



# **CURRICULUM FOR TRADITIONAL DJEMBE & DUNUN**

## BOOK 1

## ABOUT THE NOTATION

<b>B</b>	Bass for djembe.
<b>O</b>	Tone for djembe & open tone for dunun.
<b>X</b>	Slap for djembe and muted tone for dunun.
<b>OO</b>	Flam tone for djembe.
<b>XX</b>	Flam Slap for djembe.
<b>BX</b>	Flam technique in the sequence of bass followed by slap for djembe.
<b>x</b>	Kenken (dunun bells) hits.
<b>R</b>	Right hand.
<b>L</b>	Left hand.
Signal	The rhythm played by the teacher/lead player to start or stop the ensemble.
Djembe 1	The 1st djembe accompaniment rhythm of a drum song. The same term with the respective number is used for 2nd, 3rd and 4th djembe accompaniment rhythm.
	Beginning point of repeating cycle.
	Ending point of repeating cycle.
<b>^</b>	Starting point of rhythm.

FURTHER EXPLANATION:

Time moves from left to right.

For djembe,

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a
X R			B L	X R		X R	

The 1st row shows you how time is to be counted, which in the entire book, should be counted verbally as “1”, “e”, “and”, “a” and so forth. Every counted syllable represents one sub-division of time, or pulse. As we usually clap our hands or tap our feet for time, the pulse where we clap or tap is represented by the shaded boxes, which is what we naturally call the ‘on beat’ or ‘down beat’. And inside this shaded boxes should only be a numeric figure, which would state the pulse / count number of a rhythm. The 2nd row shows the sound to be played on the djembe where **B** means Bass, **O** means Tone and **X** means Slap. Also, you can see that underneath each sound is a small letter of ‘R’ or ‘L’, which tells you which hand you should be playing for that respective sound.

For dunun,

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a
x		x O	x O		x	x X	

The 1st row, like djembe notation, shows you the time structure. The many small ‘x’ figures you see in the 2nd row represent the hits on the kenken (the bells on top of sangban. kenkeni & dunumba) that are to be played in accordance with the time count in the 1st row. Underneath some of the x figures there are ‘O’ and ‘X’ figures which represent open and mute sounds respectively, to be played on the dunun skin. These are played in their respective time count, together with the ‘x’ figures above them.

# MORIBAYASSA

*Malinke ethnic group*

If a woman has a serious problem in her life such as an illness in her family or childlessness, after she has exhausted all of her other resources, she can take the vow of Moribayassa. In the old days, this vow was so significant that a woman could take it only once in her life. As part of the vow, the woman promises that if she finds a solution to her problem she will dance Moribayassa. When her problem is resolved, she organizes the Moribayassa dance in the village to celebrate her joy. As she circles the village three to seven times singing and dancing, she is accompanied by one or more musicians. The women of the village follow her and sing as well. After the dance, the woman buries the old and torn clothes she wore for the dance under a mango tree. In Mamady's village, Balandugu, this mango tree is called Moribayassa



Northeast Guinea

# MORIBAYASSA

Signal

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
oo			o	o			o			o		x	x		x

Djembe 1

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
B			o	o	B		x	B		o	o	B		x	
R			R	L	R		R	R		R	L	R		R	

Djembe 2

x			x	x			o	o	x			x	x		o	o
R			L	R			R	L	R			L	R		R	L

Sangban

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-
o				x				x		o		o		o	

^

Kenkeni

x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-
o				o				o				o			

Dunumba

x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-
o						o		o						o	

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# KAKILAMBE

*Baga ethnic group*

Kakilambe is known to have been the most important spiritual mask of the Baga. Its rhythm is played every year when the mask appears from the forest to the people in the village. This would be the time when the mask would make important revelations about the present and the future. A priest of the mask would interpret this information, for the mask does not speak directly to the people. The Baga people look to Kakilambe as their god. Thus, it is a big day when the Kakilambe mask appears and everybody would come to listen. When everyone bowed, the mask would grow up to a height of five meters tall. Ropes are attached to the mask with the other end of each rope held by a member of each family. The Kakilambe mask is also known to fight bad spirits in order to protect the villagers and their harvests. Today, Kakilambe is no longer played in villages but Mamady teaches this rhythm so its story and tradition are not forgotten.



