

music of ZAIRE

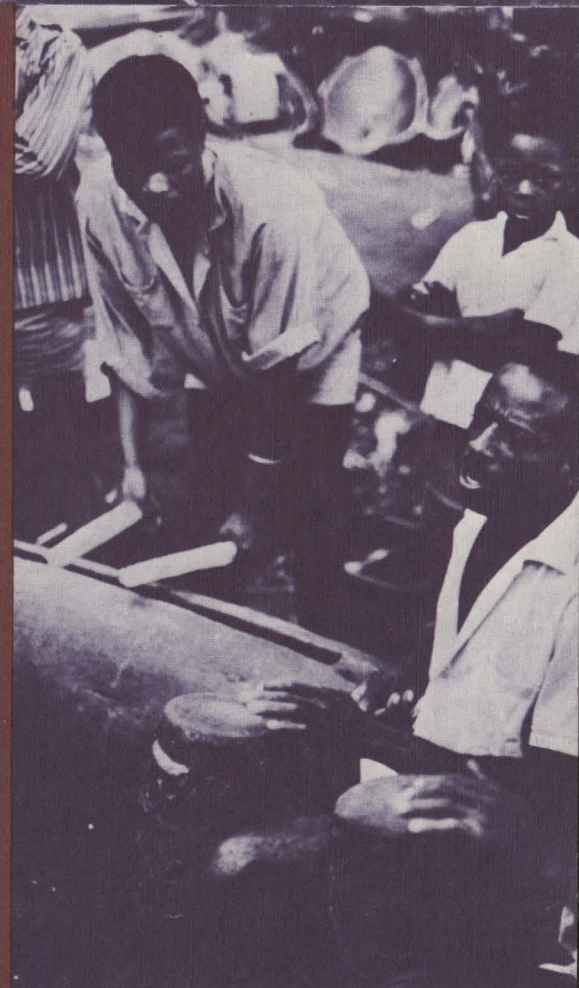
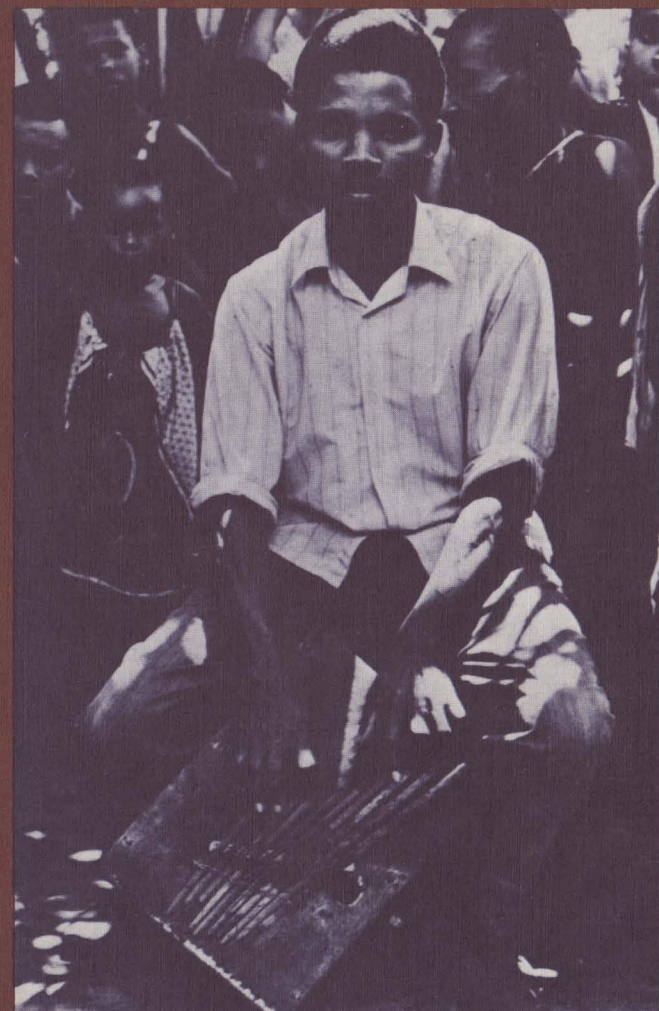
bodjara

bamwe

djamba

recorded by  
jacques jangoux

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4242 VOLUME TWO



PEOPLES OF THE NGIRI RIVER

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS  
FE 4242

SIDE 1

1. Song, with drums
2. Jealousy song: "In the past our husband loved you..."
3. Mourning song for father
4. Singing & Libeke playing
5. Song by two singers
6. Song, with drums
7. Song about President Mobutu, with drums

