

Kakilambe: 4/4 or 6/8

Beigesteuert von Alan Tauber

Well...Kakilambe is not 'in 4' as you all know. The 'Americanized' version, if you will, is played 'in 4'. There is a long history to why this happened. Without naming names... much of what has been said is correct. It was brought to the US by the Senegalese and is not a Senegalese rhythm. Also, Mamady Keita NEVER taught Kakilambe as a 4 rhythm, just for the record.

About 20 years ago I had an interesting experience: I was in a drum class with my Senegalese teacher who was wonderful. he taught Kakilambe in 4 many times. He brought it here 35 years ago. After a few years I decided to take private lessons with him. In those private lessons we played Kakilambe. As I tried to play the 'in 4' version, he kept correcting me and I didn't undersatnd. There was a different feel happening. But I couldn't quite make sense of it as it was SO similar to the in 4 version I knew.

So we both were frustrated and unsure and confused. Then I basically asked him what was going on. He said, in effect, that many years ago, he tried to teach Kakilambe with a 6 feel to drummers in the US. They couldn't get it. So he made it simple 'in 4'. He was the one. Clear and simple. He has has a huge effect on drumming in the US now not just with this rhythm. There is much more to the story but that's the basic version. How hard he tried to teach the Americans, I do not know. And who they were, remember drumming was at a different level back then, I do not know.

But make no mistake, there really is a Kakilambe 'in 4' only in the US. And, for me, I accept that and I even play it from time to time. Drum circles love it!

As far as the real Kakilambe goes, there are many versions. The Mamady one in the book and he has others. Famoudou Konate in his Advanced classes teaches kakilambe in the various stages of the ceremony. It begins slowly and speeds up and the slow and medium and fast version are all different and beautiful. The hand patterns change and the dunun changes.

As with many rhythms, I think that this is one of those that unless you study with a man from Guinea who is a true master drummer, a villiage drummer responsible for the kakilambe ceremony, you will probably not understand it. It is not that simple. And, none of the real Guinean rhythms are simple...even the simple ones:)

When Famoudou comes to town near you next year as the tour is now being finalized, be sure to register early and study with the man who knows. You will receive more that a correct rhythm. You may be changed for life!

Happy Thanksgiving to all.
Alan Tauber