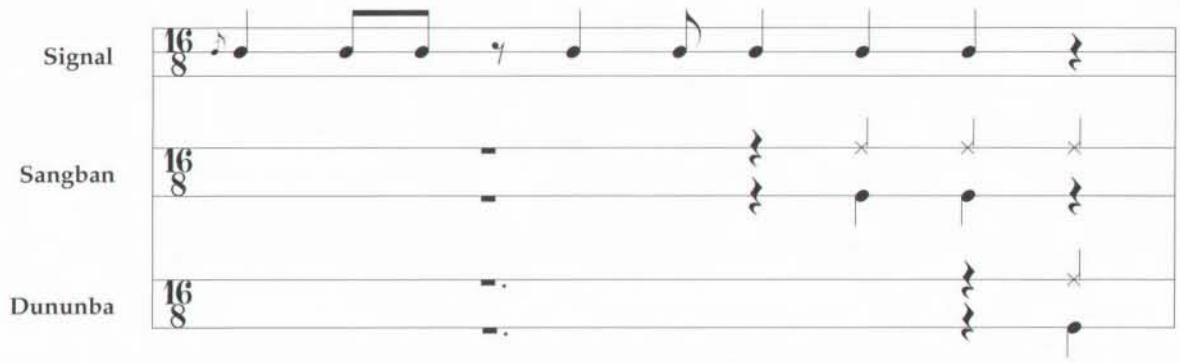
Bala kulandyan! Den de ka fissa!
Kèmè ta iye n´sö den na!
I ba kèmè kè den kelen sonko di.
Kèmè ta iye n´sö den na!

Bala Kulandyan! A child is better than anything (in the world)!
Take a hundred (things) and give me a child!
I give a hundred as a gift to receive a child.
Take a hundred and give me a child!

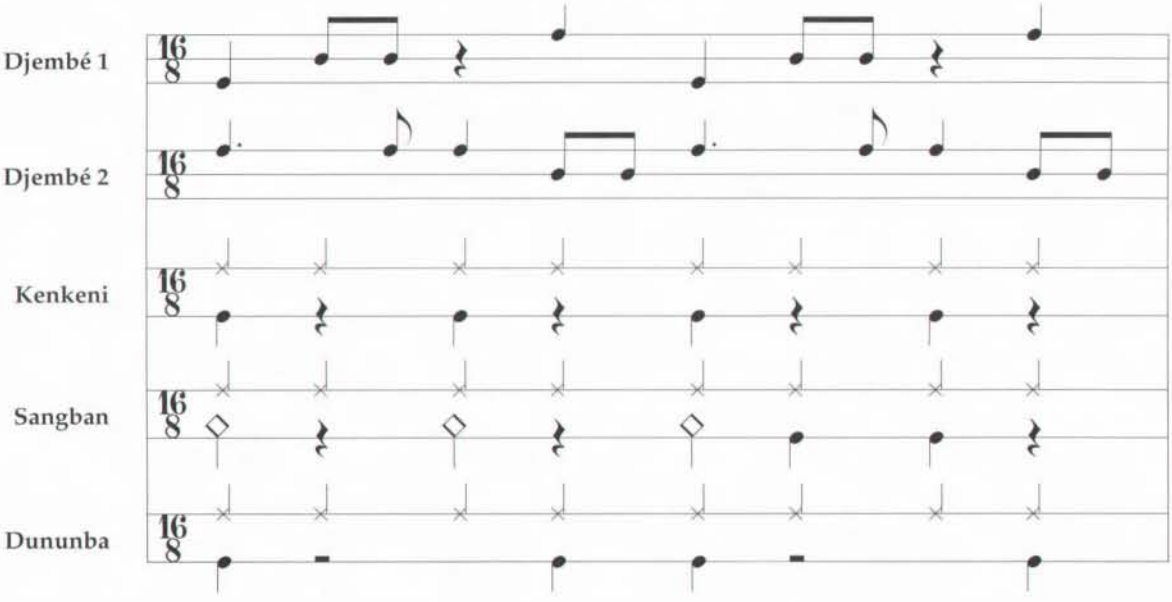


Pronunciation:
Den de ka fissa: "den nah fissa" (a as in "far"; i as in "be")
Kèmè ta iye n'sö den na:"kehmeh tah yen so denna" (kèmè: e as in "yes"; sö: o as in "soft")

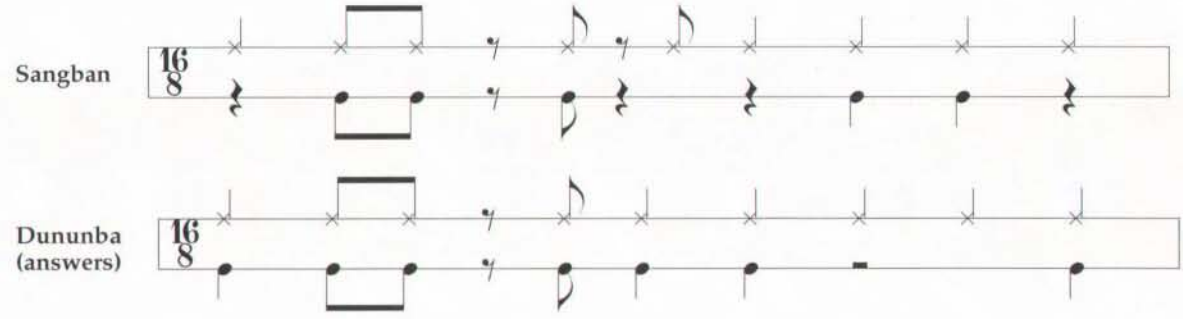
Signal



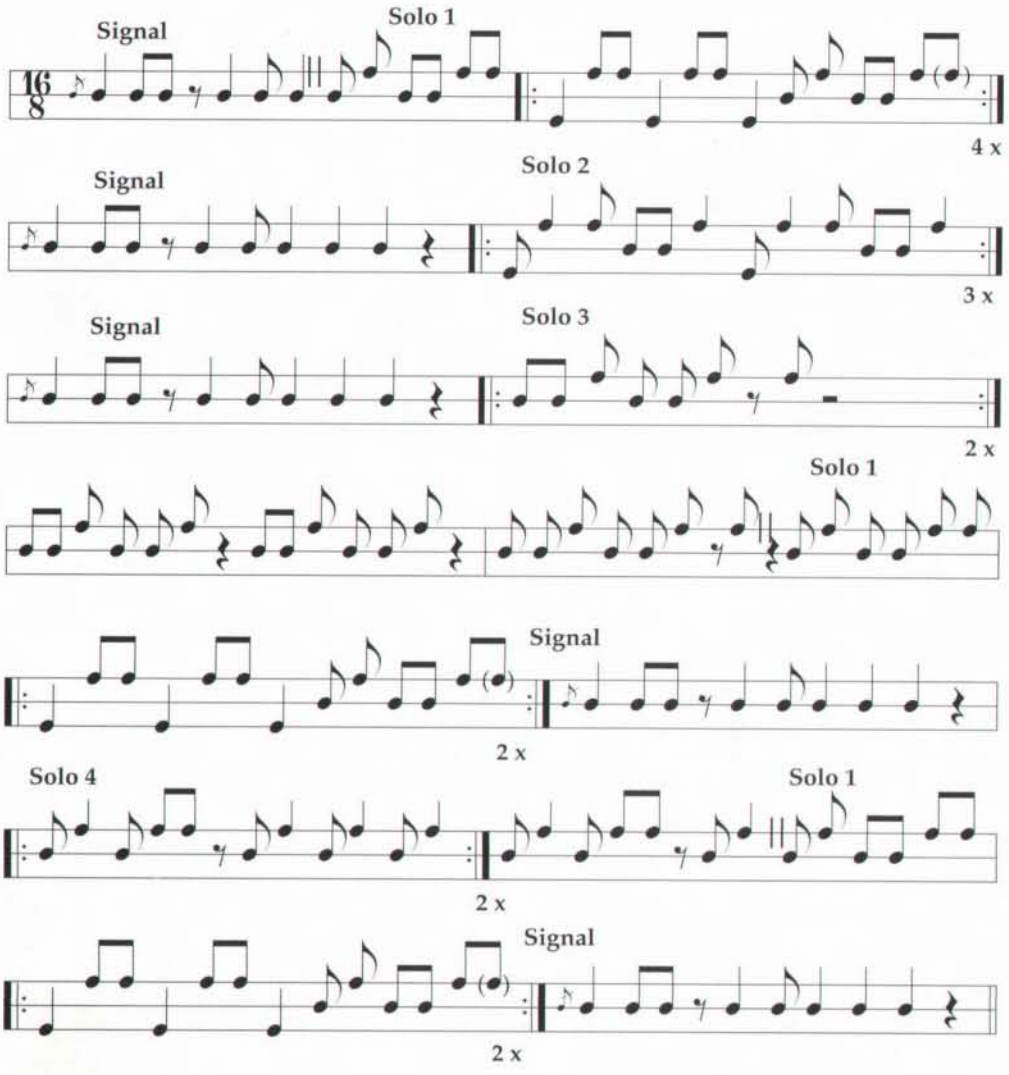
Accompaniment Patterns



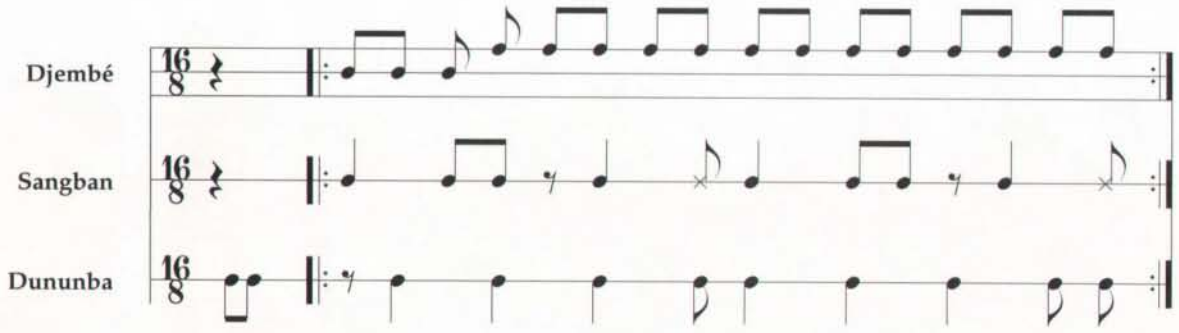
Variation (every 5th time)

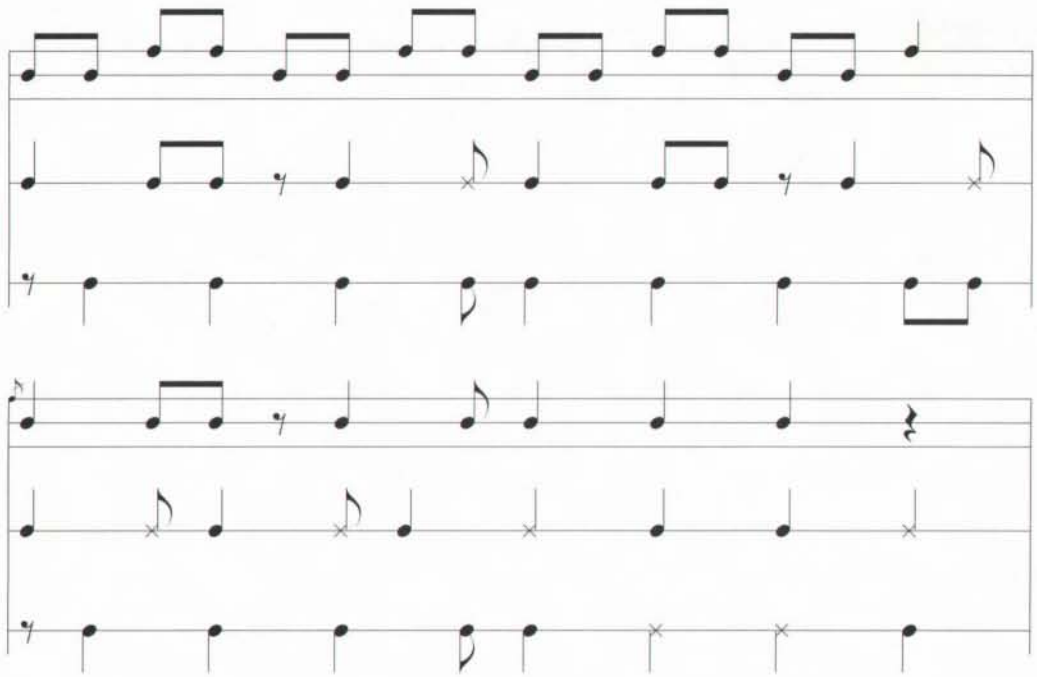


Solo Patterns



Échauffement





Information

BALA KULANDYAN is one of the very old pieces in the Malinké tradition. In many other rhythms – for example DYIDANBA – the song is exchangeable: different songs may be sung to one and the same rhythm. In Bala Kulandyan the rhythm and the song are inseparable.

The song speaks of what a blessing a child signifies and of how every woman wishes to have children. For this reason, the Bala Kulandyan music plays a role on all occasions when children are the central figures (baptism, circumcision and initiation) or when children are present in thought (marriage).

As to the rhythm: All the solo and accompaniment patterns are from the traditional stock of the Bala Kulandyan. Famoudou Konaté took only solo pattern 2 from another dance, because he felt it so well suited to the melody of the bass drums.