SIDE 2

BAMWE

1. Song by man living in Libinza village, Bonianga
2. Song by woman living in Libinza village, Bondongo

DJAMBA

3. & 4. Man singing, with chorus of children

TRIBE UNKNOWN

- 5, 6 & 7. Songs by three women from Bomboma

SONGS IN LINGALA

8. Song, with drum: "They killed me..."
9. Popular song in honor of President Mobutu

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACQUES JANGOUX

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

# music of ZAIRE

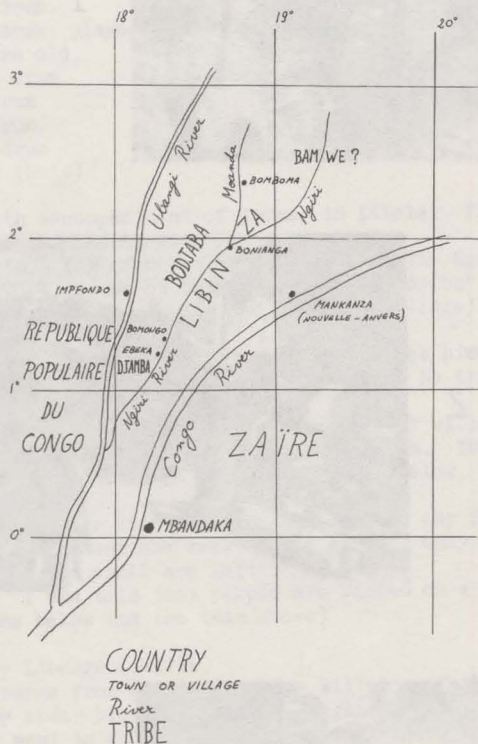
## PEOPLES OF THE NGIRI RIVER

### MUSIC OF ZAIRE

Recorded in 1970 by Jacques Jangoux  
 Editing and photographs by Jacques Jangoux  
 Notes by Jacques Jangoux and, for Libinza culture,  
 by Pierre Van Leynseele

These recordings were made as a side activity while I was doing a photographic coverage of the Libinza. They were made possible by the enthusiastic cooperation of the people of the Ngiri River, especially my Libinza informant, guide and interpreter, Esoko Dominique; by the help and orientation given by my friend, the anthropologist Pierre Van Leynseele, who is undertaking a study of the Libinza and who is at the origin of my visit to the region; and by the support of the IPRES (Institut de Recherches Economiques et Sociales) of the National University of Zaire.

Most songs and musical performances were recorded outside their normal social context. The reason for the musical performances was because I was there with a tape recorder. I was invited in many villages to record their songs. This often provided the opportunity for a palm wine drinking party which was perhaps, after all, the normal social context for many of the songs.



MAP No.1 (tribal locations are approximate)

### Tribes (see approximate location on map No.1)

- Libinza
- Bodjaba (Bodzaba; they are called Likoka by the Libinza)
- Djamba (Dzamba)
- Bamwe
- Women from Bomboma: tribe unidentified

### Location

The tribes represented in these recordings all live along or in the vicinity of the Ngiri River, a tributary of

the Ubangi. The area lies between 1° and 3° North, and between 18° and 20° East. It is further delimited by the Ubangi River on the West and by the Congo River on the South-East.

### Environment

The Ngiri River meanders in a wide strip of swamp savanna and periodically flooded savanna spread with numerous islets which are the habitat of the Libinza. This strip of marshland is surrounded by swamp forest. Farther from the river bed is dry land tropical rain forest, where the Djamba and the Bodjaba live.

### Languages

The language of the Libinza belongs to the Bantu group; so does Lingala, the lingua franca of the region (and of the whole lower Congo River region). I do not know the linguistic affiliation of the other languages.

### Cultures

#### LIBINZA FISHERMEN

I made some borrowings in the paragraphs Social and political structure, Economy, and Continuity and Change from a personal communication by Pierre Van Leynseele; responsibility for these paragraphs is however entirely mine, as I made some changes and additions without consulting him.

