

## **DDD Music Analysis, Occupational Lineage Dance, *Dikala***

### **Overview**

Dikala is music for members of the blacksmith lineage in Dagbon.

Alhaji and I did not work on Dikala as deeply as other pieces in this collection. I asked him to include it in this study primarily because blacksmiths figure prominently in the social and cultural history of West Africa. My hunch that the history story of Dikala would be interesting proved right (see History Story of Dikala).

Alhaji did not think that Dikala was a rich piece to teach non-Dagombas. The lead drumming has only a few drum talks for Dikala itself; instead the part consists of event-specific praise drumming for people in attendance. Alhaji felt that the drumming would lack immediate authenticity if Dikala was played out-of-context in a non-Dagomba situation. Furthermore, the lead drummer needs a great deal of what we might term "cultural literacy," for example, knowledge of the praise drumming for specific towns, for people born on different days of the week, or with certain Muslim first names. More than other items presented on this site, drummers without strong command of the Dagbani language and without detailed understanding of Dagomba society cannot adequately handle the part. Furthermore, Dikala also has the spiritual power often associated with the work of blacksmithing. As seems to be true for all people throughout history, the human transformation of natural materials into metal objects inspires awe. Blacksmiths usually are regarded as a special class within most societies. Alhaji seemed reluctant to invoke this power in a cultural environment unprepared for its consequences, which include spirit possession.

### **Meter and Rhythm**

The temporal structure of Dikala is ternary time in a four beat cycle, notated here as two duple measures (see Rhythm Notation, which shows the version of the answer luŋa phrase that is based most closely on the implicit Dagbani drum language). The rhythm is characterized by the lead luŋa's duplet motion within each ternary beat, which sets up 2:3 with the fast ternary pulses and 4:3 with the flow of implicit binary beats (quarter notes). The response drums achieve different rhythmic results in each of their two measures. In measure one they play with onbeat and offbeat accentuation on the three time-points

within the two ternary beats, resulting in an interlaced composite rhythm. In measure two they collaborate to accentuate three-feel motion in quarter note time values. As discussed below, the response parts may be analyzed as accentuating a two-then-three metric rhythm, that is, two ternary beats followed by three binary beats (two dotted quarter notes followed by three quarter notes).

### Pace and Tempo

Like "Jerigu," Dikala has a mid-tempo quality to its pace but the piece tends to feel faster due to the interlocked relationship among the parts.

### Form, Call-and-Response and Phrase Duration

Like Damba, Nakohi-waa and the Group Dances, call-and-response in Dikala is overlapped, not sequential. In other words, neither lead or response parts have a quiet portion of their part in which the other part stands out. Everyone is active at the same time. In material demonstrated by Alhaji for this site, the phrases of all the parts fit within the temporal cycle of twelve fast time values. In comparison to pieces which have staggered placement of drum talks within the temporal cycle, all the phrases in Dikala start on the same time-point and are basically the same duration. We could go so far as to say that there is no call-and-response in this sort of multi-part musical texture.

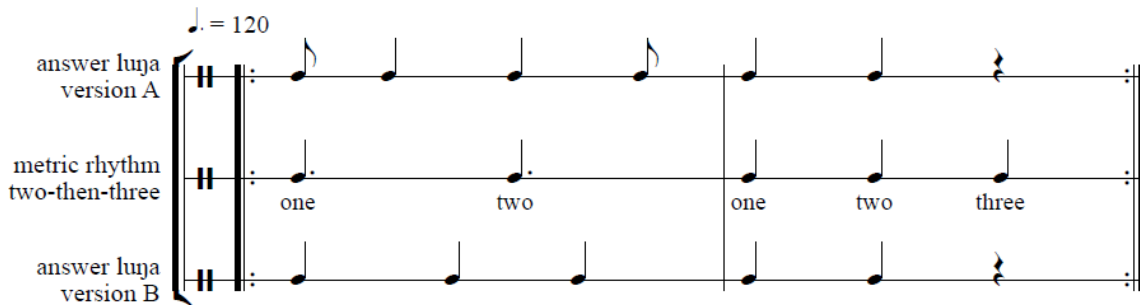
### Groove

To my ear, Dikala grooves with a poised intensity. When each part plays its own distinct phrase, the result is an intricate lattice of accents that draw listeners into the depth of the rhythmic composite. But, if players happen to play phrases with many notes in unison, time seems to flow along more smoothly, with more forward motion.