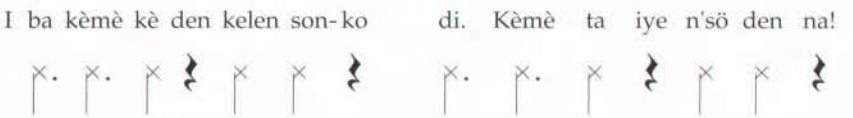
Practicing the song

1. The melody and text of measure 2 (Kèmè ta iye n´sö...) are sung in a call / response exchange, then alternately measure 2 and measure 4.
2. Add measures 1 and 3 (leader, call) to 2 and 4 (students, response).
3. Practice measures 1 and 3 (call / response), also phrase by phrase with the flow of the music.
4. Sing the whole song in alternation, as in the recording.

Pattern to be clapped or played as accompaniment

The time line pattern, widespread in Africa, works very well for this:

All the beats of this pattern coincide with important syllables of the text and notes of the melody:



The pattern should be worked on from various angles: with the beat, independent from the song (see p. 52, Working out Simple Patterns), then with the spoken text (building up phrase by phrase and step by step) and finally with the song, sung to the beat.

Well suited for an (additional) simple accompaniment are the patterns of the bass drums, especially the sangban and dununba (the uniform pulsation of the bell strokes, and simultaneous easy-to-learn drumhead patterns).

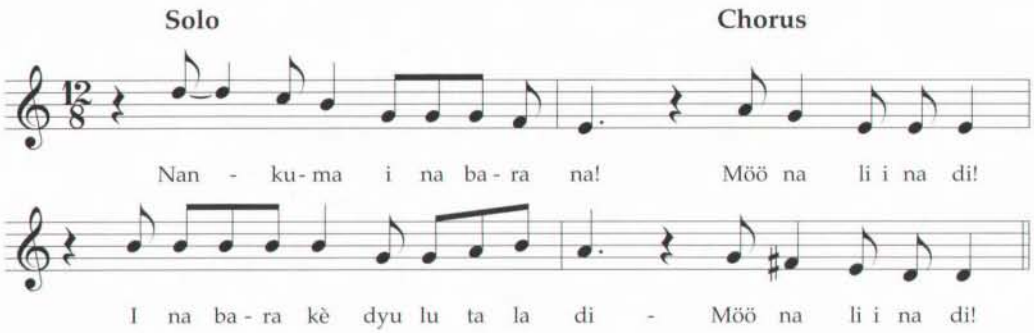
Somba Körö (Dyidanba)

The Woman Thief

Nankuma is the name of a boy. The subject of this song is that a person's mother – in this case Nankumsa's mother – is irreplaceable, no matter what she looks like or how badly she behaves.

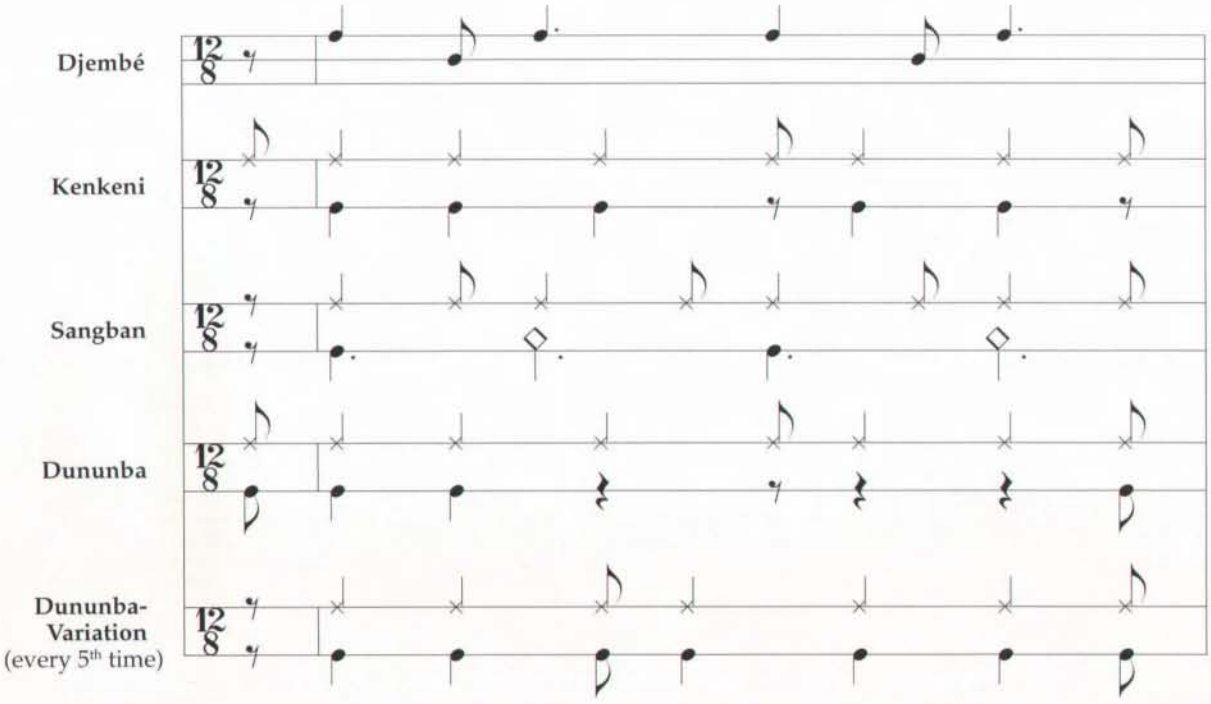
We should all learn from this song to accept our parents as they are.

Nankuma i na bara na!	**Nankuma, your mother has come!**
Möö na li i na di!	**Your mother is always your mother!**
I na bara kè	**Even if your mother**
Dyulu ta la di –	**Has too many debts –**
Möö na li i na di!	**Your mother is always your mother!**
Nankuma i na bara na!	**Nankuma, your mother has come!**
Möö na li i na di!	**Your mother is always your mother!**
I na bara kè	**Even if your mother**
Somba körö di –	**Has become a thief –**
Möö na li i na di!	**Your mother is always your mother!**
Nankuma i na bara na!	**Nankuma, your mother has come!**
Möö na li i na di!	**Your mother is always your mother!**
I na bara kè	**Even if your mother**
Dyalan ba körö di –	**Has become a prostitute –**
Möö na li i na di!	**Your mother is always your mother!**
Nankuma i na bara na!	**Nankuma, your mother has come!**
Möö na li i na di!	**Your mother is always your mother!**
I na bara kè	**Even if your mother**
Somba körö di –	**Has become a thief –**
Möö na li i na di!	**Your mother is always your mother!**

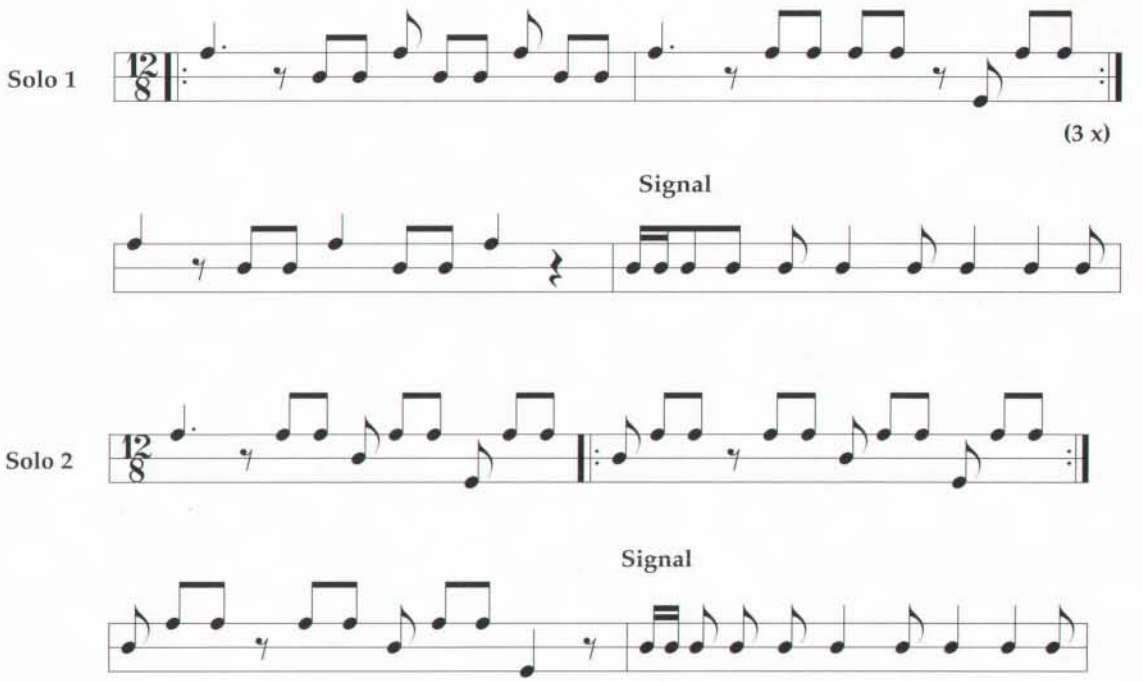


Signal

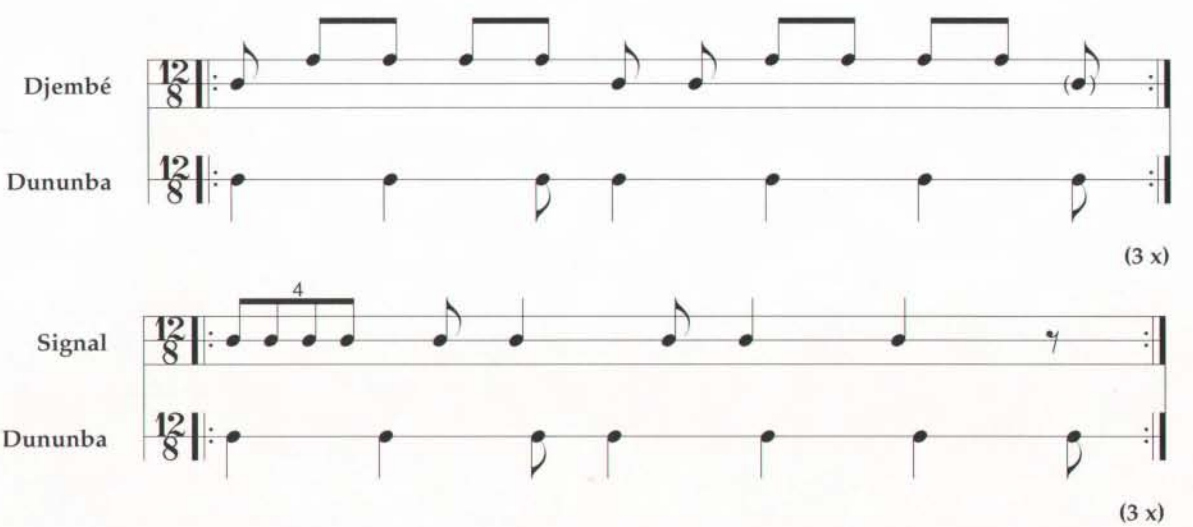
Accompanying Patterns



Solo Patterns



Échauffement



Information

Famoudou Konaté: "The rhythm Dyidanba is traditional among the Malinké. It is played on many occasions and is not restricted to particular ceremonies. For this reason the songs that can be sung to this rhythm are exchangeable.

The text of the song SOMBA KÖRÖ speaks of the relationship between mother and child and therefore has a certain bearing on weddings, baptisms, and initiation festivities. Like some of the others, this song is very old. I knew it as a child, but forgot it when, as a young man, I left my native village of Sangbarala. When I heard it there again two years ago, sung by old women, it awakened many memories in me and I was very moved."

Mohamed Kandé says, concerning the significance of traditional songs in African cultures: "Songs like SOMBA KÖRÖ are often sung. They are familiar to the children, who grow up with them without really giving them second thoughts. There comes a time when one is profoundly touched and upset by some experience – and suddenly a certain song that has to do with that situation acquires existential significance and is a great help. This function of songs is deeply embedded in our African culture. When my sister had lost her child due to some wrong medication that was given, she heard a song of Salif Keita's in which he sang, in essence: 'A person does not belong to himself, he is here due to God, and God decides when he shall die.' In her despair, she absolutely wanted to have this song and listened to it over and over again. Every song contains a certain philosophy which can become a true life support. When one is near a collapse, a song can impart the strength to stand straight again."

Special Details

The rhythm is based on a time line pattern that is played by the kenkeni and dununba. (Please be sure to refer here to the information on Omele and Dyidanba, p.45: Time line Patterns, under "African Rhythm". For working out a bass-drum pattern, see p.56: Working out Double Patterns.)

Time line patterns can be quite a special experience if they are built up systematically to the beat and then played for a while to the motion of one's own body.

