

## **DDD Music Analysis, Group Dances, *Baamaaya--Nyayboli***

### **Overview of Nyayboli**

Judging by its presence in all the Group Dances, Nyayboli is a very popular item of music and dance. We might say, "It has a groovy beat that is fun to dance to." While all versions are similar, the Nyayboli of Baamaaya differs slightly from the Nyayboli of Takai and Tora. One obvious difference: no answer luḡa or answer guḡ-gḡḡ parts. There are subtle differences in the internal design of the phrases, as well.

Nyayboli's popularity may also be attributed to the flirtatiously erotic meaning of the drum language--"We are not fighting. We love each other. Catch her."

### Phrase Duration

The time span of Nyayboli is sixteen eighth notes. In Baamaaya as shown by Alhaji here, all three aspects of the performance--luḡa, guḡ-gḡḡ and dance--shape their fundamental phrases according to the following arithmetic equation:  $16 = 6 + 6 + 4$ . In other words, players move through one cycle of time in three shorter motives.

### Dance and Musical Material

Nyayboli has an eight-count cycle (notated as four duple measures). In Takai and Tora, dancers mark one time point with a dramatic knocking gesture but, in Baamaaya, the cadence point is marked more subtly by each individual dancer. Still, in all three medleys the idea is the same--over an eight-beat span the music creates suspense that is momentarily resolved on count one before the arc of tension-resolution begins again.

### Interplay among Parts

Luḡa and guḡ-gḡḡ use the same musical ideas, although each instrument renders them differently, according to its physical construction and playing technique. Depending on the spontaneous decisions made during a performance, the drums may be in unison or counterpoint.

### Groove

The pleasure of Nyayboli arises from the way the drum phrases move in relation to the cadence point and the underlying flow of steady beats and faster pulses. After coming

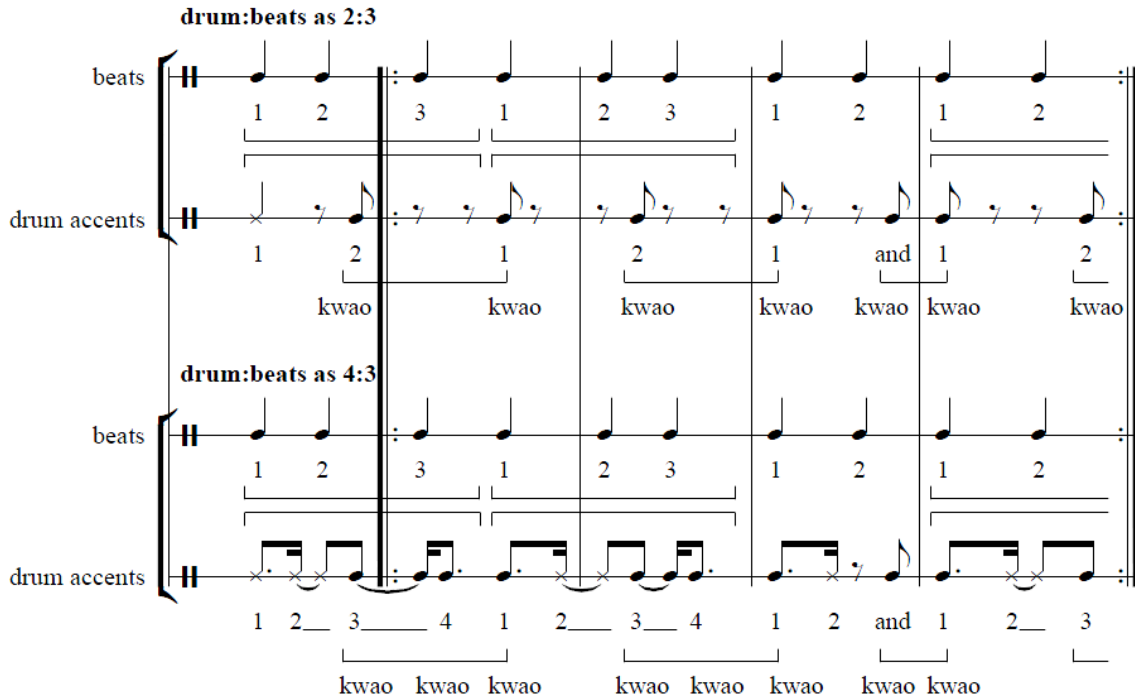
together on beat one, the phrases cleverly travel through the time span--accenting certain offbeats, suggesting contrametric patterns, and touching some onbeats--before meeting up once again on the next subsequent downbeat. The rhythmic aesthetic has an enjoyable balance of predictability and surprise--we know the outcome of each cycle but are not sure how the musicians will achieve it.