Pierre Van Leynseele did most of his fieldwork several villages downstream from the region where I made the recordings. According to his observations there are local cultural variations between these two subregions.

Social and political structure: The Libinza have a patrilineal descent system. The oldest son in every generation has particular rights and duties. The basic social structure is the lineage with authority residing in the eldest closest to the direct line of descent. This man is in charge of the common wealth of the lineage. Authority and social prestige are associated with wealth. The Libinza family is generally polygynous. Traditionally a group of polygynous families patrilineally related to a common ancestor lived on one small islet, each family occupying a separate section.

There was no permanent political authority above the level of the lineage elders, villages being constituted by a cluster of independent lineages of which some prominent elders were, by common agreement, responsible for common welfare and safety in cases when the village as a whole was concerned.

Economy: The Libinza are nearly exclusive fishermen. They use different fishing techniques purposely suited to catch the different species of fish at the different seasons of the year. Wealth being an important factor in determining social status and fishing offering a possibility to acquire a considerable surplus, there is an incentive to become a successful fisherman. Smoked fish was sold in marketplaces organized at the limit of the marshes where agricultural products (of which manioc is the staple) were brought from the local people. Surplus of wealth was used for social prestige by acquiring more wives. Libinza fishermen are industrious. They keep themselves busy making fishing equipment. They are also natural traders. Different fishing techniques are used by women, who also tend small gardens that provide them with vegetables.

Continuity and change: Over the last two decades most of the able men have been going away to fish in the Congo River or some of its tributaries where they have a better opportunity to sell their fish to the urban markets or passing riverboats, getting a better price. Demand for fish is never satisfied, prices are constantly increasing.

The Libinza use their traditional fishing methods and live during the fishing season in temporary fishing camps on the large rivers, looking forward to considerable profits which make them enjoy a far better standard of living than any other traditional population.

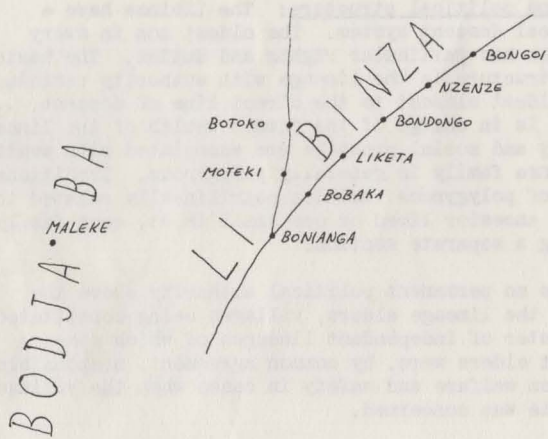
Outboard engines and other modern commodities are of most common use.

The Libinza still have a strong feeling of identity. Their segmentary social structure keeps family ties strong, though contacts between families are occasional. It seems that Libinza culture, with little change, was successful in adapting itself to a new way of life and in the broader context of an emerging national market economy.

Music: Music is played in a variety of circumstances, ranging from informal palm wine drinking parties to curing ceremonies by medicine-men or medicine-women to funerals. A man is sometimes heard singing while travelling in his canoe. The songs are improvised around a central theme. When I was able to obtain it a translation of the theme is given, although I do not always understand its meaning, either due to difficulties and loss in translation or because its symbolism escapes me.

OTHER TRIBES

I know very little of the cultures of the other tribes; I know nothing of the Bamwe who live on the Upper Ngiri. The two Bamwe songs that I recorded were by a Bamwe man living in a Libinza village and by a Bamwe woman living in another Libinza village. Women from Bomboma (tribe unidentified; I was told that their language is Boba) came by canoe to Libinza villages to sell manioc processed by fermentation. The Bodjaba and Djamba are mainland peoples; I assume that they are slash-and-burn agriculturists. Djamba men hunt with hunting nets and spears. Some Bodjaba come to Libinza villages to sell palm wine, which the Libinza also harvest themselves.