Scheme for Practice

Clapping / Claves:	x			x			x			x	x			x			x	
Spoken:	**DA**	BO	**LA**		DA	**BO**	LA		**DA**	**BO**	LA		**DA**	BO	**LA**	
Spoken later:	gun		gun												gu	
Feet:	O				O				O				O			

Procedure

1. Speak slowly the syllables "DA BO LA ..." to the beat.
2. Build up the pattern step by step – with many repetitions at each level!
3. When the pattern is stable: speak along with it the syllables "gu gun gung" (or similar syllables that imitate the sound of the dununba).
4. Work in the same way with the drumhead pattern of the kenkeni (e.g., on "ta").
5. Form two groups for the kenkeni and the dununba and speak the patterns simultaneously. This is not easy – the patterns seem like two completely different figures!
6. Add the pattern for the sangban.
7. Now apply what has been learned in steps 1 through 6 to the playing of suitable instruments. These exercises should be carried out slowly – much more slowly than in the recording (!) – upper limit: O = metronome 40.

The Song

Of all the songs documented here, the Nankuma song seems at first glance the most foreign musically. Only slowly do we realize that it is also built up very regularly, in keeping with our principles of form. The phrases, though, do not coincide with the beginning of the "measures". It has been our experience that groups that have learned it have enjoyed singing it.

Practicing: With the beat clapped or walked, build up gradually in small sections and call / response alternation: "Nan-ku-ma / Nan-ku-ma i na / Nan-ku-ma i na bara na" etc. While practicing, put special emphasis on the beat immediately preceding the phrases of the song.

A Simple Accompaniment

The sangban bell figure (maracas, caxixi, cow bell, or similar instruments – see p.76, Accompanying Patterns); at the same time the beat: alternate g (low) and d (higher) on deep bass chime bars, or on deeper and higher timpani; at the same time (if it has been mastered), the time line pattern (kenkeni or dununba bell-figure, see p.76: Accompanying Patterns) on claves.

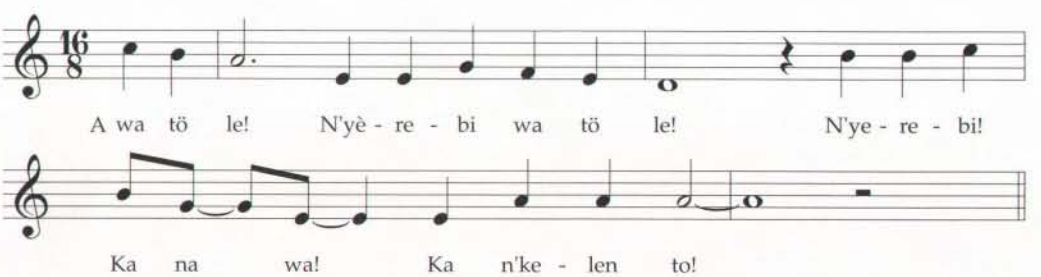
N'Yèrèbi
My Dearest

 4

A man and woman are in love. Due to social reasons not mentioned, they cannot marry. One day the woman marries another man who lives somewhere else. When she leaves the village, her former love sings despairingly the following song:

A wa tö le! N'yèrèbi wa tö le!
N'yèrèbi! Ka na wa! Ka n'kelen to!

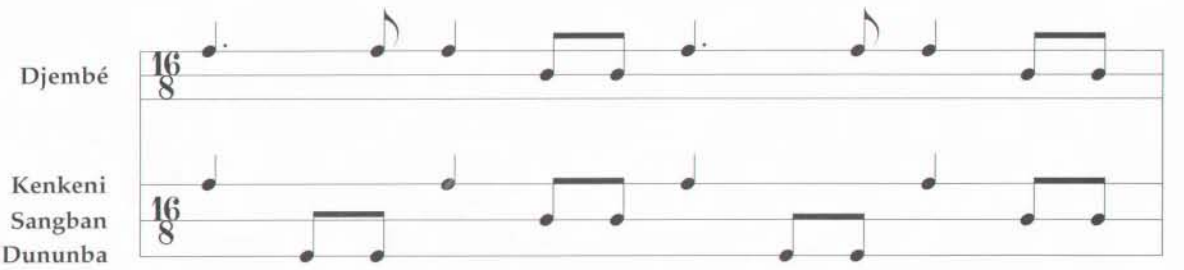
She will go away! My dearest will go away!
My dearest, don't go! Don't leave me alone!



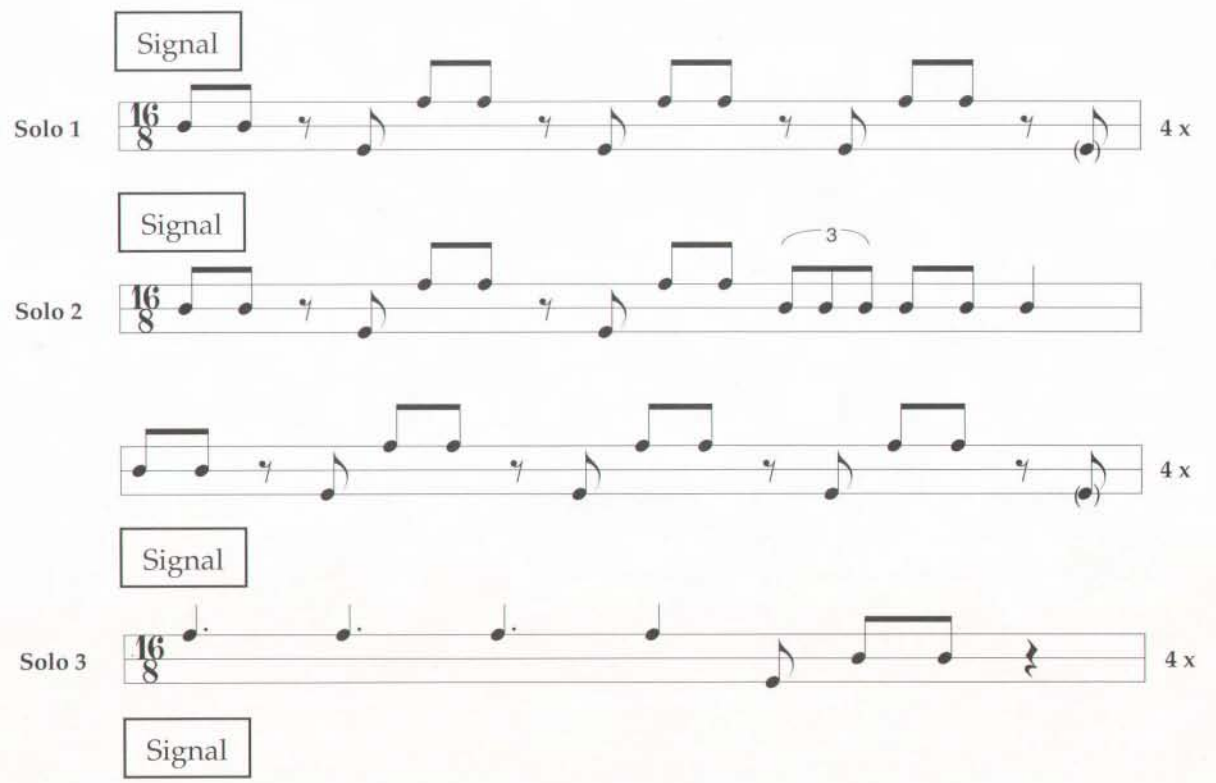
Pronunciation:
A wa: a as in "far"; tö: o as in "soft"; N'yèrèby: e as in "yes".

Signal

Accompanying Patterns

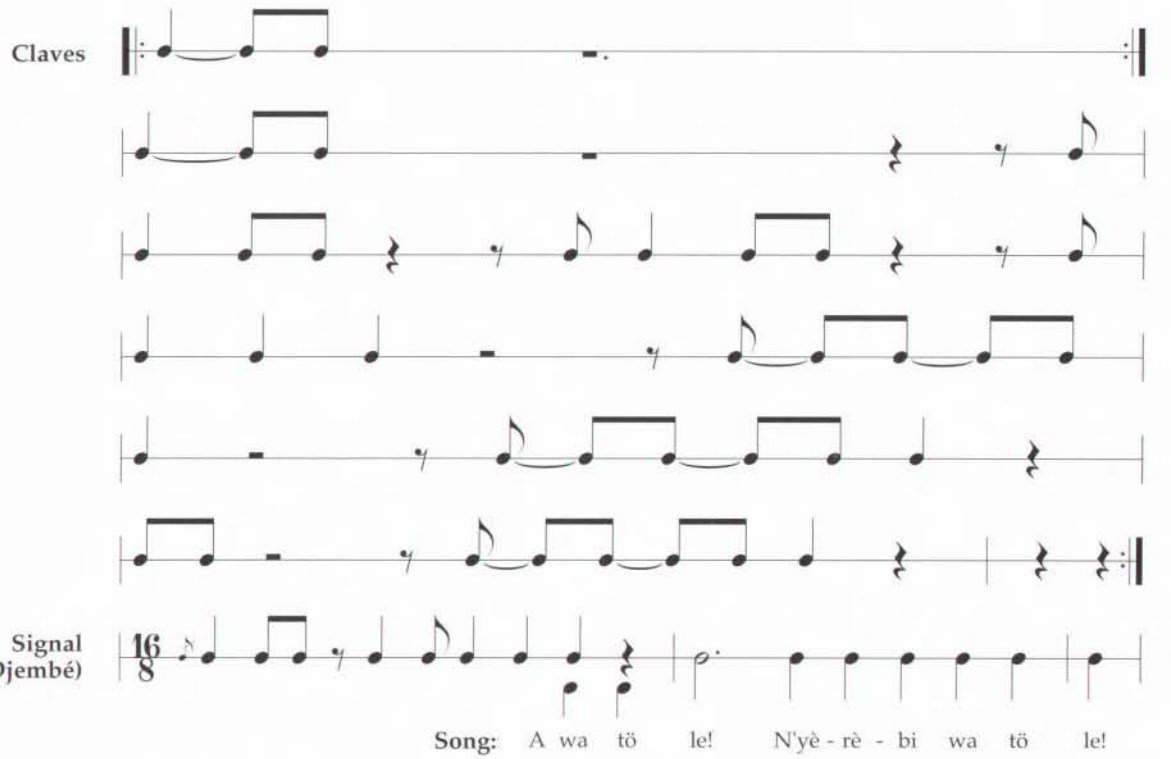


Solo Patterns



Prelude and Interlude (3 rounds)

the 1st round: repeat the first line 3 times
the 2nd and 3rd rounds: do not repeat the first line



After the 3rd round, beginning with the signal, the claves play regular fourths (until the end of the song).

Information

Famoudou Konaté:

"This song goes back to an old Malinké custom. At an appointed time, a Malinké child is assigned by his or her father a permanent friend, a girl for a son, and a boy for a daughter. They don't live together like a married couple, but they spend a lot of time with each other, sometimes the night, too – whereby sexual contact is forbidden. When the girl marries, she does not go right away to her husband, but stays with her parents and her childhood friend – sometimes for several years. Once a year her husband brings presents to her and her parents. One day the elders of the village decide when the daughter should be taken to her husband. When that time comes – always on a Wednesday – her friend takes grievous leave of her. Then the griot, substituting for the young man, sings the song N'yèrèbi."

It is sung to the traditional Diagba rhythm. Famoudou Konaté has changed the song slightly (because of his pleasure in experimenting, as he puts it) and developed a new rhythm arrangement, with a prelude and interlude, that is played on claves.

Special Details

- In contrast to the usual practice, only one musician plays the bass drums. The kenkeni is upright – the player hits the drumhead from above with the stick in his left hand. The sangban and dununba are attached one above the other and propped against a chair. They are played alternately with the right-hand stick. Depending on his condition, the drummer can also play a double beat on the kenkeni. The parts for the bass drums may of course be divided up, but this will not make it easier to play them, as the motor points of reference for each player will be missing.
- In the prelude and interlude there is a deviation from the 16-cycle which is otherwise adhered to throughout. The sixth line, the last, is lengthened by four pulses (notated here as two fourth rests). Famoudou Konaté introduced this extension to obtain a special effect. Namely, the beginning of the next cycle comes at a different place in the accompaniment pattern of the djembé and bass drums (four pulses further on!), which makes all the figures seem "reversed". The signal and the song, too, both begin at this new starting-point.
- The rhythm has no échauffement.

Working out the Prelude and Interlude

In principle like the prelude and interlude in Lolo, but without melodizing the spoken syllables (use here "ga – ga"). It is best to work out the individual figures first, using the call/response alternation:

1. the figure from cycle 1
2. then the figure from cycle 3
3. then the figure from cycle 4/5 (important here: always accentuate with the foot the beat directly before the figure!)
4. then – with the same flow of the music – an interchange of the three figures in whatever order, and finally the combination of the figures in their original formation.

Because of the four pulses inserted at the end of the sixth cycle, the second round begins on the left foot, the third on the right again, etc.

A simple accompaniment to the song

Pulsation: rattles (caxixi, maracas, etc.).

Clapping pattern: The first figure from the prelude and interlude works well for this, beginning on "le" (twice), on "ka" and after "to". In order to find the offbeat of the pattern precisely, it is important to walk to the song in the beat measure. The pattern can also be played on claves.

A simple version of the *accompaniment figure of the bass drum* can easily be played on a conga or djembé: kenkeni (the left-hand fingertips on the edge of the drum), sangban (open or tom beat), dununba (bass beat).

