

## **Collaborative Timelines: Metric Identity in *Malinke* Dance Drumming**

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The importance of “timeline” patterns in the organization of African music is well documented (Rahn 1986, Anku 2000, Toussaint 2003, Agawu 2006, Polak 2010). Sometimes called “time cycles,” or “standard patterns”, these are most often performed on iron bells or other timbrally distinct instruments within an ensemble. Whether audibly present in the texture or active only in the minds of performers and listeners, their role as an organizing, contextualizing force has been compared to pitch scales (Pressing 1983), and more recently, shown to participate in meter (London 2012).

My analysis of pieces from the Dundunba and Kassa families of Malinke dance rhythms maps Kubik’s (2010) explanation of African musical time as an interface of elementary pulsation, reference beat, and timeline, to London’s (2012) meter as organization of N-cycle, beat cycle, and (non-isochronous) sub-cycles. The analysis demonstrates two things; that timelines are created collaboratively in Malinke drumming, and that these timelines are an essential part of the musical time in a way that is akin to entrained meter.