MAP No.2: Confluence area of Ngiri and Moanda Rivers, showing approximate location of Libinza and Bodjaba villages where recordings were made (no scale available). Each Libinza village consists of several islets.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

(Libinza names unless otherwise specified; most drum names seem to be the same for the Libinza and Bodjaba)

Drums: ENGILI: small drum covered with antelope hide at both ends. Approximately 35cm high and 22cm in diameter. Usually played with one hand and one stick. Can be played on either side. (photo No.4)

MOKOTO: large slit drum (photos 1, 2, 3, 4)

LINGOTE (or LINGOTI): large drum with openings of different sizes at each end, the larger one covered with elephant ear skin, the smaller one covered with antelope hide (photo No.3)

NGOMO: similar to Lingote but smaller (photo No.2)

EKETU: cylindrical drum, open at one end, the

opening at the other end is covered with snake skin.

MBONDA: cylindrical drum held vertical, resting on three feet. The lower end is open, the opening at the top end is covered with hide. There are large and small Mbonda. (photo No.2)

TAMBOUR: (French word for drum) a rectangular drum covered with hide, probably a recent introduction. I saw it only in one village.

Other instruments:

MOKUMBE (or MOKOMBE): a metal bell held at the top in one hand and hit with a drumstick in the other hand. The sound is stopped by lowering the bell on the thigh.

LIBEKE (seen only among the Bodjaba): Sansa ("thumb piano") (photo No.5)

LINGA: basketry rattle, used by women (among the Bodjaba I have seen rattles made of tin cans)

LINGILA: two small metal bells on a wooden handle, used as a rattle.

MANGILA: several bells (same as Lingila) tied to ankles of dancer.



1



2



3



4



5

NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS

RECORD 1: LIBINZA TRIBE

RECORD 1, SIDE 1

1. Engili drum
2. Mokoto drum
3. Mokoto drum, played by two boys, about 12 and 14 years old.
4. Lingote drum
5. Eketu drum
6. Ngomo drum
7. Mbonda drum
8. Mokumbe (bell)
9. Song with accompaniment of drums, in Liketa. First a woman, then a man.  
"There is a lot of noise (of arguments) like Ngombe people. It is not us but the people of Ndjiba".  
(note: Ngombe is a tribe; Ndjiba is a village)
10. Song by Mwamiokolo Camille, who accompanies himself with Engili drum. Village: Bondongo. No translation.
11. Song by Mwamiokolo Camille, with chorus of villagers. Singer: "When we die we change into earth. The woman from Bolombo (has been buried) the arms below, the legs above".  
Chorus: "If we die we change into earth, our flesh doesn't even last one week in the ground, only the bones and the skull are left".  
(note: I was told that people are buried on a chair, the arms below and the legs above)
12. Song by Libenge Camille.  
"Me Libenge from Bobaka you have killed my father, then my elder brother, then my daughter. What else do you want to do to me: You could at least have left me with a daughter so I could have her married and I could eat with the brideprice money".
13. Song by an old woman, Nyabotuka Euphrasie, who is a medicine-woman. Sings a song of her trade.  
Village: Nzenze.
- 14 and 15: Songs that used to be sung during circumcision ceremony, which is no longer performed. Now circumcision is done at a medical dispensary. Drums are not used, but instead the men are drumming on a sapling suspended by split vines.  
Village: Bobaka.

14. Circumcision song.  
"Something has been thrown in the water. When he arrived in Bonianga the white man found that thing and took it. Then he took six pieces of cloth to (wrap it and) have it buried. The white man's (African) servant took the seventh piece of cloth and ate it".
15. Circumcision song.  
"A man had two wives. The first one always used to give something (to eat) when visitors arrived; the other did not. One day the man had gone out with his second wife, and the first wife was staying home. Visitors came, and the (first) wife refused to give them food".