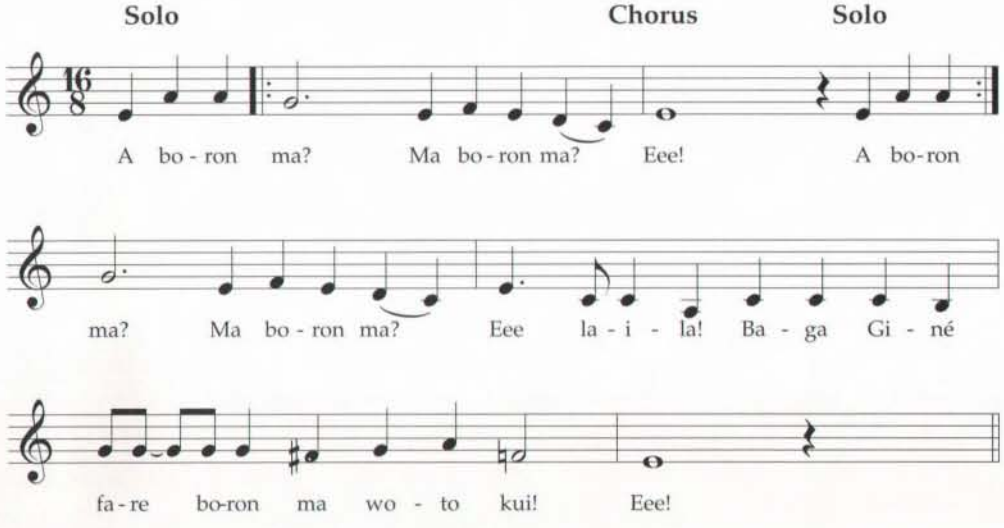
One of the two double beats (or both) can also be played as simple fourths. If a second conga plays the djembé rhythm to it, then the double beat of the sangban on the first drum can be omitted.

Baga Giné

The Baga Woman

This is a song in the Susu language. The Baga are an ethnic group in northwest Guinea. A Baga woman hears music. At first she doesn't want to dance. But soon she can't stand it any more – the music is so good that she just simply has to dance.

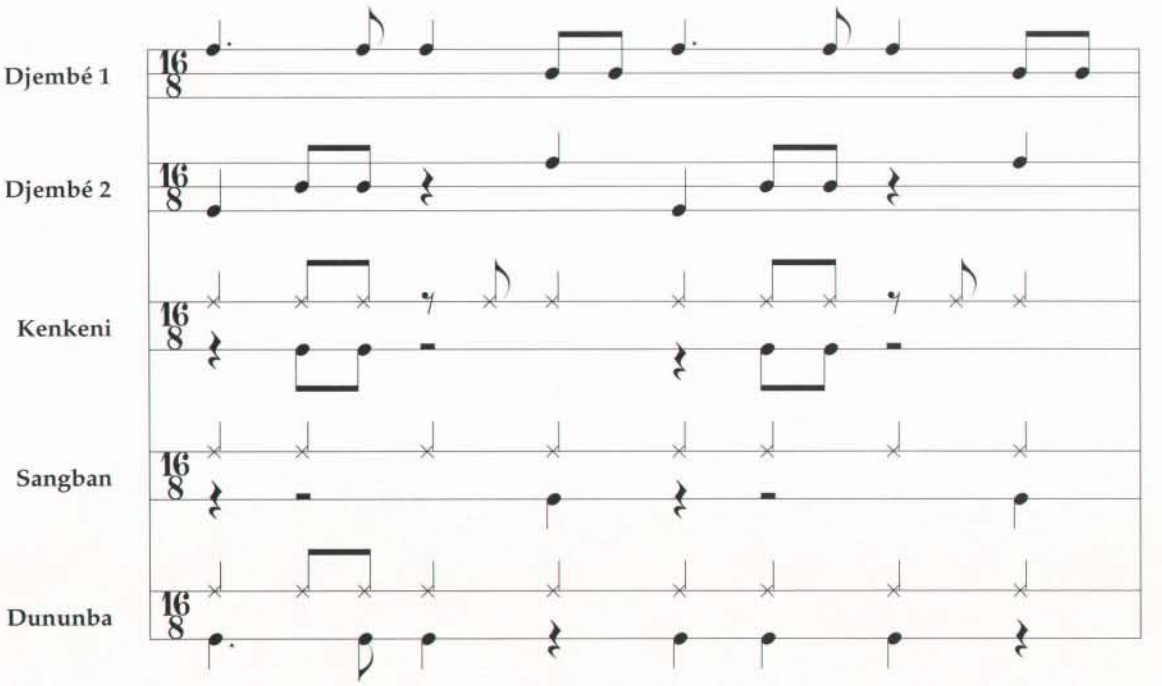
A boron ma?	**Does she dance the dance?**
Ma boron ma?	**Or does she not dance the dance?**
Eee!	**Hey!**
A boron ma?	**Does she dance the dance?**
Ma boron ma?	**Or does she not dance the dance?**
Eee!	**Hey!**
A boron ma?	**Does she dance the dance?**
Ma boron ma?	**Or does she not dance the dance?**
E laila! Baga Giné	**Can you believe it! The Baga woman**
Faré boron ma woto kui!	**Even dances in the car!**
Eee!	**Hey!**



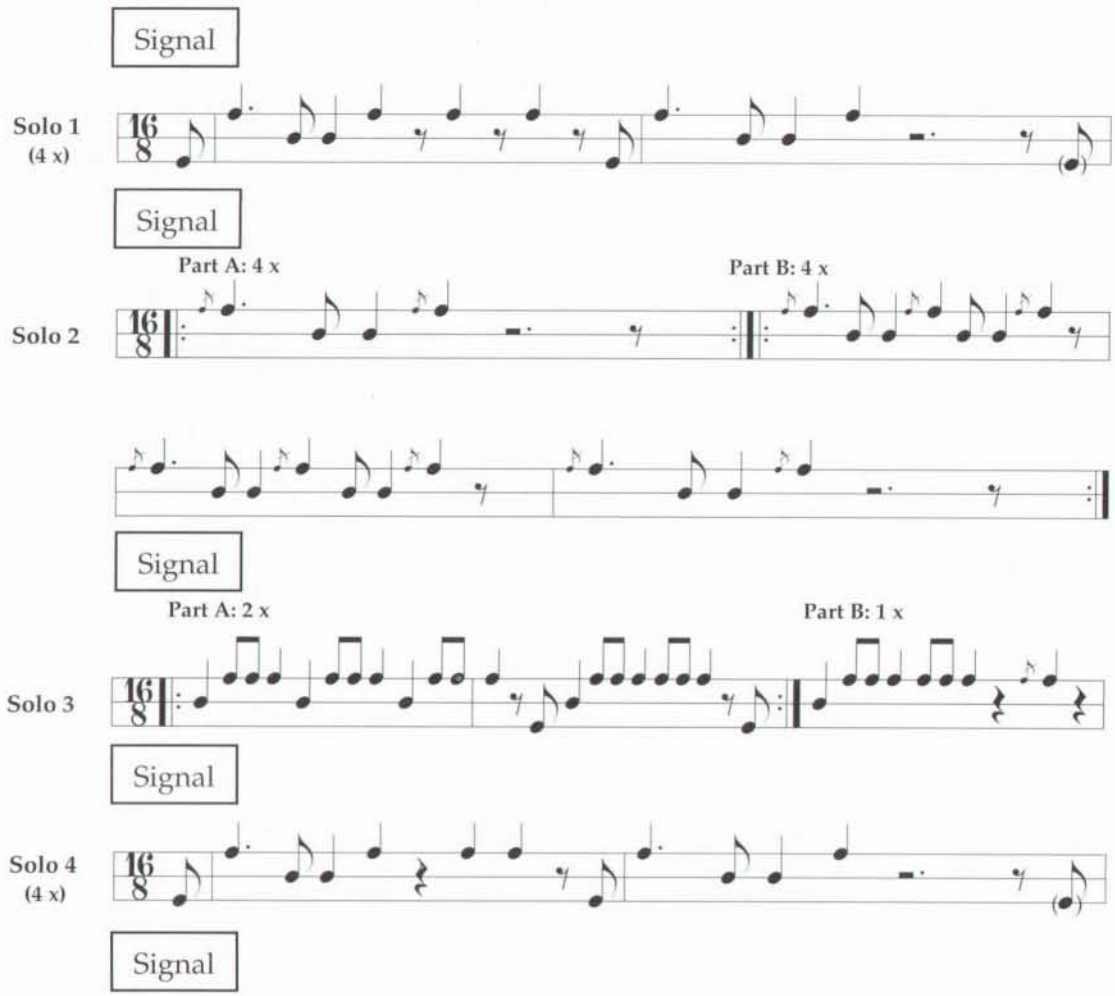
Pronunciation:
A boron ma: "A boroma" (a as in "far"); Eee, Giné, Faré: e as in French "pré"; Faré: a as in "far"

Signal

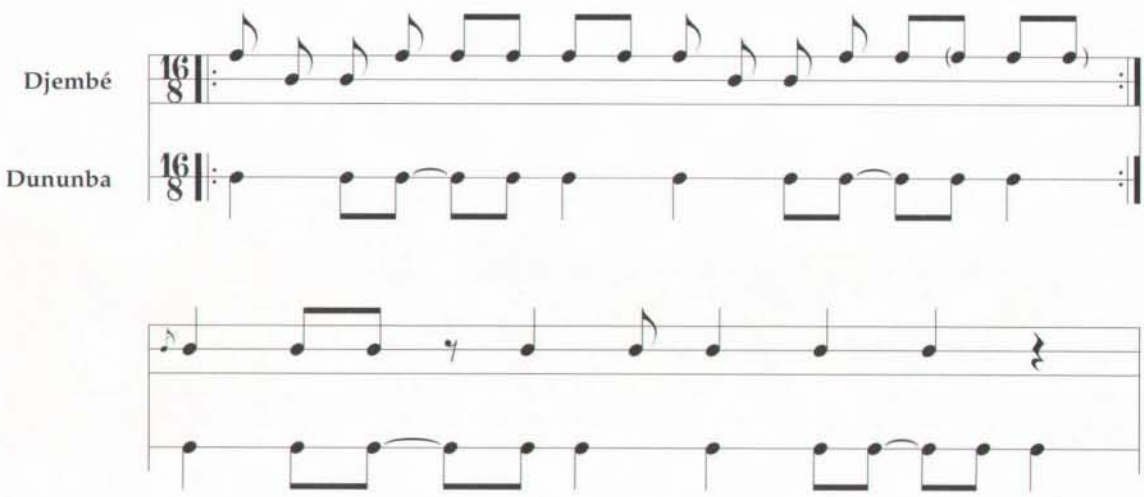
Accompanying Patterns



Solo Patterns



Échauffement



Information

The song and the rhythm are from the Susu, the third largest ethnic group in Guinea after the Fulani and the Malinké. The song is a sort of African "hit", and what Famoudou Konaté said about Lolo (see p.68) is true also for Baga Giné. He has fairly faithfully taken over the song and the rhythm of the Susu version. He has only, as he says, put "a bit of dynamics" into it.

Working out the Song

In a call / response alternation, walk or clap the beat. Proceed by sections or motifs, e.g.:

Teacher	*Students*
"Eee lai-la"	"Eee lai-la"
"baga giné"	"baga giné"
"fa-re bo-ron ma"	"fa-re bo-ron ma"
etc.	etc.

Repeat and combine the motifs often with the flow of the music until the right sequence "sits". It would be good if already during this working-out process the leader could play a drum pattern (very suitable for this purpose: the djembé 2 pattern on a conga).

Accompaniment to the Song

Simple:

- *Pulsation*: maracas, caxixi, etc.
- *Clap*: the beat, offbeat, or the pattern  at the beginning of each cycle.

Additional (building up an arrangement):

- The *drumhead patterns* of the dununba and sangban, played by one or two players on timpani or deep bass chime bars (dununba: low C / sangban: higher G).
- The *bell pattern* of the kenkeni (claves, etc.).
- The *double beats* of djembé 2 and the kenkeni on the 2nd and 6th fourths (conga; perhaps play the whole pattern of djembé 2).

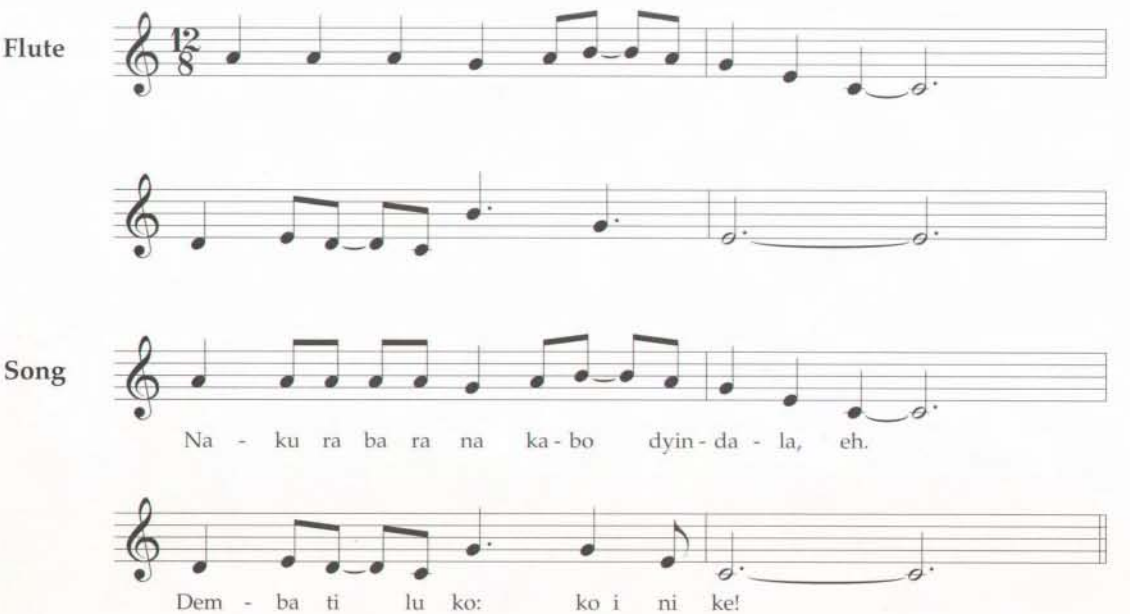
Kéné Foli

6

A circumcision is preceded by a ceremony that begins the previous evening and lasts until morning the day of the circumcision. In the afternoon the boys are led to the circumcision site outside the village. After the ceremony the circumciser and the boys are greeted by their parents and the village elders with this song. Sacrifices are made for the boys so that their wounds will heal quickly and not be made worse by evil spirits. The circumciser is given cola nuts, money, rice, manioc, fonio, or other gifts as symbolic signs of recognition.