Rhythmically, the shaping of Nyayboli's time span into a twelve-pulse unit--6 + 6-- followed by a four-pulse unit ingeniously enables drummers to create 2:3 and 4:3 patterns of accentuation (see below).

### **Guṅ-gṅṅ**

The underlying structure of the guṅ-gṅṅ part is most clearly apparent in the version of the "talk" "Ti be zabira, ti be zabira, gbam o" that uses only eighth note bounce strokes (see Vocables phrase B, Drumming phrase C). The 16 = 6 + 6 + 4 structure is charted below--center bounce strokes in bold (see Figure 1). We see that in the first set of six pulses, bounce stroke two lands on the downbeat of measure 1 and bounce four lands on beat two; in the second set of six pulses, it is the fourth and last bounce stroke that lands on the downbeat of measure 3 with stroke two falling on beat two of measure 2. The set of four pulses shares features with both sets of six that preceded it: like the first set of six it begins on a pickup, but like the second set its last bounce coincides with a downbeat. Another facet of the musical personality of the guṅ-gṅṅ part is found in tracing the location of the last note in each set of bounce strokes--first it falls on the backbeat of measure 1 but then it falls on the downbeat of measure 3, an onbeat coincidence that is emphatically confirmed by the final bounce stroke of the third set.

measures		1				2				3				4				
eighth notes in 2-4 bars	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
eighth notes in drum phrase		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	5	6	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	5	6	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	3	4	1



**Figure 1 Baamaaya Nyayboli 6 + 6 + 4 structure**

The sixteen eighths in one cycle of Nyayboli are given a slightly different shape by the other main "talk" for the gun-gon part--"Mani bori o, mani bori o, gbam o" By changing the internal design of the six-pulse sets from 4 + 2 to 3 + 3, this phrase makes possible rhythms that have the power of 2:3 and 4:3 (see Figure 2). As most clearly seen in the notation of Alhaji's vocables demonstration, by sounding only the first and last of the four bounce strokes, two drum accents occur within a span of three beats. In time values, this 2:3 ratio is two dotted quarter notes in-the-time-of three quarter notes. In the style of Nyayboli played in the group dance Takai, a stroke is placed midway between the two bounces, thus creating a four-in-the-time-of-three relationship. In time values, this 4:3 is four dotted eighth notes in-the-time-of three quarter notes. Although 4:3 occurs in the gun-gon part, this rhythmic structure is most clearly seen in the luja part (see Vocables and Drumming).

**Figure 2 Baamaaya Nyayboli 2:3 and 4:3 rhythms**

According to Alhaji, the unadorned version of this "talk"--ka ka ka ka + ka ka ka ka + ka ka--is more typical of the style of Nyayboli played in Takai and Tora. In Baamaaya, this

phrase should be rendered in a more ornamented manner-- ka kara ka zika + ka kara ka zika + ka ka (see Vocables version A, Drumming versions A and B). The subtle center strokes and distinctive chahira stroke figures distinguish Nyayboli in Baamaaya from the other two Group Dances.

### **Luḡa**

Like guḡ-gḡ, luḡa also has the 6 + 6 + 4 "Ti be zabira, ti be zabira, gbam o" "talk" (see Drumming notation). On luḡa, Alhaji prolongs the vowel sound of "ti" with virtuosic techniques of double-sticking and rapid downward pitch motion. A matching release of pressure renders the two-syllables of "zabi-," thus creating a musical rhyme, so to speak, between the two sixteenth note figures. Another drum talk for luḡa begins like "Ti be zabira, ti be zabira, gbam o" but rather unexpectedly changes to a 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 treatment of the sixteen eighth note pulses by playing the opening three-stroke figure three times before bringing the usual final cadential figure (see Drumming, "Man' bḡr' o, man' bḡri o, man' bḡr' o, gbam o"). Thus we can conclude that grouping is among the musical forces used creatively in improvisation.

Unlike guḡ-gḡ, luḡa gives melody to the 3:2 and 4:3 phrases (see Drumming Notation). The melodic and rhythmic beauty of the luḡa part is greatly enhanced by the subtle pitch bends caused by changes in pressure on the cords that connect the two heads.

All luḡa phrases end with a pickup-to-onbeat cadence--L M--that is in unison with guḡ-gḡ bounces. Both drums set the words "gbam o," which mean, "Catch her."

END