

DDD Music Analysis, Praise Names, *Dɔɣu Tuli*

Overview

Cultural Significance

The Praise Name called "Dɔɣu" is two separate pieces distinguished by tempo. The slow-paced music is designated in Dagbani as "maŋgli" or the main piece; the fast-paced music is termed "tuli" or the hot piece. Both pieces may be singled out for the prominent way that 3:2 is built into the design of the response theme. In Dɔɣu Tuli the lead drum also prominently uses 3:2, offset from the response theme, to create extremely intense interlocked relationships.

The History Story of Dɔɣu reveals the importance of praise names to the men of Dagbon. A proud prince would rather be tortured to death than relinquish his appellation to an archrival. In fact, the fast piece was first played when the victorious brothers killed the defeated prince by a "death from a thousand cuts." In my opinion, it was a vainglorious and bloody way to go. In contemporary practice, Dɔɣu is played for individuals who have the title and social role of "regent," that is, the eldest son of a deceased chief.

The musical design and rhythmic intensity of Dɔɣu Tuli separate it from other Praise Name Dances in this collection. With its short temporal span and tightly interlocked drumming, Dɔɣu Tuli feels more like fast Damba or Nakɔhi-waa than one of the Praise Names with a longer cycle and unison relationship between answer luŋa and guŋ-gɔŋ.

Although its name signifies "hot" rhythm, Alhaji emphasized that drummers remain cool at the center of the intense web of strokes. For a masterful technician on these instruments, playing continuously at fast pace is not hard. Alhaji would brag that he could play Dɔɣu Tuli all night long.

Meter and Rhythm

The underlying main beats in Dɔɣu Tuli are ternary. The music's temporal cycle spans four ternary beats, i.e., twelve fast pulses notated within two duple measures.

The rhythmic surface of the music is very different from its metric framework, however. The answer luŋa and guŋ-gɔŋ primarily play strokes with quarter note time values that set

up 3:2 relationships with the felt, but unsounded, ternary beats. Furthermore, the lead luṅa phrases tend to steadily accentuate offbeat time points so that the part seems permanently offset from the other drums. To notate the lead drum on its own terms, the barlines for the call and response parts would be displaced in relation to each other. In this regard, the lead luṅa in DṶyu Tuli is like Takai, Kondaliya, Tora, and NakṶhi-waa.

Pace and Tempo

The first impression of DṶyu Tuli is its speed--strokes fly fast and furious among offset phrases, the composite rhythm moves at an extremely rapid pace, and the ensemble's texture is very dense. Writing the music in staff notation entails choices of time values and tempo. I have chosen to maintain the same time values used in all the notation, which means setting the tempo as dotted quarter note = approximately 156 beats per minute. In his demonstrations Alhaji ranged from a rather moderate tempo of 136 bpm when playing answer luṅa to the more brisk 176 bpm when stretching out on leading guṅ-gṶṅ.

Form and Call-and-Response

Unlike other Praise Name Dances, DṶyu Tuli does not have clear alternation between lead luṅa and the response drums. Everyone plays at the same time, as is typical in the Festival, Occupational, and Group Dances.

The basic phrases of the response drums move from downbeat to downbeat in two successive measures, followed by a short period of rest on answer luṅa or chahira strokes on guṅ-gṶṅ (see Rhythm Notation). During the second measure, the lead luṅa's sound emerges from the overall texture. However, all three drums have scope for variation, which is rare among the pieces presented on the site. Some variations on the response drums do not allow the lead drum to stand out clearly on its own.

Because of separate improvisation on each part, the form of the ensemble's music is a function of group decision-making. Each player can construct logical passages according to their own feeling for the linear line of the part or for the quality of the group interaction.

Phrase Duration

The two-measure frame provides a handy way to understand the duration of phrases. The response phrases tend to span two ternary-duple measures, although variations on guṅ-gṅ ca augment this span. Although they all fit within the twelve-pulse period, Alhaji showed three ways to play the answer luṅa theme, each with fewer strokes than the last. Since the lead luṅa player often builds four-beat phrases by repeating a two-beat motive, the part conveys a percussive, choppy impression.

Groove

Dṳyṳ Tuli "cooks" like crazy! Answer luṅa establishes a solid but variable center that accentuates downbeats and establishes the three-in-the-time-of-two situation that is at the heart of the music. Guṅ-gṅ aligns with answer luṅa but is expected to energize the dance with variations that include powerful offbeat accentuation. Lead luṅa slots its strokes in between the strokes of the response drums and enjoys forming figures that are offset in relation to the phrases of answer luṅa and guṅ-gṅ. When everything locks in, Dṳyṳ Tuli becomes an amazing rhythmic engine.