Nakura bara na kabo dyinda la, eh.
Demba ti lu ko:
"Ko i niké!"

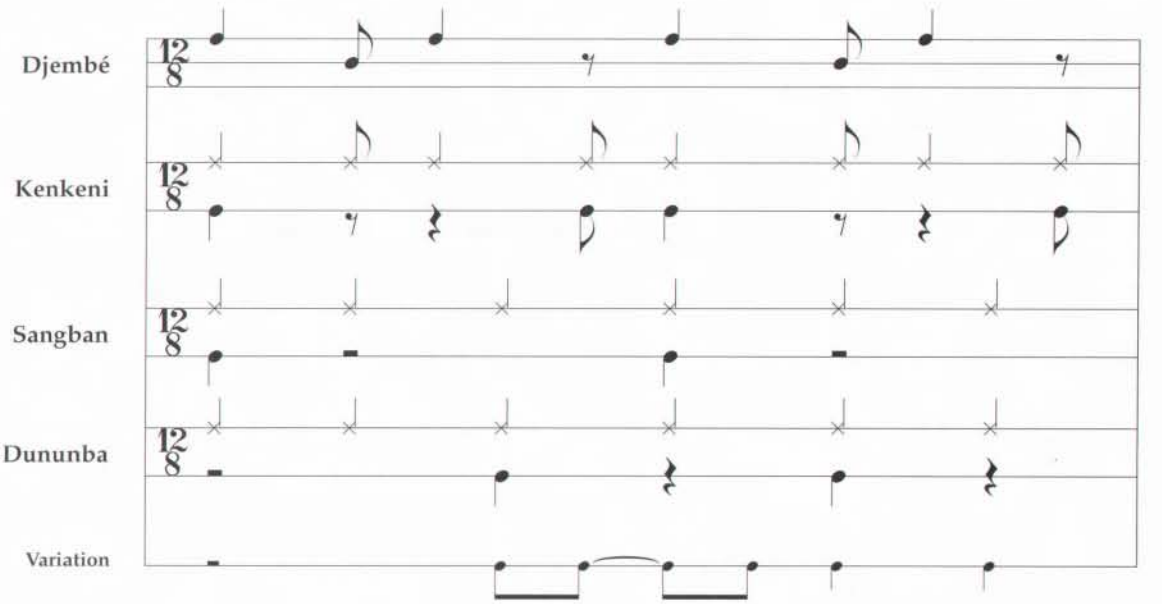
Nakura has returned from the circumcision site.
His parents say,
"Greetings to you!"



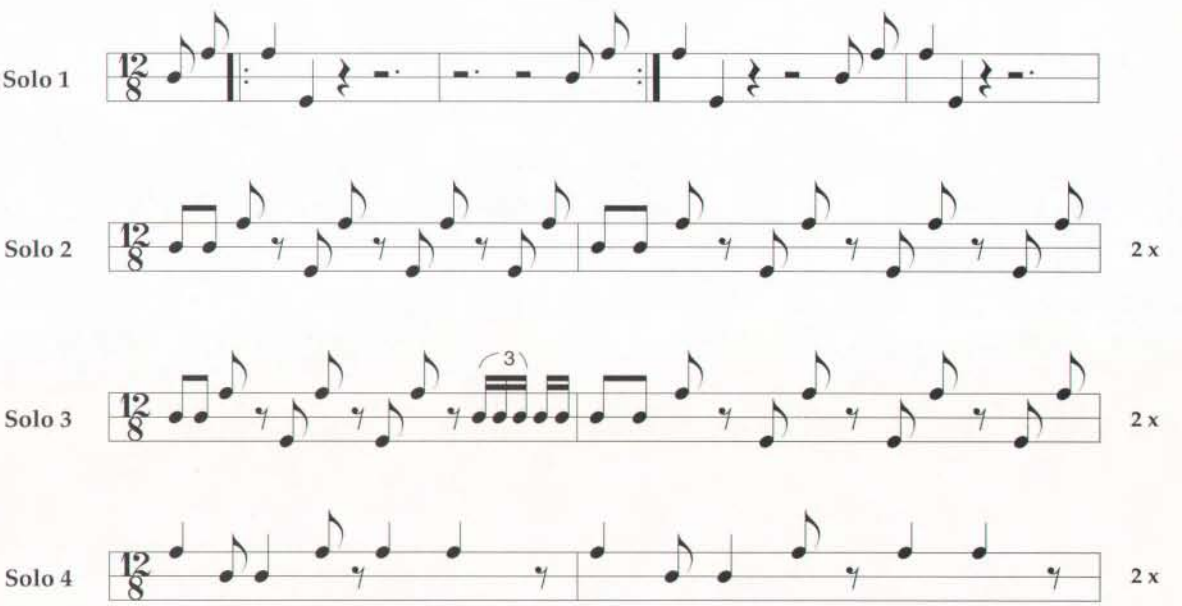
Pronunciation:
Ko i niké: o as in French "beau"; i: as in "be"; niké: "nekay" (e as in French "pré").

Signal

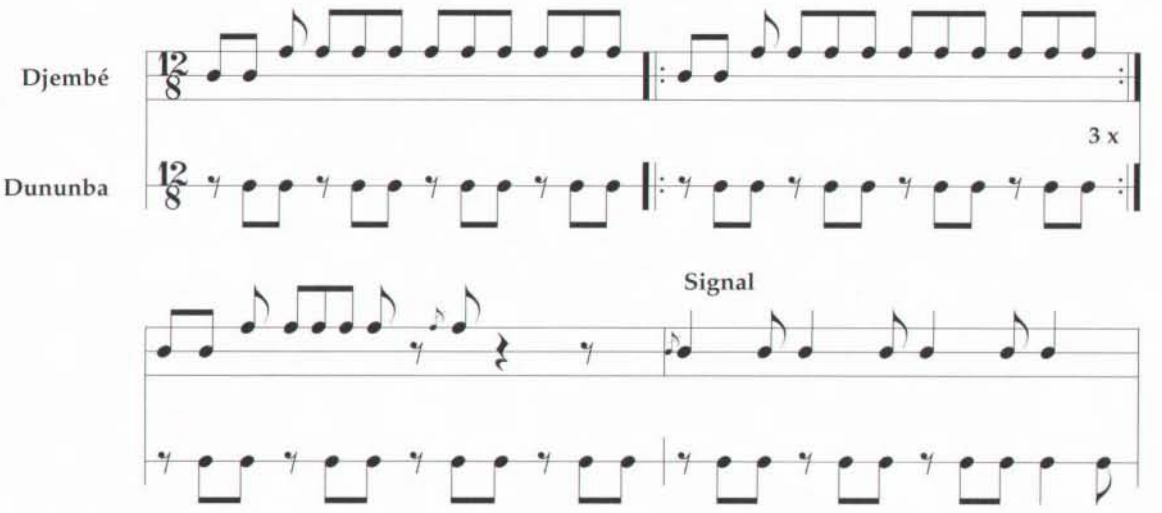
Accompanying Patterns



Solo Patterns



Échauffement



Information

KÉNÉ FOLI is a traditional Malinké piece; the rhythm and the song are very old. The song refers to a particular situation during the initiation ceremonies – of which the circumcision is the focal point. In his excellent book "Amkoullel, l'enfant peul" (see bibliography), the Mali author and philosopher Amadou Hampâté Bâ gives a detailed report of such circumcision ceremonies for boys in West Africa (p. 279 ff., *Circoncision de mon frère Hammadoun (My Brother Hammadoun's Circumcision)*. Probably this music was originally used also on the occasion of girls' circumcisions, a custom still practiced in many parts of Africa, but recently more and more criticized and fought against. In some countries (France, the USA), it can now be considered a valid reason for asylum if a woman or her children are threatened by it. In the final document of the Worldwide Women's Conference in Peking in 1995, the African delegates added their votes to the condemnation of this practice. The opposition to it is growing within Africa. Famoudou Konaté, who himself has four daughters, is strictly against it and has forbidden it in his family. The problem was dealt with by Hanny Lightfoot-Klein in her book: *Prisoners of Ritual. An Odyssey into Female Circumcision in Africa.* © 1989, Harrington Park Press. 10 Alice St., Binghampton, N.Y. 13094-1580. ISBN 0-918393-68-X.

Special Details

- What is special about this rhythm is its "polymetric" structure. Please refer in this connection to "Polymeter", etc., in the chapter "African Rhythm" (p.42).
- Re the recording: In the two solo phases (after the song) Famoudou Konaté does not play in sequence the solo patterns printed here, but brings them into his improvisations. In the first solo phase he uses, among other patterns, solo patterns 1-3. Solo pattern 4 can be heard toward the end of the second solo phase. The échauffement is written here the way it is heard the second time (at the end).

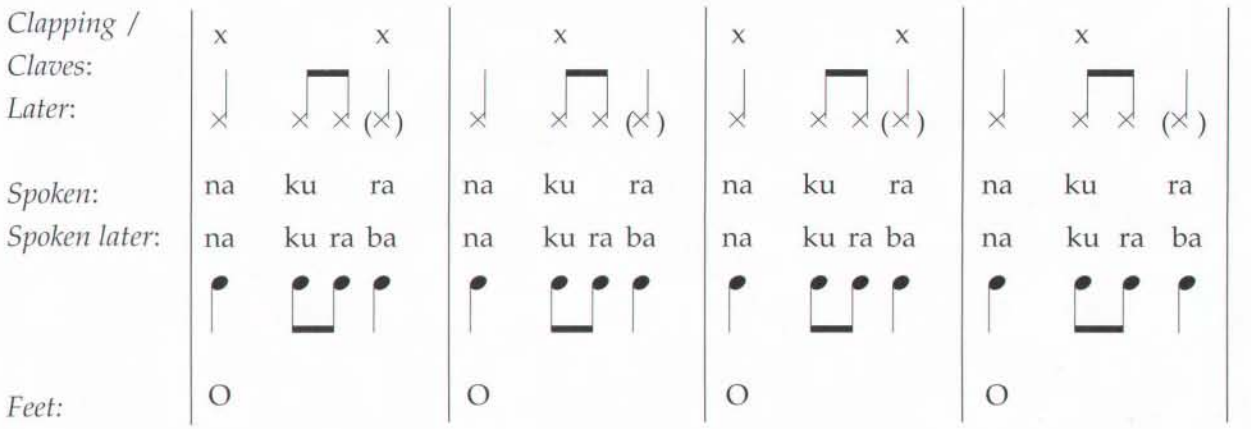
Working out the "Polymeter" of the Accompanying Instruments

We must be aware of the various metric levels simultaneously and in the way they function together. To achieve this, we use our whole body – clapping, walking and speaking – to work them out.

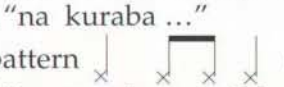
For the two exercises which now follow, one should allow plenty of time for every phase. Especially when a pattern has finally stabilized and grooves, it should not be interrupted. It is only after a while that structures of this kind have their effect; when this happens, one should take time to enjoy it.

1. Working on two levels: (1) sangban / (2) kenkeni and djembé

Working Scheme



Procedure

1. Walk very calmly (at the most, O = metronome 40); at the same time, say "na ku ra …"
2. Add the clapped sangban bell pattern step by step. Always accentuate the syllable falling on the clapped beats of the pattern, e.g.: "**na** ku **ra** na **ku** ra …" With each newly added beat, repeat the cycle several times. When the sequence is complete, stay with it for a while.
3. While walking in the beat measure, speak in call / response interchange: from cycle to cycle say alternately "na ku ra …" and "na kuraba …"
4. As in 3; at "na kuraba", play the pattern  on claves.
5. As in 4, but leave out the last beat (in parentheses) of the pattern.
6. As in 5; in speaking, switch more often between "na ku ra …" and "na kuraba …" and play the pattern through. Finally say only "na ku ra …" while playing the pattern.

2. Working on three levels: (1) dununba (2) sangban (3) kenkeni / djembé

This exercise depends on having done the previous one (working on two levels).