Boke region, West Guinea

# KAKILAMBE

Signal

1	&	a	2	&	a	3	&	a	4	&	a
oo	o	o	o	o		o	o		o		

Djembe 1

1	&	a	2	&	a	3	&	a	4	&	a
B			O	X		B			O	X	
R			L	R		R			L	R	

Djembe 2

B			O	X		B	O	O	O	X	
R			L	R		R	L	R	L	R	

Sangban

1	&	a	2	&	a	3	&	a	4	&	a
x	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-
X			O	O		X			O	O	

^

Kenkeni

x	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-
O	O		X			O	O		X		

Dunumba

x	-	x	-	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	x
O		O		O							O
x	-	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	x	-	x
O											O

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## UNDERSTANDING *TERNARY* AND *BINARY* RHYTHMS

Ternary rhythms are what western notation refers to as 12/8 rhythms. Binary rhythms are what western notation refers to as 4/4 rhythms. For traditional ternary rhythms, we further group them into Ternary 1 and Ternary 2. Although both types of ternary rhythm have the same type of notation and count, they are different in feel.

*Ternary 1* rhythms usually have this rhythm as the signal:

1	&	a	2	&	a	3	&	a	4	&	a
oo		o	o		o	o		o	o		

Examples of *Ternary 1* rhythms are Soli Rapide and Konden.

*Ternary 2* rhythms usually have this rhythm as the signal:

1	&	a	2	&	a	3	&	a	4	&	a
oo	o	o	o	o		o	o		o		

Examples of *Ternary 1* rhythms are Soko and Kakilambe.

*Note: The flam notation shown here is only a guide. In the Ternary 1 signal, the technique for pulse 1 is a flam. In the Ternary 2 signal, the two tones on the first pulse are not actually a flam, but are played with more space between them. It is necessary to learn from our teachers to play these two different signals correctly.*

*Binary* rhythms usually have this rhythm as the signal.

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
oo		o	o		o		o	o		x	x	x			

Examples of *Binary* rhythms are Moribayassa and Denadon.



## DJEMBE LEVEL 3 POINTERS

Rhythms	Ethnic	Region	Type	Feel
Kassa	Malinke	Northeast Guinea	Profession	Binary
Sofa	Malinke	Northeast Guinea	Warrior	Binary
Dansa/Djansa	Kassouké	Mali	Popular	Binary
Sunun	Kassouké	Mali	Popular	Binary
Sorsornet w/break	Baga	West Guinea	Mask	Ternary 1
Kakilambe	Baga	West Guinea	Mask	Ternary 2
Soli des Maninyan	Manian	Southeast Guinea	Initiation & Circumcision	Ternary 2

Djembe 2 rhythms for Kassa, Sofa, Dansa and Sunun are the same.

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a	
X			X	X			O	O	X			X	X		O	O
R			L	R			R	L	R			L	R		R	L

Djembe 1 accompaniments for Kassa, Sofa, Dansa, and Sunun each start with two tones and two slaps. However, they are not the same technique entirely and it is important to not get confused when studying these rhythms together.

	4	e	&	a	1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
Kassa					O	O	X	X		X	X	O	O	X	X	B		X	X	
					R	L	R	L		R	L	R	L	R	L	R		R	L	
Sofa					O	O	X	X		X		O	O		X	B		X		
					R	L	R	L		R		R	L		R	R		R		
Dansa		O	O	X	X		X	X		O	O	X		B		X	B	O	O	
		R	L	R	L		L	R		R	L	R		R		R	L	R	L	
Sunun		O	O		X	X				X	O	O		X	X	B		X	O	
		L	R		R	L				R	L	R		R	L	R		R	L	

## DUNUN LEVEL 1 POINTERS

Rhythms	Ethnic	Region	Type	Feel
Djole	Temine / Mandenya	Southwest Guinea	Popular	Binary
Moribayassa	Malinke	Northeast Guinea	Women	Binary
Soli Lent	Malinke	Northeast Guinea	Initiation & Circumcision	Binary
Sofa	Malinke	Northeast Guinea	Warrior	Binary
Fe	Malinke	Northeast Guinea	Popular	Binary
Kuku	Manian	Southeast Guinea	Popular	Binary
Garange Don	Bambara	Mali	Profession	Ternary 1

In acquiring dunun technique, it is recommended to look at all the dunun rhythms in level 1 and start from technically easy parts before moving on to more challenging rhythms. In other words, students should learn all the parts before putting them together as part of a drum song. For a start, let's look at all bell rhythms as two types of patterns: single-beats and double-beats.

Single-beats bell pattern example:

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-
○				○				○				○			

Double-beats bell pattern example:

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-
○						○		○						○	

Next, we look at single-beats bell pattern with muted drum sound and double-beats bell pattern with muted drum sound.

Single-beats bell pattern with muted drum sound example:

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	-
X				○				X				○			

Double-beats bell pattern with muted drum sound example:

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-
		○	○			X				○	○			X	



**"Ni sewa tiyen, kantiye"**

**Without music, there is no joy.  
Without joy, there is no music.**

Malinke Proverb