### **Answer Luja**

Alhaji showed two ways to play the drum language for the answer luja phrase (see Vocables Notation and Drumming Notation). Rhythmically version A uses shorter and longer time values in ternary time--eighth and quarter notes (see Figure 1). As mentioned above, it moves through the first two ternary beats with strong onbeat accentuation, flavored with notes on both ternary offbeats, first on time-point 1.2 and then on time-point 2.3. Over the third and fourth ternary beats in measure two, the answer luja sounds

the first two of the three 3:2 binary beats. The overall accentuation pattern of this phrase is two-then-three (two dotted quarters followed by three quarters). The rhythm of version B flows more smoothly. All time values are binary, i.e., quarter notes, putting the answer luṅa part of Dikala in the company of other pieces with similar phrases (see Damba Sochendi and Jerigu N-dari O Salima). Both versions of the answer luṅa part have the same melodic shape--gradual rise from low-pitch to the concluding mid-high final figure. Notes produced by after-stroke pressure technique make the melodic contour of version B sinuously graceful.



**Figure 1 Dikala, rhythm of answer luṅa part**

### Guṅ-gṅṅ

Alhaji demonstrated two drum talks for the guṅ-gṅṅ part of Dikala--"To ṅuni sayirisi ku gbaa o ku" and "To ku gbaa o ku" (see Drum Language and Drumming Notation). In vocables, he rendered the first drum talk in its simplest form--ka kaka ki ka--and also sang this version in the more subtle version that he played on the drum--ka karaka kika--that uses double-bounce technique on the second stroke (see Vocables Notation versions A and C). This fancier version creates rhythmic multidimensionality within the first ternary beat, since the rhythmic motion partakes of duplet and triplet timing. Alhaji likely would say that the more subtle version better matches the drumming to the underlying Dagbani text. Musically, the second drum talk is a spare variation of the first talk, that is, it omits the strokes within the time-points 1.1 and 1.2 and instead begins on time-point 1.3 with a pickup leading towards ternary beat two. Alhaji's chahira stroking rewards close study; the physical motion of the stick and bare hand is great fun to play (see Drumming Notation).

## **Lead Luḡa**

Alhaji demonstrated only one drum talk that directly relates to the cultural history of Dikala (see History Story of Dikala). At a "real live" event in Dagbon today, such as a funeral memorial service, an expert lead luḡa player would not be limited to variations on this talk. Instead, the drummer would salute people who are present at the event by playing their various praise epithets.

## Opening Call

Alhaji did not show a special introductory phrase but simply jumped in with the main version of the drum talk. If he was at an event in Dagbon, he would play drum talks that were appropriate to the occasion.

## Drum Talks

Alhaji showed three ways to play the same drum talk (see Vocables Notation and Drumming Notation). Versions A and B are quite similar, differing only in the pitch of the first four strokes. Version A starts with alternation between low and mid pitch--simplified as L M L M--while version B stays on low pitch before rising to mid--simplified as L L M M. As mentioned above, the main rhythmic idea in these two phrases is duplet motion within ternary temporal structure.

The third version is so different that if Alhaji had not said it had the same implicit drumming text I would have assumed it was a different drum talk. This phrase is constructed by playing the same rhythmic figure three times (see Figure 2). Each figure spans four fast time units, giving it  $12 = 4 \times 3$  morphology. Within the ternary temporal framework, this may be understood as three-in-the-time-of-four or 3:4; if one feels the beats as moving on a quarter note flow it is 3:2 between the upbeats of the in-three feel and the foundational march of the dotted quarter note beats.

♩ = 120

dotted quarter beats  
ternary duple two-feel

half note beats  
3:4 with dotted quarters

lead luḡa

quarter note beats  
upbeats of three-feel

**Figure 2 Dikala, lead luḡa, 3:4 in version C**

END