Working Scheme

Clapping / Claves:			x		x			x			x	
Spoken:	na	ku	ra	na	ku	ra	na	ku	ra	na	ku	ra
Spoken later:	na	kura	ba	na	kura	ba	na	kura	ba	na	kura	ba
Feet:	O			O			O			O		

Procedure

1. Walk very calmly (upper limit: O = metronome 40), say at the same time "na ku ra ..."
2. Add the clapped dununba bell pattern step by step. Always accentuate the syllable falling on the clapped beats of the pattern: "na ku **ra** na **ku** ra ..." With each newly added beat, repeat the cycle several times. When the sequence is complete, stay with it for a while.
3. Call / response interchange – from cycle to cycle say alternately "na ku ra ..." and "na kuraba ..." Have the accentuation of the spoken syllables "na kuraba" correspond to the clapped pattern: "na kura**ba** na **ku**raba ..."
4. As in 3, but "swallow" the last syllable "ba" each time, and accentuate somewhat the syllable "ra" each time. Stay with this version for a while.

After this exercise, remain very calm, in a relaxed sitting or reclining position, and listen to the recording (track 6). It is now possible to hear and internalize the different time schemes.

Working out the Song

The first part of the melody fits the time scheme of the dununba. To build it up step by step, motif by motif, we go into the following pattern:

Clapping / Claves:			x			x			x			x				
Spoken:	na	ku	ra	na	ku	ra	na	ku	ra	na	ku	ra				
Feet:	O			O			O			O						

While walking and clapping the melody and text are built up in a call / response alternation (first speaking, then singing). Meanwhile, return from time to time to "na ku ra ...", return repeatedly to "na ku ra ..."

The second part of the melody has to be worked out separately; rhythmically it follows the kenkeni and djembé patterns, but has the same beat as the first part. It is best to simply walk to the beat in working it out.

Put the two parts together: alternation of part 1 (walk and clap, as above) and part 2 (only walk). At first in call / response alternation (teacher part 1 / students part 1 / teacher part 2 / students part 2), then in direct alternation (teacher part 1 / students part 2).

Kuku

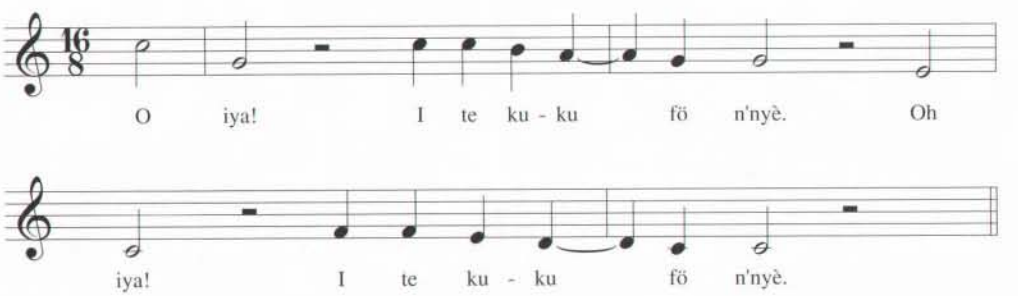
7

The rhythm KUKU comes from Beyla, a city in Guinea in which the Malinké dialect Konyakan is spoken, but we now find this song throughout the whole Malinké region. There are nowadays several ways of playing it. It is often played in the evening. Men and women come to the musicians and ask them to play Kuku, saying it would make them happy. They dance to the music, forget their cares, and then return home with a light heart.

Famoudou Konaté tells us that the "original version" of KUKU had no bass drum accompaniment. What was typical and musically decisive was the rhythmic figure played by the first accompanying djembé in the version illustrated here. This accompanying rhythm was adapted to the bass drums in a very particular manner, and out of this adaptation resulted the manner in which KUKU is customarily played today.

Famoudou Konaté one day found KUKU in this usual version somewhat outworn and trivial and therefore composed a new bass melody. The Kuku song and text, too, are his. However, the solo figures are, as he puts it, "authentic KUKU".

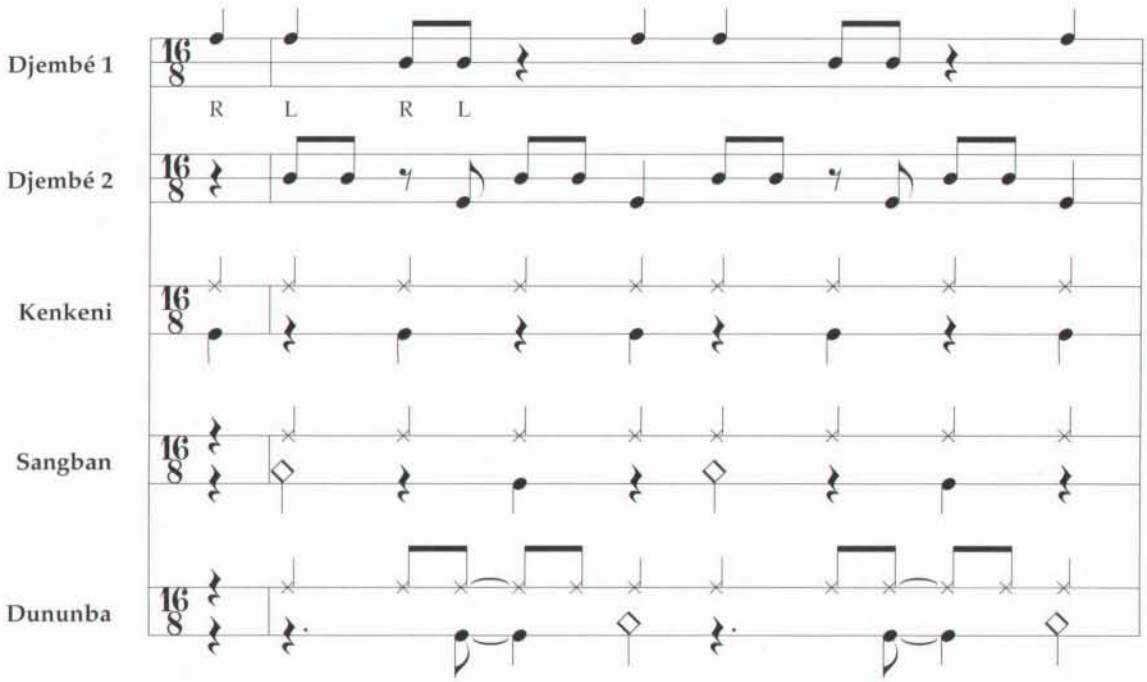
Oh iya!	**Oh yeah!**
I te kuku fö n'nyè.	**Play Kuku for me.**
Oh iya!	**Oh yeah!**
I te kuku fö n'nyè.	**Play Kuku for me.**



Pronunciation:
Oh iya: "O ya"
fö n'nyè: "fonyeh" (o as in "soft", nyè: e as in "yes")

Signal

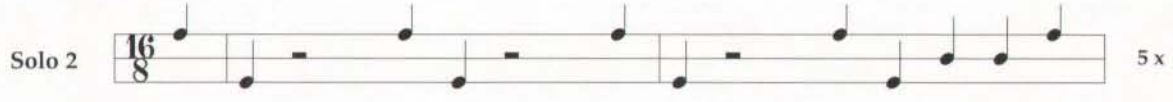
Accompanying Patterns



Solo Patterns

Signal

Signal



Signal

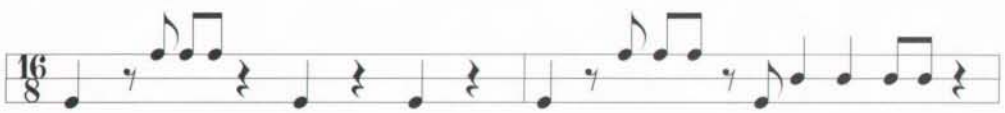
Solo 3

3 x

= Hand remains on drumhead after beat

Signal

Solo 4



4 x

Signal

Solo 5

4 x

Signal

Solo 6

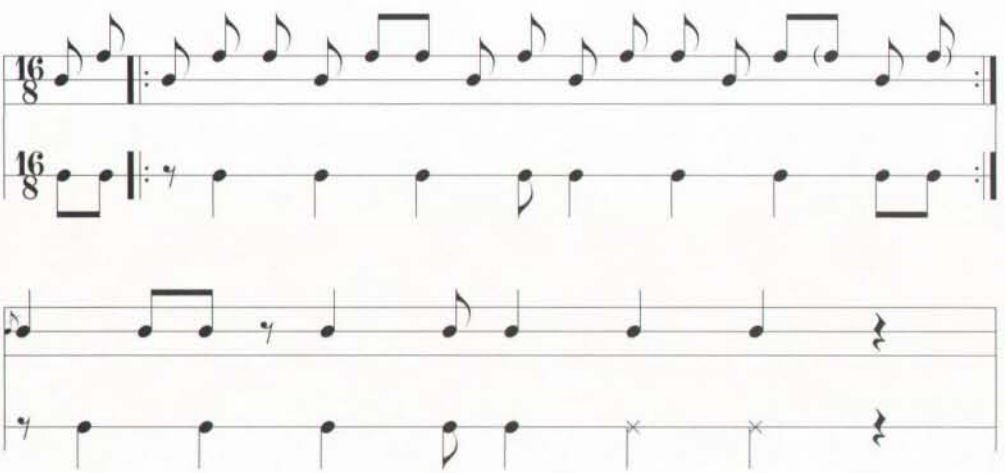
4 x

Signal

Échauffement

Djembé

Dununba



Simplified Arrangement

The drumhead figures of the three bass drums are decisive for the drive in Kuku. It is important that the offbeat stroke of the dununba before the 3rd and 7th fourths be played with the utmost precision. As this offbeat is simultaneous with the 2nd eighth of the double beat of djembé 1, and as djembé 1's pattern is relatively easy to master, this can be a starting point for working on the song. We work on the pattern slowly and reflectively, so that we can finally play it as precisely as possible. We go through it as we did with the djembé pattern 2 on p. 55 (in the chapter "On Methods", "Additional Exercises on Patterns from Malinké Rhythms"): that pattern is modified here only in the spoken syllables and the melody:

Clapping /															
Claves:	x		x	x			x	x		x	x			x	
Spoken:	gan					gan	gan						gan		
			gi	ti						gi	ti				
Feet:	O				O		O					O			
					accentuate							accentuate			

Then the pattern is played on instruments:

- 1st possibility: Drum with a deep bass tone (timpani, large conga, surdo). The left hand beats the pattern on the edge or plays a bell, the right hand carries out synchronously the bass beat (in the spoken pattern: on "ti").
- 2nd possibility: The pattern of djembé 1 is carried out in the original "handing" on a deep drum (e.g., conga or djembé), whereby the 4th beat (left hand on "ti") is played in the middle of the drumhead as a bass beat.

In addition:

Kenkeni drumhead beat (offbeat series): claves

Sangban drumhead beat: deep bass chime bars (C – G = fundamental tone and fifth of the song KUKU)

Kenkeni bell ("fourths" played throughout): cow bell

Pulsation: rattle (maracas, caxixi)

The Song

The song KUKU is not difficult, but should nevertheless be worked out with precision (walking, clapping), so that the offbeat tones of the melody (on "ku-ku") are rhythmically correct.

Easy accompaniment: pulsation (rattle), with simultaneous clapping on the 1st and 3rd fourths.

More difficult accompaniment: the above arrangement.

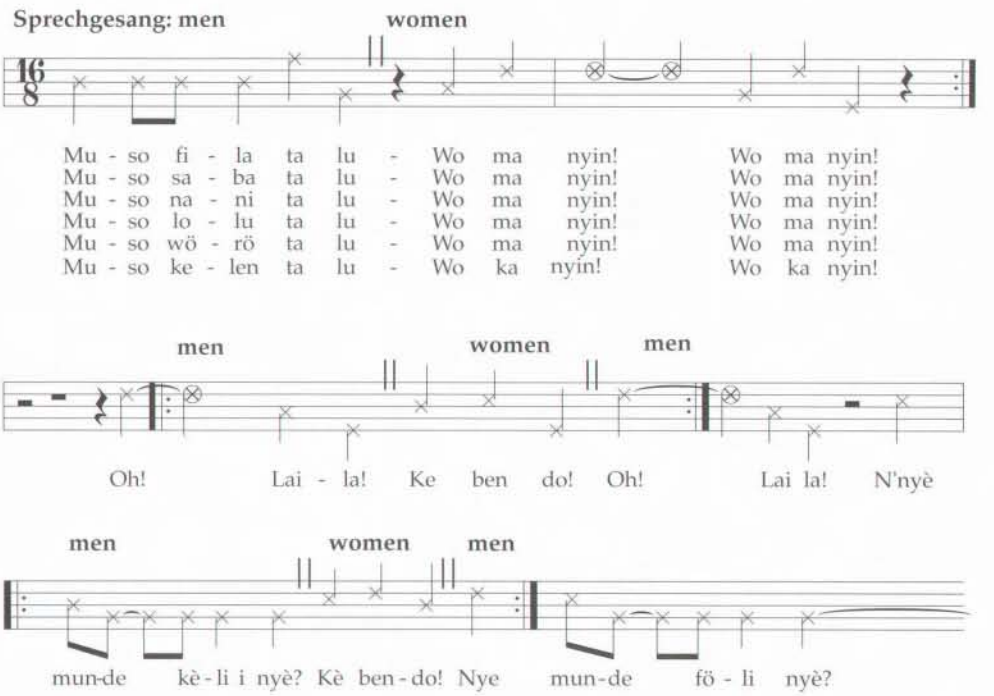
Kè Bendo

 8

Kè Bendo	Men's Association
E! Kè bendo!	Hey! You men! (lit.: men's association)
Oh laila!	Would you believe it!
E! Kè bendo!	Hey! You men!
Oh laila!	Would you believe it!
Kè bendo!	Men!
Oh laila!	Would you believe it!
E! Kè bendo!	Hey! You men!
Oh laila!	Would you believe it!
Kè bendo!	Men!
Oh laila!	Would you believe it!
Muso fila ta lu –	Marry two women –
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Muso saba ta lu –	Marry three women –
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Muso nani ta lu –	Marry four women –
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Muso lolu ta lu –	Marry five women –
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Muso wörö ta lu –	Marry six women –
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Wo ma nyin!	That's not good!
Muso kelen ta lu –	Marry one woman –
Wo ka nyin!	That's good!
Wo ka nyin!	That's good!
Muso kelen ta lu –	Marry one woman –
Wo ka nyin!	That's good!
Wo ka nyin!	That's good!
Muso kelen ta lu –	Marry one woman –

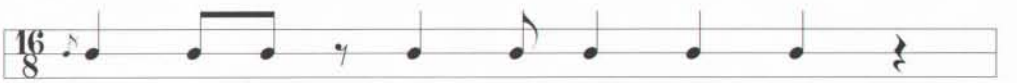
Wo ka nyin!	**That's good!**
Wo ka nyin!	**That's good!**
N'nye mun de kèli-i nyè?	**What shall we do for you?**
Kè bendo!	**Men!**
N'nye mun de föli-i nyè?	**What shall we tell you?**
Kè bendo!	**Men!**
N'nye mun de kèli-i nyè?	**What shall we do for you?**
Kè bendo!	**Men!**
N'nye mun de föli-i nyè?	**What shall we tell you?**

This song against polygamy was originally sung by women from Kissidugu (region of the Kissi, an ethnic group in the forest region of Guinea) as a warning to their husbands. They asked themselves what more they could do to prevent their husbands from taking several wives.