Answer Luṅa

Alhaji demonstrated three versions of the answer luṅa theme for Dṳyṳ Tuli. The vocables of the phrase he most preferred are "da zen diyan dayan den diyan" which stand for the full drum language text, "To cheli yuli taṅi yuli gba!" or "To cheli yuli taṅi yuli to! (Yes, leave the name, change the name, yes!). The other two versions omit some of the words, which explains Alhaji's preference. From an exclusively musical perspective, however, the three versions make a nice set of closely related variations.

The full phrase begins with a short pickup into four strokes in 3:2 ratio with the ternary beats (see Vocables and Drum Notation). The two strokes placed on the downbeats ring fully over the whole quarter note time value, while the other strokes are turned into two notes by pressure release technique. The final note extends the phrase well into the second measure, really emphasizing the flow of quarter notes. The second version of the phrase changes the final stroke into a ghosted or lightly struck press stroke, which can be omitted entirely at the player's discretion. The version strongly accentuates the downbeats, in my opinion. The third version of the phrase, which starts within measure

one, has only three strokes. Even though Alhaji denigrated this version as "lazy drumming," I enjoy the way it changes the musical feeling of the answer luṅa part and clarifies that the crucial time point towards which the phrase moves is the downbeat of the second measure.

Guṅ-gṳṅ

The drum language for guṅ-gṳṅ is the same as for answer luṅa and both parts are centered on the idea of three-in-the-time-of-two over the span of two ternary beats. But the way guṅ-gṳṅ uses its center presses--"ki"--and chahira strokes make its phrases sound substantially different from its partner in the response section of the ensemble.

When demonstrating the part in vocables, Alhaji showed only two phrases (see Vocables Notation). The first, "tiki ka ka ki" is quite like the second and third versions of the answer luṅa part. It strongly marks the downbeats with ki strokes, while also accentuating the second and third quarter note positions in measure one of the two-measure cycle. The second vocables phrase creates a four measure variation by isolating a fragment of the first phrase--"ki ka"--and repeating it before bringing back the first phrase--"ki ka, ki ka, ki ka ka ki." Rhythmically, this variation highlights the way the second quarter note position in the measure also is time point 1.3 when felt and perceived in ternary-duple meter. This variation provides evidence that Dagomba musicians are fully aware of the way their music can be felt equally well "in two" and "in three."

Mostly likely because musical ideas are stimulated by the act of drumming, Alhaji showed four phrases in his drumming demonstration (see Drumming Notation). The first variation is like the third version of the answer luṅa theme. The second variation is the same of the first vocables phrase, although chahira strokes make it more interesting. The third variation is the same as the second vocables phrase; note how the bare hand stroke in chahira consistently lands on time point 1.2, thus consistently giving special timbre to that offbeat position. Finally, the fourth variation fills out the third phrase by playing two center bounces rather than only one. The fourth phrase bears close resemblance to the second and third phrases, which illustrates that all four phrases are variations on the same theme.

Alhaji would not characterize this drumming as improvisation. To him, this is the basic *gun-gon* part.

Lead Luḡa

In contrast to the lyrical, flowing quality of its musical line in the slow-paced *Doyu Manḡli*, the leading *luḡa* part in *Doyu Tuli* is percussive. At the fast tempo, there are neither ornamental double-strokes nor extensive after-stroke notes produced by pressure technique. Instead, the part builds assertive, rather short figures using plainly struck strokes with simple time values (eighths and quarters). The leader's musical goal is to heat up the rhythm with offset accentuation and to intensify the composite texture of the ensemble with interlocked strokes and motives.

The physical act of drumming helps players lock in--when the answer *luḡa*'s stick head is moving toward the drum skin, the lead *luḡa*'s stick head is moving away. Furthermore, the music is physically palpable--the drum skins reverberate through the air, creating vibrations that players feel on their skin and in their gut.

Opening Call

The opening call for *Doyu Tuli* is longer than any other piece in this collection (compare to *Jenkunu*, which also has a long introduction). It is one complete musical composition based on drum language that cannot be abridged (see Table 1).

<i>Nuni borimi ḡo tilgi,</i>	He who wants to be alive,
<i>Nuni cheli zuu yuli la.</i>	He should leave the regent's title.
<i>Nuni borimi o-kpi,</i>	He who wants himself to die,
<i>Nuni cheli zuu yuli la.</i>	He should leave the regent's title.
<i>Zuu yuli la, ḡuni zuu yuli la, zuu yuli la.</i>	The regent's title, the regent's title.
<i>To ku o, to ku o, to ku o to ku o!</i>	Yes, kill him!

