

Badjala Malé

(last edited on 3 September 2026)

Badjala Malé is a rhythm from Mali. It literally means ‘the adventurer who sets out to sea’. It tells of the adventures of young Malians on the eve of independence in countries such as the Ivory Coast, Congo and Ghana, who set out in search of wealth.

I studied it briefly whilst I was in Mali in 2004 and had a few lessons from Lamin Balani. In 2022, I found two videos on YouTube that inspired me to explore it further. Through the ‘*lebamananke*’ video channel, I asked ‘*Faso Kanou*’ for a translation (which is reproduced here) and received it. Based on the song sung by Victor Sams in the YouTube video, I composed a melody line for the balafon myself.

Badjala Malé, ee, Badjala Malé
tie-è lou fo, Badjala Malé

(B’djalamale hey b’djalamale, men say: b’djala male)

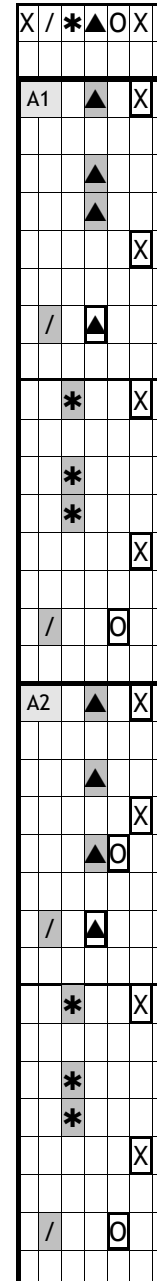
Words that appear in the video by Djenebou & Doura Tiekoro Sanogo:

Ne bi sara, bèrè de la, ne bi sara wolo ba-a bèrè lan da man dja
Mi le sa, ka ka de la ne bou na ba kolo wari ka ka lan da man dja
ki ki si djougou lou ma ki ki si digi njo ko njou kou man da man dja
ki ki si djougou lou ma ki ki si ten koro djougou man dja man dja
ki ki si djougou lou ma ki ki si tamanjo ko njou ko man dja

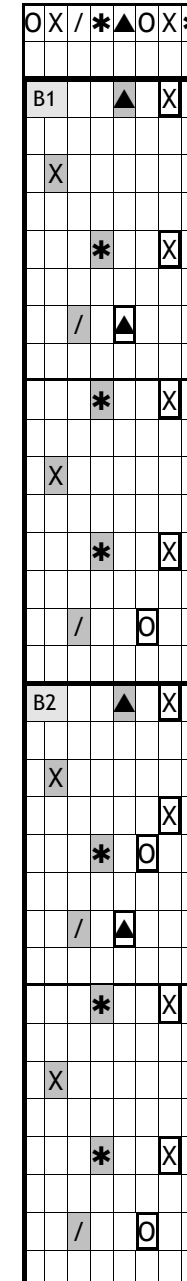
I’ll tell my father, I’ll tell my biological father
I’ll warn my mum, I’ll warn my biological mum
That I’m off to the Ivory Coast, that I’m off to the Ivory Coast
May God protect you from bad neighbourhoods, my companion
May God protect you from bad company, my companion
May God protect you from bad friends, my companion
How hard it is, my friend, to set off on an adventure, my friend
And if you ever set off on an adventure
You’ll face many difficulties, my friend
But you must bear all these difficulties, my friend
That you bring back clothes from the Ivory Coast, my friend.
Djalamale, hey djalamale, they say djalamale
Djalamale, hey djalamale, they say djalamale

Sources: Lamin Balani and Oumou Mariko, Bamako, Mali; workshop during the 2° IDON!-voyage in Mali, January 2004. ‘Sams Ngoniband Ruigoord’ Percussion Festival Amsterdam (on youtube), Youtube video with N’Goni and singing by: ‘Djenebou & Doura Tiekoro Sanogo - Badjala Malé’

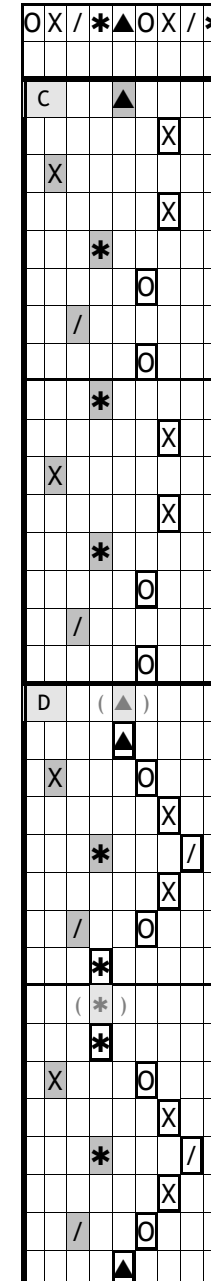
Pattern A1 & A2
also after each other



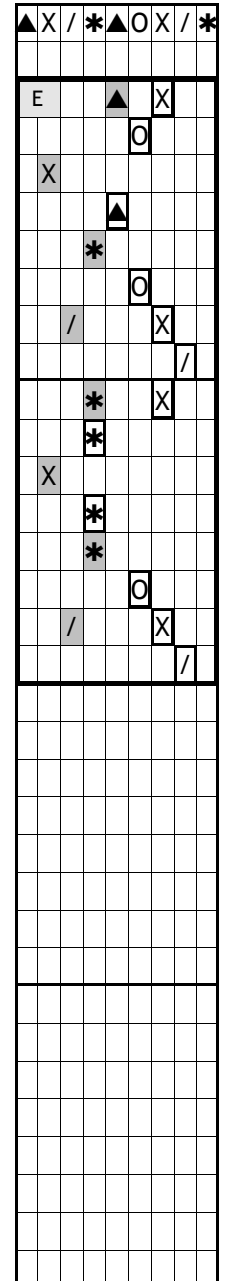
Pattern B1 & B2
also after each other



Pattern C & D



Pattern E



O	X	/	*	▲	O	X	/
	X						
	X						
		/					
				▲			
						X	
					O		
						X	
					O		
						X	
						X	
							/
							/
						X	
					O		
						X	
			*				
			*				
						O	
							X

[illegible]

	X / *▲OX /
ba	X
dja	X
la	/
ma	▲
lé	X
ée	/
ba	X
dja	X
la	O
ma	▲
lé	X
ty	*
è	*
lou	O
fo	X

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

	X /	*▲	O	X /
ne				/
bi				/
sa			X	
ra			X	
bè			O	
rè			X	
de	/			
la	/			
ne	*			
bi		▲		
sa			O	
ra				X
wo				/
lo				half
ba			X	
bè			O	
rè			X	
lan	/			
da	/			
man		▲		
dja				X

[illegible]