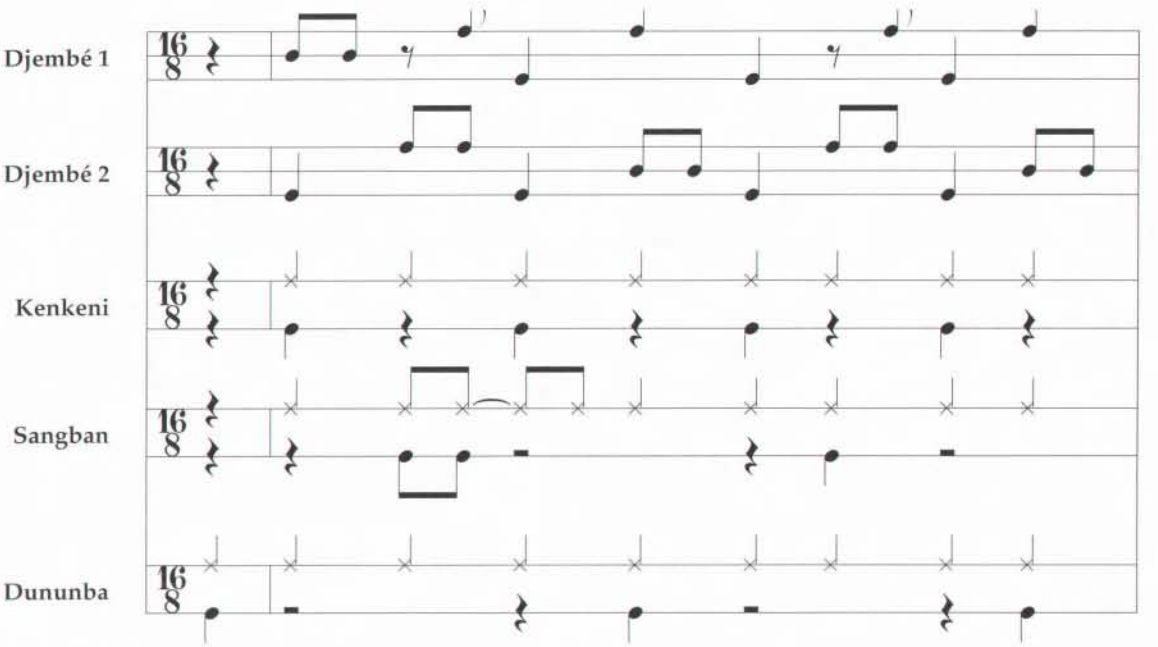


Pronunciation:
Muso: u as in "boot"; o as in French "beau"
fila: i as in "fee"; saba: a as in "far"; lolu: o as in French "beau"; wörö: o as in "soft"

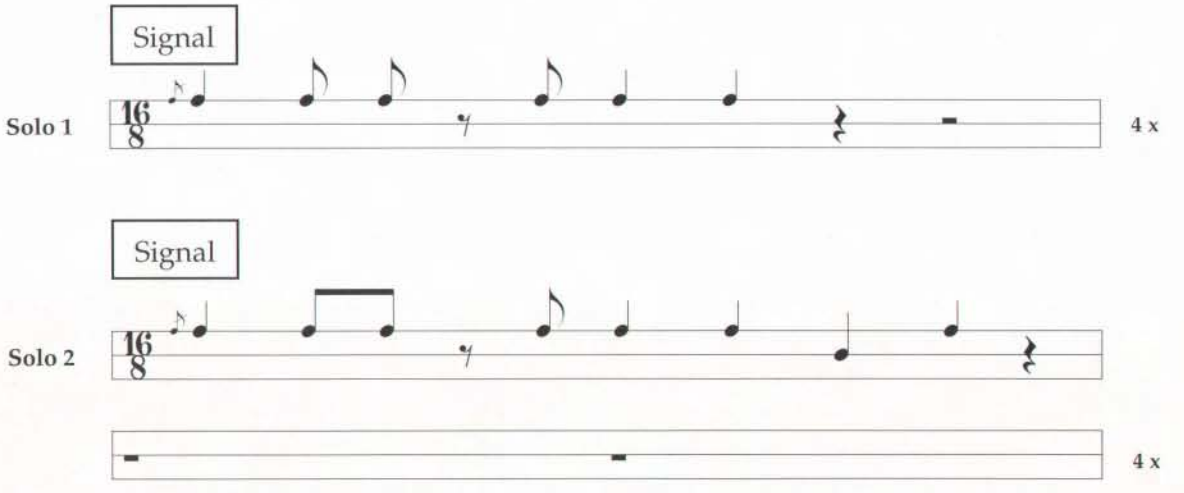
Signal

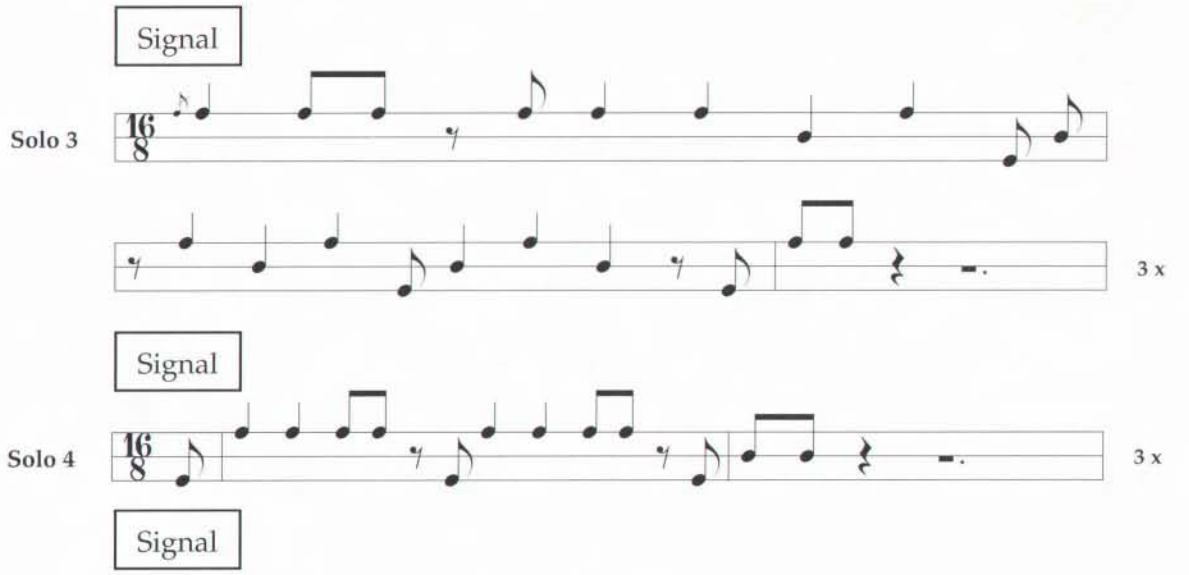


Accompanying Patterns

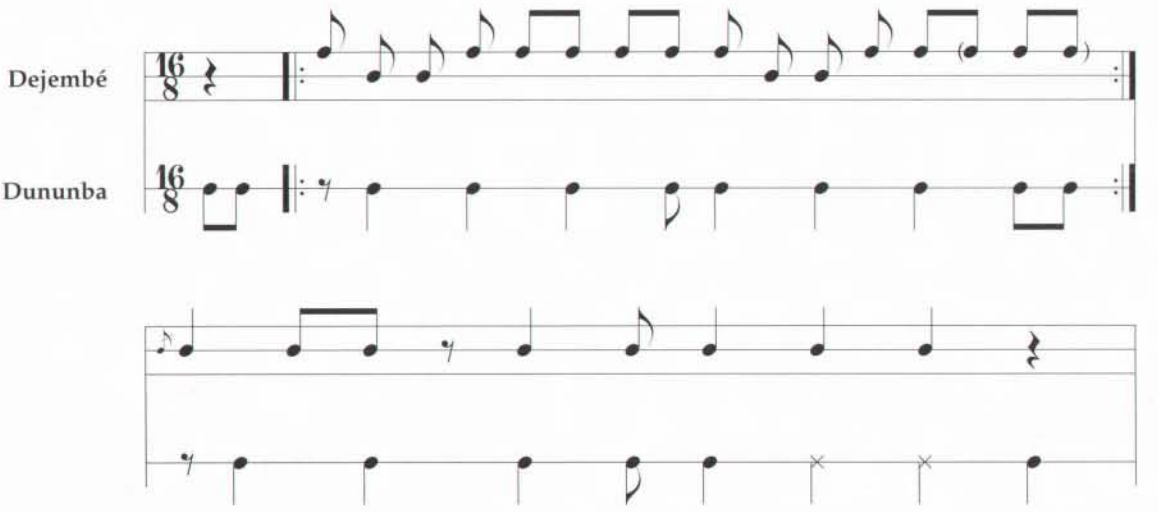


Solo Patterns





Échauffement



Information

This sprechgesang is from the 60's, when women in Guinea first began protesting against polygamy. Islamic and traditional African customs permitted (or under certain circumstances even required) a man to have several wives. Among men for whom it was economically feasible, this was the usual practice throughout West Africa. Sometimes there was a matter of social support involved (e.g., marrying the widow of a relative or friend in order to give her and maybe her children, too, a new family and economic security). Today there is a sharp decline in polygamy.

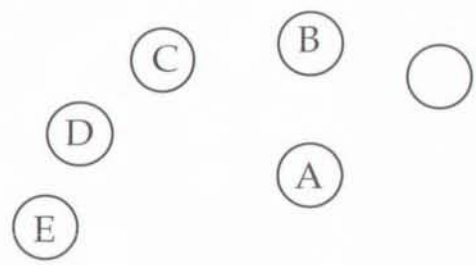
The dictator Sékou Touré tried to encourage the women who at that time rebelled against polygamy. He decreed (with the ulterior motive that the first wife generally would not agree) that the first wife had to give her consent if a man wanted to take a second wife. It was at that time that the KÈ BENDO song became popular.

Originally only the very characteristic rhythm (written here) of the first accompanying djembé was part of the KÈ BENDO song. Famoudou Konaté composed and added all the rest.

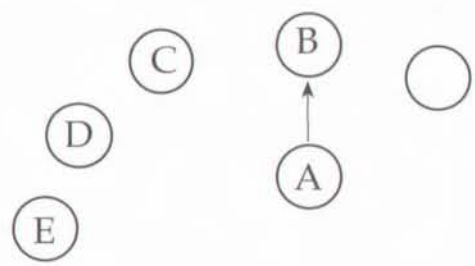
The Song

The song has alternate singing between women and men (the latter either actually men, or women impersonating them). At the "Oh laila!" passage there is a bit of animation in the group as they give to one another a scarf wound loosely around the neck.

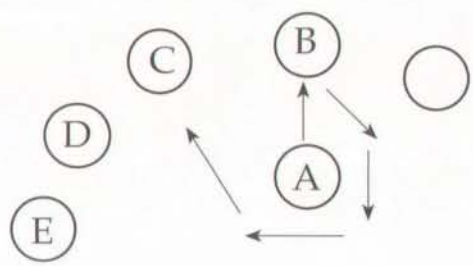
Starting position: The women form a circle. One (A), with the scarf around her neck, stands in the circle facing the next woman (B).



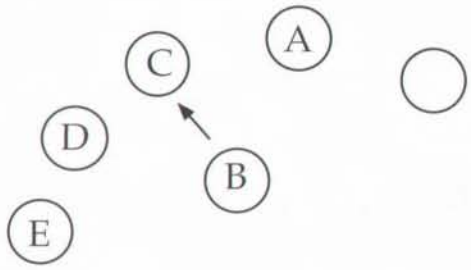
1st to 4th fourths: All (except A) clap to the 1st and 3rd fourths while singing "Oh laila! Kè bendo!". In the meantime A quickly puts the scarf around B's neck.