Table 1 *Doyu Tuli*, drum language for opening call

I have not transcribed or notated the opening call for *Doyu Tuli*. First, I do not understand it. I cannot figure out its temporal structure and cannot assign time values to

the notes Alhaji plays. It remains opaque and mysterious to me. Second, I think it is good to make plain that I am still learning a musical style that is not the cultural heritage of my birth and upbringing. As this site amply demonstrates, I have proposed solutions to many of the musical puzzles presented by Dagomba dance drumming but I do not claim to have mastered this difficult tradition. Users of this site should listen to Alhaji's demonstrations, contemplate the drum language for the open call, and try to make sense of the long opening call. At the end of the opening call skilled Dagomba players immediately begin their response phrases, usually in perfect alignment as if by magic.

Drum Talks

The musical sophistication of the lead luŋa part arises from its relationship to the response parts. I have notated Alhaji's demonstration of vocables and drumming from the perspective of the response parts. This orientation emphasizes their offset relationship to answer luŋa and guŋ-gɔŋ and makes the lead drum rhythm, as notated, appear to be highly offbeat. Specifically, the lead luŋa phrases consistently accentuate the second time point within the ternary beats of the response parts.

Heard alone on the Part-by-Part audio files on this site, the lead luŋa part seems onbeat and much less rhythmically complicated (see Vocables Notation and Drumming Notation). Below, I re-notation these phrases to show their own internal sense of accentuation and placement within meter.

Four lead drum talks--"O-ku o," "To ku o," "To ku o, ku o, ku o," and "Ku o"--are closely related musically and in their meaning--"He killed him. Yes, kill him" (see Drum Notation). As Alhaji demonstrates, slight variations in variations melody and time values are enough to create a new phrase. The theme's phrase length can be shortened or lengthened by means of repetition. All these phrases share rhythm and accentuation (see Figure 1). They push towards an end-point cadence, here notated on a downbeat; in the context of the response parts the lead drum's cadence is on the second time point within the second beat of the duple measures.

♩ = approx. 156

The musical score consists of four staves, each representing a different drum talk. The notes are re-beamed to show their relationship to the lyrics. The lyrics are: o - ku o - ku o - ku o - ku (top staff); to ku o to ku o to ku (second staff); to ku o ku o ku o to ku (third staff); ku o ku o ku o ku o ku (bottom staff). The tempo is indicated as approximately 156 beats per minute.

Figure 1 Dəyü Tuli, lead drum "O-ku o" themes re-beamed

Two drum talks stand out as unique. From the metric perspective of the response parts, the key musical idea in "Bažini cheli o yuli" is accentuation of the offbeat time points within ternary beats. Heard on its own metric terms, however, it becomes much less syncopated. Unlike the "Ku o" family, however, "Bažini's" accents fall on the third, not the second time point within the beats of the response parts (see Figure 2).

The musical score shows a single staff of re-beamed drum talk. The notes are re-beamed to show their relationship to the lyrics. The lyrics are: ba - ži - ni che - li o yu - li ba - ži - (bottom staff). The tempo is indicated as 154 beats per minute.

Figure 2 Dəyü Tuli, lead drum "Bažini" re-beamed

Finally, lead drum theme "Zuu yuli o-ku o" closely resembles the long version of the answer luja phrase, but offset by one fast-moving temporal unit (eighth note). When positioned within the meter of the response parts, the time point on which the three-feel and the two-feel meet in unison is beat two, not beat one. Strokes of the lead and answer luja drums are precisely inter-woven (see Figure 3).

♩. = 154

ternary-duple beats

answer luğa

lead luğa

den diyan dahan den diyan

den diyan dan dayan den

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for 'Döyü Tuli'. It consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'ternary-duple beats' and contains a sequence of six quarter notes with stems pointing up, grouped into two pairs of three. The middle staff is labeled 'answer luğa' and contains a sequence of six quarter notes with stems pointing up, grouped into two pairs of three. The bottom staff is labeled 'lead luğa' and contains a sequence of six quarter notes with stems pointing up, grouped into two pairs of three. The lyrics 'den diyan dahan den diyan' are written below the middle staff, and 'den diyan dan dayan den' are written below the bottom staff. A tempo marking '♩. = 154' is at the top left. A vertical bar line is placed between the second and third measures of each staff.

Figure 3 Döyü Tuli, lead and answer luğa phrases inter-woven

This theme can be considered a musical "trick" whose secret is shared among drummers. It is not hard to do, put it creates a wonderful result that never fails to excite listeners.

END