

DDD Music Analysis, Group Dances, *Baamaaya--Dakoli Kutokɔ*

Overview of *Dakoli Kutokɔ*

The musical rhythms of the drum parts in *Dakoli Kutokɔ* are organized to highlight the two moments in each cycle when dancers bump hips together. Tora is another bumping dance. No other sections of *Baamaaya* mark the cadence point in the cycle with such an overt gesture.

Like other sections of *Baamaaya*, the feeling of *Dakoli Kutokɔ* is playful. In this case, however, the joking carries an important underlying cultural theme: the importance of marriage and large families. The drum language means,

Dakoli ku to kɔ.

Bachelor cannot farm.

N-na kɔ n-zaŋ ka m-paɣi bi di.

I will farm and harvest for my woman to eat.

Alhaji explains that drummers are teasing unmarried young adults who do not have enough people in their household to do the manual labor needed in traditional farming. Among the Dagomba, a large polygamous household is a mark of status and wealth.

Dance and Musical Material

As shown in

Figure 1, the dance shapes the overall musical period of *Dakoli Kutokɔ* into two eight count phrases that move toward the cadence point when dancers bump.

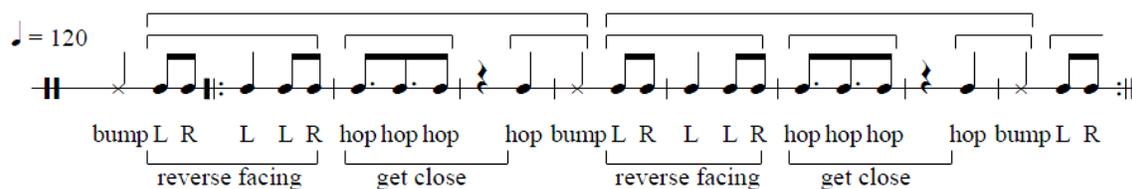


Figure 1 *Dakoli Kutokɔ* Rhythm of dance steps

Arranged in a circle, dancers bump alternately with the person in the adjacent position to their front or back. When the drums are playing the "*Dakoli ku to kɔ*" language, the dancers reverse their facing to the inside or outside of the circle; then they hop towards their right while the drums play the "*N-na kɔ n-zaŋ*" motive; finally the pairs of dancers hop close together and bump hips on the "*di*" of "*Ka m-paɣi bi di.*" [Note: In the

parlance of Labanotation, a "hop" is a leaping movement in which the dancer takes off and lands on two feet.] The relationship of dance and music here is of unison--the timing of the dancers steps and gestures is precisely together with the shape of the drum phrases.

Interplay among Parts

Dakoli Kutokɔ begins with a "call" from the luja--"Dakoli ku to kɔ"--and then both drums play together for the rest of the cycle. Because its pitch capabilities enable it to better imitate spoken Dagbani, the luja usually stays close to the implicit drum language, but guŋ-gɔŋ has slightly more leeway for musical variation.

Phrase Duration

One full cycle of Dakoli Kutokɔ spans thirty-two eighth notes, consisting of two phrases with similar drum language but different melody--the first with higher pitched strokes and the second with lower pitched strokes. Although the period is structured into two sixteen-pulse phrases, each phrase consists of three motives of unequal duration that yield the equation: $16 = 6 + 5 + 5$ (see below).

motive one	Dakoli ku to kɔ	6 eighth notes
motive two	N-na kɔ n-zaŋ	5 eighth notes
motive three	ka m-payi bi di	5 eighth notes

This suggests that an aesthetic preference for a mixture of symmetry and asymmetry in Dagomba dance drumming.

Groove

The musical appeal of Dakoli Kutokɔ stems from the way each of its three motives works with the metric structure, that is, an eight-beat span culminating in a clearly marked cadence on the downbeat (see Rhythm Notation). Motive one moves in "square" eighth note time values from backbeat to backbeat--"two and one and two"; motive two moves in "groovy" dotted values from downbeat to the "and of two"; and the motion of motive three mimics motive one but it travels from a metrically weak point--the "and of one"--to conclusion directly on the downbeat of the eight-count span. Described differently, motive one accentuates backbeats, while motive two avoids the backbeat and creates an unfulfilled expectation of a downbeat accent that is fulfilled at the conclusion of motive three.

The dotted figure in measures 3 and 7 of the Rhythm Notation strongly contrasts with the other motion in eighth note values. The dotted figure appears throughout Dagomba dance drumming pieces in quaternary time (for example, see Damba Maṅgli and Nantoo Nimdi).

Guṅ-gɔŋ

As mentioned above, the two drums play the same underlying drum language so their phrases bear close resemblance. The normal call-and-response relationship holds that guṅ-gɔŋ should play quiet filler notes in the chahira area of the drum when luṅa is playing "Dakoli ku to kɔ." Although these strokes are not loud enough to make a significant contribution to the music's overall sound, they impart a distinctive rhythmic feeling for the player. In his demonstration of the drumming, Alhaji favored the following stroking pattern: zigiZiḡizi ZIḡizi ZIḡizi (note: onbeat notes in capitals) (see Drumming Notation).

Press strokes in the drum's center (ki) enable the guṅ-gɔŋ to imitate the melody of the luṅa part. In the fertile musical mind and body of a drummer like Alhaji, the drum language of Dakoli Kutokɔ is an opportunity for many subtle but charming inventions. He uses quick strokes as pickups and afterstrokes, as well as a mix of bounce and press strokes with eighth note time values.

Luṅa

As already discussed, Alhaji's demonstration of the luṅa part in Dakoli Kutokɔ stayed very close to underlying drum language. Two features of his playing merit discussion here. First, to render the two-syllable word "paḡi," he uses a double-stick technique to make his drumming sound very close to the spoken Dagbani; this drumming nuance is notated as two sixteenth notes with the first having an accent to show the strong impact of the drum stick and the second being unaccented to show that the stick hits with less dynamic energy. Second, he consistently intones second appearance of the phrase "N-na kɔ n-zaṅ ka m-paḡi bi di" on what I have designated as a so-called "neighbor pitch" to the basic low- and mid-pitch tones. This is notated on C. I would have expected him to

play this phrase on low pitch, so perhaps this indicates that further study of Dagomba drumming will reveal that my assertion that the luṅa uses only three main pitch classes should be revised.

Alhaji's drumming demonstration does provide lovely examples of the pressure technique on luṅa. Without those subtle downward and upward pitch bends, the part is much less compelling.

END