5th to 8th fourths: All clap to the 5th and 7th fourths while singing "Oh laila! Kè bendo!". B quickly goes around A and stands facing C, while A takes B's former place.



1st to 4th fourths: All (except B) clap to the 1st and 3rd fourths while singing "Oh laila! Kè bendo!". In the meantime B quickly puts the scarf around C's neck, etc.



When practicing the whole song:
Walk to whole notes, while clapping half notes, during the entire practice.

1. Begin with rhythmic speaking of the numbers 1 – 6 in Malinké:
   Leader: "kelen – fila – saba" *Students:* "kelen – fila – saba"
   Leader: "nani – lolu – wörö" *Students:* "nani – lolu – wörö"
2. Practice the text rhythmically in call / response alternation :

   "Mu – so ta lu"
   "Wo ma nyin! Wo ma nyin!"

3. Sing the first part of the song in alternation, with the addition of the Malinké numbers we introduced above (perhaps write them on the blackboard).
4. Practice the second part in call / response alternation.

5. Finally, in sequence: Divide the group into "men" and "woman" and sing the first part of the song with the numbers through to 1 (kelen), repeat the "kelen" phrases several times. During the rest measure before "Oh laila!", form the circle for passing the scarf. When the scarf has been passed clear around the circle once, return to the beginning of the song.

Accompanying the song

Clapping / claves: on the 1st and 3rd fourth of each measure.

Rattles (maracas / caxixi): pulsation

Bell / claves: bell pattern of the sangban.

The pattern of djembé 1 (played by the leader or by a student, perhaps on a deep conga) is very nice and fully sufficient as a drum accompaniment. (See above: Famoudou Konaté's comment that this pattern is the original rhythm of Kè Bendo.)

Malin Na Kanin
Friendship with the Hippopotamus

9

When we were in Famoudou Konaté's house in Conakry in 1995, doing the recordings for the CD accompanying this book, we met 13-year-old Saran Camara. Famoudou had brought her from his home village of Sangbarala when her father died. She had been very fond of her father, who was an excellent musician, and had learned many rhythms and songs from him. One of them tells the long story of a hippopotamus who befriends a child, but is then taken away from the child by a hunter's fatal shot. Whenever Saran sang this song to us, before long she had tears in her eyes.

The final words mean: Hey, Sory (this is probably the name of the hunter), you have killed my friend – now you must protect me (take over responsibility for me).

In our recording, Famoudou Konaté accompanies Saran's song with a bass rhythm on the water drum. This instrument is made from a large half calabash filled with water. A stick wrapped in cloth strikes the top of a smaller calabash floating on the water with its opening downward. Famoudou's daughter Koulako Konaté plays a gourd rattle to this song.

Saran Camara

N'Na wo, n'Na wo!
N'Na wo, n'Na wo!
Muso wara baa la.
Muso wara baa la.
Muso ka a la fanin ko;
Bonba la faninko.
Muso tonin wolerö,
Bafila tè malin böra,
Bafila tè malin böra.
Ka dyi sari muso kan.
Muso ko wolerö:
"Ko n'dyere nö dyi sari la i kan?
Ko n'dyere nö dyi sari la i kan?"
Bafila tè malin böra,
Bafila tè malin böra.
"Ko n'dele nö dyi sari la i kan!
Ko n'dele nö dyi sari la i kan!
Ko den mèn ye i farila –
Ko na kèra kèè di
N'de boro kè n'kanin di.
N'de boro kè n'kanin na diya nyè di.
Ko den mèn ye i farila –
Ko na kèra muso di
N'de boro kè n'kanin di.
N'de boro kè n'kanin na diya nyè di."
Muso wara luma,
Muso wara luma.
Muso ka den soron.
Dinin kèra muso di.
Dinin ka a si de.
Dinin ki-i wununman.
Dinin ka a nyinbö.
Dinin ka a taman.
Dinin ki-i bori bidi bidi –
Ka wa i lö a Na ma.
"N'Na i tè ni-i la dyala di,
N'nye wa a ko baa la,

Oh, my mother! Oh, my mother!
Oh, my mother! Oh, my mother!
The woman went to the river.
The woman went to the river.
The woman washed her laundry;
The laundry for the whole house.
The woman was washing her laundry,
And the hippo of the rivermouth came,
The hippo of the rivermouth came.
And sprayed water all over the woman.
The woman said:
"Who sprayed water on me?
Who sprayed water on me?
The hippo of the rivermouth came,
The hippo of the rivermouth came.
"I sprayed water on you!
I sprayed water on you!
This child you bear –
If it is a boy
I want to befriend him ,
I want him to be the love of my heart.
This child you bear –
If it is a girl
I want to befriend her,
I want her to be the love of my heart."
The woman went home,
The woman went home.
The woman bore the child.
The child was a girl.
The child learned to sit.
The child learned to crawl.
The child teethed.
The child learned to walk.
The child ran fast –
And stood before her mother.
"Mother, give me your headscarf,
I want to go to the river and wash it,

N'nye wa a ko baa la."
Dinin ki-i bori bidi bidi –
Ka wa i lö a Ma ma.
"N'Ma i tè ni-i la dyala di,
N'nye wa a ko baa la,
N'nye wa a ko baa la."
Dinin ki-i bori bidi bidi –
Ka wa i lö a Fa ma.
"N'Fa i tè ni-i la fula di,
N'nye wa a ko baa la,
N'nye wa a ko baa la."
Dinin wara baa la.
Dinin ka a la fanin ko;
Bonba la faninko.
Dinin tonin wolerö,
Bafila tè malin böra,
Bafila tè malin böra.
Ka dyi sari dinin kan.
Dinin ko wolerö:
"Ko dyere nö dyi sari la n'kan?
Ko dyere nö dyi sari la n'kan?"
Bafila tè malin böra,
Bafila tè malin böra.
"Ko n'dele nö dyi sari la i kan!
Ko n'dele nö dyi sari la i kan!
Ka a tèrè i ye i Na farila,
N'de ka a fö Na nyè
Koni ile kèra kèè di
N'de biri i kè n'kanin di,
N'de biri i kè n'kanin na diya nyè di.
Ka a tèrè i ye i Na farila,
N'de ka a fö i Na nyè
Koni i kèrè muso di
N'de biri i kè n'kanin di,
N'de biri i kè n'kanin na diya nyè di.
Wodi dun mèn ye nin –
I yewa wo di i Na ma

I want to go to the river and wash it."
The child ran fast –
And stood before her grandmother.
"Grandmother, give me your headscarf,
I want to go to the river and wash it,
I want to go to the river and wash it."
The child ran fast –
And stood before her father.
"Father, give me your cap,
I want to go to the river and wash it,
I want to go to the river and wash it."
The child went to the river.
The child washed the laundry;
The laundry for the whole house.
The child was washing her laundry,
And the hippo of the rivermouth came,
The hippo of the rivermouth came.
And sprayed water all over the child.
The child said:
"Who sprayed water on me?
Who sprayed water on me?"
The hippo of the rivermouth came,
The hippo of the rivermouth came.
"I sprayed water on you!
I sprayed water on you!
When your mother was expecting you
I said to her
That if you should be a boy
I would want to befriend you,
I would want you to be the love of my heart.
When your mother was expecting you
I said to her
That if you should be a girl
I would want to befriend you,
I would want you to be the love of my heart.
This handful of money –
Give this money to your mother

Ko n'boro kè n'kanin di,
Ko n'boro kè n'kanin na diya nyè di.
Sanin dun mèn ye nin –
I yewa wo di i Ma ma
Ko n'boro kè n'kanin di,
Ko n'boro kè n'kanin na diya nyè di."
Dinin wara luma,
Dinin wara luma.
Dinin ki-i bori bidi bidi –
Ka wa i lö a Na ma.
"N'Na wo, n'Na wo!
Bafila tè malin ko,
Bafila tè malin ko:
Wodi dun mèn ye nin -
Ko n'nye wo di ile ma
Ko a boro kè n'kanin di,
Ko a boro kè n'kanin na diya nyè di."
Dinin ki-i bori bidi bidi –
Ka wa ilö a Ma ma.
"N'Ma wo, n'Ma wo!
Bafila tè malin ko,
Bafila tè malin ko:
Sanin dun mèn ye nin -
Ko n'nye wo di ile ma
Ko a boro kè n'kanin di,
Ko a boro kè n'kanin na diya nyè di."
Dinin tonin wolerö
Mukan bora baa la.
Dinin ki-i bori bidi bidi –
Ka wa i lö a Na ma.
"N'Na n'bara wa n'kanin kö!
N'de n'bara wa n'kanin kö!"
Dinin ki-i bori bidi bidi –
Ka wa i lö a Ma ma.
"N'Ma n'bara wa n'kanin kö!
N'de n'bara wa n'kanin kö!"
Dinin ki-i bori bidi bidi –

As a token of my friendship,
As a token of the love from my heart.
This handful of gold –
Give this gold to your grandmother
As a token of my friendship,
As a token of the love from my heart."
The child went home,
The child went home.
The child ran fast –
And stood before her mother.
"Oh, Mother! Oh, Mother!
The hippo from the mouth of the river says,
The hippo from the mouth of the river says
This handful of money –
I must give you this handful of money
As a token of his friendship with me,
As a token of the love from his heart."
The child ran fast –
And stood before her grandmother.
"Oh, Grandmother! Oh, Grandmother!
The hippo from the mouth of the river says,
The hippo from the mouth of the river says:
This handful of gold –
I must give you this handful of gold
As a token of his friendship with me,
As a token of the love from his heart."
As the child was saying this,
A shot was heard near the river.
The child ran fast –
And stood before her mother.
"Mother! I am going to my friend!
I am going to my friend!"
The child ran fast –
And stood before her grandmother.
"Grandmother! I am going to my friend!
I am going to my friend!"
The child ran fast –

Ka wa i lö a Fa ma.
"N'Fa n'bara wa n'kanin kö!
N'de n'bara wa n'kanin kö!"
Dinin wara baa la,
Dinin wara baa la.
Badyi bara wulen kari, kari!
Ki nyè bara wulen kari, kari!
Bafin nin bara wulen kari, kari!
Dinin tonin wolerö
Bafila tè malin böra,

Bafila tè malin böra,

Ka wa a fun dyi kan.
Dinin ko wolerö:
"E he! Sory wo,
N'bara n'kari fa sory la!
E he! Sory wo,
N'bara n'kari fa sory la!
E he! Sory wo,
N'bara n'kari fa sory la!"

And stood before her father.
"Father! I am going to my friend!
I am going to my friend!"
The child went to the river,
The child went to the river.
The river was very, very red!
The sand was very, very red!
The Bafin nin[1] had become very, very red!
When the child saw this
The hippo from the rivermouth came out of the water,
The hippo from the rivermouth came out of the water,
Fell in again and lay floating on the water.
The child said helplessly,
"Hey, hey! Sory!
Now I must rely on you!
Hey, hey! Sory!
Now I must rely on you!
Hey, hey! Sory!
Now I must rely on you!"

[1] Bafin = the name of a river in Guinea ("Bafin nin" = "Small Bafin")

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Mamady Keita: *MÖGÖBALU.* Fonti Musicali Traditions du Monde fmd 205. (A double CD with many Malinké rhythms and songs. Famoudou Konaté figures as solo drummer.)

Mamady Keita: *Hamanah.* Special guest: Famoudou Konaté. Fonti Musicali Traditions du Monde fmd 211

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Music Examples on the Accompanying CD

1 Lolo
2 Bala Kulandyan
3 Soma Körö (Dyidanba)
4 N'yèrèbi
5 Baga Giné
6 Kéné Foli
7 Kuku
8 Kè Bendo
9 Malin Ma Kanin (Sarans Song)

The recordings on the accompanying CD were made in December 1995 in Conakry/ Guinea, with the participation of:

Instrumental:
Famoudou Konaté (music leader, djembé, flute, water drum);
Diarra Konaté, Fodé Konaté, Mamady Kourouma (djembé); Karamo Daman (kenkeni); Amadou Diakité, Nankuma Konaté (sangban); Aliseny Sylla (dununba); Kadé Konaté, Kolako Konaté (gourd rattle).

Vocal:
Manou Fofana, Saran Camara, Kadé Konaté, Fanta Konaté (solo, chorus);
Kadiatou Cissé, Fatou Diakité, Mariama Siré Diallo, Balia Kalissa, Siré Keita, Bintou Konaté, Diaka Konaté, Kotria Konaté, Koulako Konaté, Mariam Leno (chorus).

Recordings and sound engineering:
Thomas Goldhahn

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Famoudou Konaté was born in 1940 near Kouroussa (Guinea, West Africa). His exceptional rhythmic talent appeared at a very early age. In 1959 Guinea took the best musicians and dancers in the country to form the "Ballets Africains of Guinea". Famoudou Konaté was chosen to be the lead drummer, a position that he occupied for 26 years. Since 1987 he has gone to Germany every year to give concerts and workshops to an ever growing audience. In 1996 he became honorary professor at the University of the Arts in Berlin.

Dr. Thomas Ott, born in 1945, is professor for music pedagogy at the University of Cologne, Germany.

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