

Kakilambé

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Kakilambé is a mask-dance of the Baga-people that live in the coastal area (Boke-region) of Guinea. Originally it was played on the Baga-drums that are similar to the djembe.

"Kakilambé is a very important mask of the Baga people, that appears only once a year. The spirit of the *Kakilambé* is revered as the protector against evil entities. He appears to make important declarations about the present and the future. A priest of the *Kakilambé* is like a translator, since the mask doesn't talk directly to the people. It's a big day when the mask appears. Everybody comes to listen. Slowly the mask emerges from the forest, together with the priests. The people have gathered and are waiting. When all of the people bow, the mask grows to a height of five meters! It holds a string for each individual family of the village, and the other end is held by a member of each family.

When the rhythm gets fast, the priest and some of the older men dance around the mask. The priest receives the information. Then he gives the musicians a sign, they play a break, and then the rhythm is played slower and softer. Afterwards he passes on the information given to him by the mask." (Uschi Billmeier: Mamady Keïta, A life for the djembe).

"These days *Kakilambé*, the terrifying god of the Baga, is nothing more than a memory causing a few shivers in the minds of the elders. But for centuries he ruled the life of Bagatai; he was the lord of the waters, of rain, of wind and of fire. Every seven years he came out of the sacred forest, his arrival announced by thunder and the calls of the fetish priests, to appear to the terrified people and, speaking through the local soothsayer, addressed the assembled villagers. First, he showed his anger against those who had behaved contrary to morality and virtue, by making himself small. The people, lying prostrate on the ground to show their repentance, asked for his forgiveness and swore to obey him. "*Kelyo! Kelyo! Kakilambé! Kelyo!*" (Get up, *Kakilambé*, rise!). Then *Kakilambé*, reassured that he was still lord of the children of the Bagatai, just as he had been of their fathers and their fathers' fathers, and swelling with joy, grew big again, and predicted seven years of happiness and prosperity. Then, accompanied by songs and dances of joy and gratitude, he disappeared for another seven years. So, "for seven years the land will be prosperous and the women fertile" *Kakilambé* has said so. But, whether the land would in fact be prosperous and the women fertile, depended on the primary power of the men, and of the SENGBE (sacred drums). The man dances, showing his strength, his virility, his confidence

and his determination to work with respect for the customs of their people. And, as a start to the favours *Kakilambé* has promised his people, the goddess of fertility suddenly appears: *Nimba* with the enormous breasts. The men shout with joy, the women and the girls soon to be married bring offerings and sing:

"O *Nimba*! The belly without child, is like a cinder in the desert wind,
like a leaf in a bush-fire.

O *Nimba*! goddess of fertility, o *Nimba*! you who make the sap rise in the dust
Here are my breasts, let them be the same as yours
Here is my belly, that the sap of the Baga may continue to rise"

And, in a vibrant frenzy, the men and the women of the Baga are united in complete communion, certain that they are protected by the gods." (text and pictures from a leaflet of the Worldtour of the Ballet de Guinée, ('65-'67). "The Baga are only a very small ethnic group and there are no more than about 32.000 Baga living in Guinea. Frederick Lamp, in his book, "The Art of the Baga"(1996), says that *Kakilambé* is called "a-Mantsho-`no-Pön" by the Baga and is "the supreme male spirit of the Sitemu subgroup" (of the Baga). Dr.Lamp says that the word *Kakilambé* is actual a word in the Susu-language meaning "Reaching as high as the copal tree". There are dozens of songs to the *Kakilambé*-rhythm; this one is the welcoming song: Welcome to the *Kakilambé*-mask!

Mai'm bo, mai'm bo mama, mai'm bo Kakilambé kekumbe



Call	T:T	T:T	T:T	T:T	T:T	T:T	T:T
	2:l	r	r	l	r	r	l

Call 2	S:S	S:S	S:S	T:T	T:T	T:T	T:T	S						
	2:r	l	r	l	2:r	l	r	l	f					

Combination 1

Kenkeni	●●	○	●●	○	●●	○	●●	○
	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x

Sangban	○	●●	○	●●	○	●●	○	●●
	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x

Doundoun	●	●	●			●	●							●
	x	x	x	x:x	x	x	x	x	x	x:x	x	x	x	x

Combination 2

Kenkeni		●●		●●		●●		●●
	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x	x:x

Sangban	●	●	●	●●		●	●	●	●●	
	x	x	x	x:x	x	x	x	x	x:x	x

Doundoun	●					●	●	●						
	x	x	x	x:x	x	x	x	x	x	x:x	x	x	x	x

Combination 3

Combi 3 sangban	●			●●		●			●●		
doundoun		●			●	●		●			●
bell	x	x	x	x:x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Combination 4

Combi 4 sangban		●	●	●				●	●
doundoun	●				●	●	●	●	
bell	x	x	x	x:x	x	x	x	x	x

Djembé 1	B	T	S	B	†	†	T	S
	r	l	r	r	r	l	r	

Djembé 2	B	T	S	B	T	T	S
	r	r	l	r	r	l	r

Djembé 3	B	S	S	B	T	T	S
	r	r	r	r	l	l	r

Djembé 4	B	B	S	S	B	B	S	S
	r	l	r	l	r	l	r	l

Djembé (soft)	S	S	S	S	T	T	S	S	S	T	T
solo accompagn.	r	l	r	l	r	l	r	l	r	l	r

Djembé solo 1	S:	S:	T:	T:T	S:	S:	S:S	S:	B
	f:	f:	f:	r:l	f:	r:	r:l	l	l

	T:	T:	T:	T:	T:	T:	S:						
	r:	r:	r:	r:	r:	r:	f:						

Sources

Lessons: Martin Bernhard

Written material: Stefan Rigert, Mamady Keita, Ponda O'Bryan, Paul Janse, Rafaël Kronberger, Åge Delbanco, Frederick Lamp.