

***Lokolé*, the talking drum of the Mongo**

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In Africa, several types of talking drums are found. The one which is used by the Mongo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is called *lokolé*. It is made out of hard wood like *bosúlú* (*Pterocarpus sayauxii* Taub.), *bolondó* (*Chlorophora excelsa* Benth.), etc. A log is cut approximately one meter long and the inside is chiseled out. It is designed to give two tones, high and low, when beaten with sticks.

The principle of transmitting messages by the *lokolé* is to go over the tone of sentences of the Mongo language, omitting vowels and consonants. Thus for example, *Lotákáná!* “Come together!” is beaten LHHH, and those who hear it have to decode it into the normal language. As tonally homonymous words are many, words are often paraphrased. Here, we see how the Mongo people conceive the world. For example, the European, called *bɔndélé* in everyday Mongo, is paraphrased as *loléma já lofekafeka botómól’óká mpulú* “big bat wafting in the sky, which is the big brother of birds”. For the autochthones, the mobility of European people who go across the ocean arriving as far as Africa is astounding.

All kinds of messages can be transmitted by the *lokolé* ranging from the birth of a child to the death of a person. The sound arrives as far as 20km because the beater performs the beating forcefully.

In the presentation, I will show some texts which I collected among the Mongo in 1989, and also I will do a performance with the *lokolé* which I procured in the field, beating a text to announce the birth of a child.