

DDD Music Analysis, Group Dances, *Baamaaya--Naa Daa*

Overview of Naa Daa

Place in the Medley

Naa Daa (also known as Baamaaya So Chendi, which can be translated to mean "Baamaaya Procession") supports the dancers as they move onto the dance space. If the dancers have a long way to travel, it can be played for a long time. Accordingly, its rather mild rhythms are played at medium tempo

Dance and Musical Form

The basic "step" for the Naa Daa dance is only two beats in duration. However, the dancers phrase their movements within an eight-beat cycle. Drummers fit their phrases into this loop.

Phrase Duration

Although notated here in a two-beat meter, the drumming phrases are consistently four beats in duration, often doubled in variations to eight beats.

Interplay among Parts

Alhaji presents three drums talks for luṅa and one for guṅ-gṅ. One luṅa phrase, "Hṅyi hṅyi ti yina ba," which is four beats in duration, is *offset* from the four-beat guṅ-gṅ phrase--the guṅ-gṅ phrase starts as the luṅa phrase is ending (see Rhythm Notation). The combination occurs twice within the eight-count cycle of the dance.

The other luṅa phrases, "Zuṅṅ zuṅṅ" and "Ma yina, ma yina, ti wam wala" have identical rhythmic but different melodies. These phrases, which are eight beats in duration, *overlap* with the guṅ-gṅ phrase. Both luṅa and guṅ-gṅ drum parts start on the backbeat of the second measure (dancers' count four) and move towards cadence on the first count of the next cycle (time point 1.1 of measure 1, see Rhythm Notation). Although they begin and end in unison, the two lines switch to call-and-response in the middle of their duet.

Groove

Naa Daa has a mellow musical quality. The guṅ-gṅṅ part accentuates every other backbeat (time point 2.1) with a "and two and one" motion towards a cadence marked by a "ki" stroke on the downbeat of measures three and one (dancers' counts five and one). The part, which uses only eighths and quarter notes, is rhythmically "square." Lead luṅa shares the guṅ-gṅṅ's square "two and one" quality in the "Zuṅṅ zuṅṅ" and "Ma yina" phrases. "Hṅyi hṅyi," on the other hand, accentuates the downbeats of each measure. Furthermore, this phrase places an important stroke on the fourth sixteenth note position within the downbeats. This moment in the meter is often accentuated in Dagomba dance drumming.

Guṅ-gṅṅ

Alhaji presents one drum talk in its fundamental four-beat form, and one simple eight-beat extension of this basic phrase (see Vocables Notation and Drumming Notation).

The basic phrase begins on an upbeat pickup to the backbeat of measure two (the "and" of beat one) and move with bounce strokes (ka) towards a press stroke (ki) on the subsequent downbeat of measure three. The phrase begins again in measure four with a cadence to the end of the dance loop.

The variation stretches this musical idea over eight beats by changing the timbre of key strokes and replacing chahira strokes with bounce strokes. Specifically, the first cadential press stroke is changed to quiet chahira strokes. This change means that there is no sense of arrival on the downbeat, the phrase feels open to continuation. Then, bounce strokes come where chahira strokes normally occur during the backbeat--in effect, a musical silence has been filled with sound. These standard variation procedures result in an eight-beat phrase built from three "kaKaka" motives.

This is only the essential minimum version of the part. In actual performance good drummers like Alhaji would play many more drum talks and variations (see Multitrack Sessions).

Luṇa

In his demonstration of vocables for Naa Daa (see Naa Daa luṇa vocables, letter A) Alhaji shows two ways to play "Hḳyi hḳyi ti yina ba" ("Hey hey, we are coming out!"). He fleetingly plays a fancy syncopated way of playing the phrase (see mm. 1-2). Musicians familiar with pan-Atlantic Black Music will likely notice the similarity of this rhythm to a widespread clave part in Latin Music and timeline in West African Highlife. Fans of American music will recognize the "Bo Diddley beat."

The rhythm spans four beats--it marks the first downbeat, avoids the backbeat, marks the second downbeat, and then cadences on the backbeat of the second measure (see Naa Daa luṇa Drumming & Dagbani "Hḳyi hḳyi ti yina ba" versions A and B). As in so many pieces of Dagomba dance drumming in quaternary time, the stroke on the fourth sixteenth position within the first beat gives the phrase a lot of rhythmic energy. In outline form the melody is mid mid low high mid mid (see version B).

In relation to the guṇ-gḳṇ phrase, this luṇa phrase is offset. The ending of one part is the beginning of the other (see Rhythm Notation).

The other two talks, "Zuṇḳ zuṇḳ, zuṇḳ zuṇḳ, zuṇḳ zuṇḳ" and "Ma yina, ma yina, ti wam waa la," differ in melody, while sharing the same timing (see Naa Daa luṇa Drumming & Dagbani and Transcription letters B and C) The rhythm resembles the eight-beat version of the guṇ-gḳṇ phrase--motion with three eighth notes from backbeats towards the subsequent downbeats. "Zuṇḳ zuṇḳ" has a static melody that emphasizes mid pitch. When demonstrating vocables, Alhaji released pressure after the second of the three strokes in each "four and one" motive, thus intensifying the feeling of the "upbeats of the backbeats" (time point 2.4). His final vocable note approaches mid pitch from its lower neighbor. When demonstrating drumming, Alhaji plays the second note in the three-stroke figure on low pitch and adds a squeeze-release figure after the third note.

"Ma yina," on the other hand, has an active melody--low high mid, low high mid, mid mid low low. In vocables, this phrase does not intensify the "and of four" with rope pressure technique until its final motive, which also has quick squeeze-release technique on the final two strokes. In drumming, all the upbeats in the phrase receive accentuation, either by being on high pitch or being marked with rope pressure technique.

These two luṇa phrases are aligned with the guṇ-guṇ phrase.
END