MUSIC FROM
AN EQUATORIAL
MICROCOSM

FANG BWITI MUSIC
(with Mbiri Selections)
Recorded and Annotated by James W. Fernandez
1. Harp (Ngombi)
2. Preparatory music of harp (2 instruments)
3. Mbiri harp song
4. Mbiri harp song
5. Minkin song
6. Nyumba song
7. Minkin song
8. 13 songs of entrance (Minkin)
9. First harp song
10. Harp song
11. Harp song
12. Harp song
13. Harp song
14. Obango chants
15. 8 Mwanga songs
   4 Prayer songs
16. Yombo songs
17. 5 Yombo songs
18. Harp song
19. Harp song
20. Obango dance
21. 3 chained harp songs
22. Obango song
23. Obango song
24. Harp song

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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MUSIC FROM AN EQUATORIAL MICROCOSM

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A New Religion of the Equatorial Forest

This music comes from the Gabon Republic (West Africa) (Fig. 1). It is heard in chapels spreading from the seaside to tiny hamlets upon the plateau deep in the interior. Bwiti (and its sister cult Mbiri) has, in recent decades, spread very widely in Gabon. But it is not likely that active membership surpasses 10,000; less than 10% of the Fang people among whom the music was recorded.

The Fang, now well adapted to the lush growth and obscurity of the equatorial forest, have not lived in this milieu more than several hundred years. They are originally a savannah people, predominantly agricultural, of the northern Cameroon. They were forced into migration by the expansions of the Sudanic kingdoms of the 16th, 17th and 18th century. While forced from their original homes, they themselves made fearsome onslaughts upon the autochthoneous peoples of the Equatorial Forest. They were much feared and widely reputed in the 19th century. European journals of popular exploration featured them from the 1860's on...when their villages began to arrive at the coast. In many ways their culture contrasts with the other cultures of the Equatorial Forest. For example, the language they speak, Fang-Bulu, in its addiction to homophones and short utterances and in its emphasis upon tune reminds one of such Guinea Coast tongues as Ewe or Fon. It has been classed as a Neo-Bantu language for that reason though it has a Bantu noun class system. Still the rapid migration of the Fang has made them aware of and adaptive to other lifeways. The Bwiti and Mbiri cults show this adaptation.

The memory of the former savannah home is not lost. Fang migration legends detail the difficulty of entering into the forest from the savannah. They symbolize that difficulty in a tale of being blocked in migration by a giant Adzape tree. The aid of the pygmées was sought and they enabled the Fang to adapt to the forest. Some hunting technology and much hunting lore, practical and magical, has been learned from the pygmées. This symbolic Adzape tree is figured in the central pillar of the Bwiti cult house (the akon aba in Figure 2) and the pygmées often appear in Bwiti origin legends where they are pictured as having brought the eboga plant—bagarates—eboga—from the forest to the cult founders. In some respects Bwiti ritual is reminiscent of pygmée ceremonies.

Eboga is a psychotrophic plant (Fernandez 1971) indigenous to the equatorial forest. It is regularly employed in the religion in small amounts to increase resistance to fatigue. It is taken once or twice in very large amounts in initiation and in order to obtain reunion with the ancestors. In these visionary experiences under high dosages, initiates frequently journey to the land of the dead. This journey is, in effect, a return through the equatorial forests back to savannah uplands.

Much of the music on this record is played and sung under
flourishing movement already spreading up country from the seacoast. In its origins Bwiti appears to have been a taking up by the Fang of attractive and dynamic elements from the ancestor cults of southern trans-Ogowe Gabon called variously Mbuyi or Bwiti. The Fang ancestor cult was called Biiri. Over time and particularly after the Second World War this syncretism added many Christian elements in liturgy. In the late 1950's and early 1960's most branches of Bwiti among Fang followed a Christian calendar of ritual events concentrating on Easter with six day ceremonies. Christian orientations will be quite clear in the songs presented here. Nevertheless in inception and still in good part Fang Bwiti was a reworking of the Fang ancestor cult in syncretism with southern Gabonese cults. One of the principle declared purposes of Bwiti is to restore that revitalizing relationship with the ancestors that had been abandoned under missionary pressure. At the same time Fang Bwiti devotes itself to the greater powers of the universe and in particular to the Sister of God, Nyinguan Mebege, to whose life-giving benevolence the members appeal. The Sister of God is the power of the night. The moon is her symbol. It is appropriate that Bwiti ceremonies be held as they are at night: from 6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M.

The Fang Mbiiri cult has a later provenience—after the first world war. It originated also on the Gabonese coast and around the estuaries. It was in origin a reworking of a coastal water goddess cult of the same name. This cult promised wealth and good health to its devotees. Mbiiri among the Fang is primarily concerned with restoring physical well being to its devotees and does this by enabling them to make contact with those spirits, generally ancestral, that may be causing affliction. Mbiiri is therapeutic in intent and does not, like Bwiti, with its multitudinous songs and ritual symbolism, suggest a whole cosmology within which the believer may be redeemed. Mbiiri seances are much shorter than those of Bwiti.

Bwiti and Mbiiri

Bwiti is the major new religion in Gabon. It has its origins in the coming together of tribes in the trading centers of the lower Ogowe and in the Gabon estuary shortly after the turn of the century. By the 1920's Bwiti was a
Mbiri may more properly be called a "curing cult." Indeed, Fang refer to Mbiri chapels, which in contrast to Bwiti are generally directed by women, as the "hospitals" of the Bwiti religion. Mbiri is also said to be the religion of this world and Bwiti of the next. Chapels do have a similar appearance but ceremonies in Mbiri are shorter and the intentions more specific.