RECORD 1, SIDE 2

- 16 and 17. I had been invited by a medicine-man, Makoka Jean, to his village, Bongoi, to record his songs. He dressed in his medicine-man attire and danced and sang for me, accompanied by drums (mokoti, mbonda, ngomo) and by the chorus of the village people. Metal bells (mangila) tied to his ankles are heard in the recordings when he is dancing. (photo No.2)  
No translation.
18. Song by woman: Nyabitane Thérèse. Village: Bongoi. "I have been ill for several years. I did not get any treatment. I am not cured".
19. Song by woman: Mwalikumbi Marie. Village: Bongoi. This song is about my visit to the village. "We had the visit of a European. We gave him a warm welcome. All the people in the village gathered. They were photographed. The photographs should be sent to President Mobutu to be appreciated".
20. Song by Maluka Martin. Village: Moteki.  
"I am hearing bats weeping. Am I being bewitched? There is already one dead. Why does the bat come and sing again, is there another dead?"  
(note: it is believed that bats cry when someone is dead)
21. Song by Maluka Martin. Village: Moteki.  
"When there is a death among us people weep. When I die I don't want people to cry, since people have died before; when we cry it does not make them come back".
22. Song by Nganda Augustin. Village: Liketa.  
"People always ask me why I don't eat manioc leaves. Since I am not married another man's wife prepares my food. The other man's wife complains that I eat too much, more than her husband. If one always reproaches me for eating too much I will not eat any more manioc leaves".  
(note: manioc leaves are eaten as a vegetable)
23. Drums and chorus of crowd during curing ceremony by medicine-woman, Mwamutomboli Maria, in Bobaka. Her singing is not heard because of the loudness of the drums. This is the only piece of music in this album that was not caused by the presence of my tape recorder (except maybe some songs recorded during palm wine drinking parties).
24. Song by old woman: Nyamwabela Adèle. Village: Bondongo. "Each time there is an argument people tell me it's because of you, it's because of you. I must leave because people always get me into trouble".

25. Song by Mokwaka Albert, accompanied by Eketu drum. Village: Bondongo.  
"A man called Mwayoba says: I could die, and I haven't had a child, I did not father a son or a daughter. Lists the names of his parents, of his wife, etc".
26. Song by Liloko Michel, accompanying himself with Mokumbe bell. Village: Bobaka.  
(note: PONGO is a traditional form of wrestling)  
"I used to be a good Pongo player. When the white man came they told us not to wrestle any more, nor to play drums any more. It made me soft and weak".

RECORD 2, SIDE 1: BODJABA TRIBE

All recordings of the Bodjaba tribe were made in one village: Maleke.

1. Song by Mosele Adrien, accompanied by drums. No translation.
2. Song by woman, Likeme Thérèse.  
Jealousy song. The wife of a bigamous husband sings. She says to the other wife: "In the past our husband loved you but now he prefers me. Before you used to cook in good cooking pans but now you have only bad ones. Before you had fine dresses but now you have only poor ones".
3. Song by woman.  
Mourning song. Lamentation for the death of a father.
4. Singing and Libeke playing by Gbatoma Gaston (photo No.5). No translation.
5. Song by Mokangi Samuel and Bokwe Gaston. No translation.
6. Man singing, accompanied by drums. No translation.
7. Man singing, accompanied by drums. The song is about President Mobutu.

RECORD 2, SIDE 2

Tribe: BAMWE

8. Song by a man of Bamwe tribe, Mutundundu Fabien, living in a Libinza village, Bonianga. (photo No.4)
9. Song by a Bamwe woman living in a Libinza village: Bondongo.

Tribe: DJAMBA

- 10 and 11: Man singing, accompanied by chorus of children.

Tribe unknown

- 12, 13, 14. Three women from Bomboma came by canoe to sell manioc processed by fermentation to Libinza villagers. I was told that their language is Boba. I was not able to verify it. I recorded some of their songs.

Songs in LINGALA by Libinza men. Lingals is the lingua franca of the lower Congo River region.

15. Song by Etulu Nicodème. Village: Moteki.  
The singer was playing a rectangular drum covered with hide called "tambour" (French for drum), probably not of traditional origin. Other drums were accompanying. "They killed me, such a remarkable fellow. It is because of the drum. I am from Bontamba".
16. Song in honor of President Mobutu, by Mayuka Arnold. It was just before the presidential election, and this song was heard everywhere, and often played on the radio.

Title: Kumbe Kumbe

Kumbe kumbe ndeke munene  
Kumba ngai nalanda Mobutu  
Bisu bana ba Equateur tokovoter Mobutu  
District ya Ubangi na Mongala tokovoter Mobutu

(note: I used the French spelling for Equateur, voter, district)

Hawk Hawk

Hawk, hawk, large bird  
Carry me, I will follow Mobutu  
We, the children of the Equateur Province we shall vote for Mobutu  
The districts of Ubangi and Mongala we shall vote for Mobutu