The Bwiti Chapel and Its Ritual Cycle

The Bwiti Chapel (aba eboza—council house of eboza) (Figure 2) is much more than a ceremonial shelter. It is a complex structure divided into symbolic areas within and between which the ritual proceed in their special order. In most general terms Bwiti is a celebration of the ultimate circumstances of life and death, creation and destruction. Birth and creation are celebrated until midnight and death and destruction after midnight. There are various levels of interpretation of these events. The birth and creation celebrated before midnight is the birth of the participants into the supernatural life of the ancestors and hence their "death" in this life. Similarly the death and destruction celebrated after midnight is at once the death of the soul in the after-life and his birth back into this life. The chapel has both a birth entrance and a death exit which are used according to the various phases of the ritual. In general, rituals move towards the rear of the chapel: from the world of the seen to the life beyond, the unseen world of the dead also associated with the other side of the ocean. Other dance sequences particularly at the beginning of cult when cosmic origins are being sung begin well outside the chapel and dance slowly within.

The pillar at the entrance to the chapel, the akon aba, simulates the adzape tree which blocked entrance into the equatorial forest. The rear of the chapel is associated to the sea. Thus ritual movement reiterates, as it proceeds from the front of the chapel to the rear, the legendary historical experience of the Fang. But the ritual and the ritual songs of Bwiti encompass more. In their early phases they celebrate the creation of the cosmos as well. Bwiti in addition to celebrating birth and death reenacts the entire experience of the Fang—cosmological, legendary and historical. The picture is even more complicated by the recent addition of Christian belief and myth to which many of the songs are devoted.

There is both a male and a female side to the chapel as well as chambers reserved for each sex. In contrast to traditional cults which were exclusively either male or female Bwiti gives equal place to the two sexes. A man's team dances before midnight and a woman's team after. There are thus songs which are sung by women alone, others by men, and still others by the sexes together.

The arrangement of ritual scenes in Bwiti from the brief 3:00 P.M. entrance is the following:

**Introduction**

1. Minkin: dances of entrance into the chapel and invitation to the ancestors. Intermittent, beginning at 3:00 P.M.

2. Nimbata: ceremonies of personal prayer, preparation, and foragathering. Held on massae in a hut outside the chapel, 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

**Zen Naëmbi: Part I (Road of the Cult Harp: Birth and Creation)**

3. Zen Abala: the dance of the birth of the spirit into the after life (synchronized to the birth of the child of man). From early evening until midnight. Interspersed with Obanga—vertiginous dances in which the spirit is shaken free from the body.

4. Nkobu Akuwusa: "Evagination," the ceremonies of final reunion with the ancestors. Final and most direct and powerful prayer to the supernatural. Direction of the "miraculous word" to the membership from the cult leader—nina na kümbi. Includes a small minkin in which the membership exits to go out into the forest on narrow pre-cut trails in order to invite in any lingering ancestor spirits. Midnight. Songs of the women's quarters, kümbi songs, are heard at this time.

**Zen Naëmbi: Part II (Road of the Cult Harp: Death and Destruction)**
5. **Zen Awo:** or the dances of the death of the spirit from the afterlife into this life (synchroned to the death of the child of man who becomes the Child of God). From midnight to first light, interspersed with **Nhangu**.

**Conclusion:**

6. **Minkin:** ceremonies of exit from the chapel and farewell to the ancestors. First light until sunrise.

7. **Mimba:** ceremonies of euphoric after-gathering of the membership for ritual food and relaxed conversation. 8:00 A.M.

This scenario which is characteristic of Asume Nging, "Begin the Life" branch of Bwiti, is not absolutely fixed in any cult house. Scene development and the use of the song repertoire (over 200 songs) tends to vary with season and with leaders responsible for the cult. But there are always four major categories of scans:

1. **Minkin:** ceremonies (songs and dances) of exit and entrance.

2. **Mimba:** ceremonies (songs and prayers) of group cohesion, intercommunication and appeal to the powers.

3. **Zen Nsöbi:** ceremonies (songs and dances) particularly celebrating the primordial experiences of the individual (at the level of body tissue, events of satisfaction and depletion) and of his culture (at the level of the mythological events of creation and dispersion). Generally divided into two subschemes as life processes or death processes are being celebrated (**zen shiale**, **zen ano**), and according as to whether the key instrument is the soft cult harp, **Nkmbi**, or the intense drums, **Nhangu**. The bamboo sounding board, **Nhanka**, may be played either softly or with resounding beat and hence is an instrument suitable to all kinds of dance.

4. **Evanjële:** ceremonies of communication of the "Word" from the powers, and confirmation of the bonds of the spiritual community.

**The Instruments, The Music and the Musicians**

There are four instruments basic to Bwiti: the 8 string (Egyptian) harp, (**Nsöbi**); the chest high barrel drum (**Nsöma**), the gong drum (**Mvu**), the bamboo sounding stave (**Nhanka**) and the one string musical bow (**Hang**). Occasional use is made of an antelope horn (**Nlak Mvu**), of various bells (**Alana**) and of a merliton (**Nhangu**) but these instruments are not central to the rituals. Characteristically the Bwiti members give elaborate symbolic explanations for all these instruments. By far the most important instrument is the cult harp. The sound of the harp is understood to be the voice of the Sister of God. Its power is evident in the fact that harp music is used to "clean out" the chapel before the rituals and its music drives away evil spirits. Its music also lifts the common prayers of the membership to heaven. The sounding box of the harp is associated to the womb and is understood as a spiritual source of life. Its cover of antelope skin is painted half red and half white on the left and right side respectively. It stands thus for the female and the male side of the cult house as well as of every ceremonial event. The eight strings of the harp are the sinews and tendons of the body of the Sister of God (Nlingwa Ntebege). They represent her endurance and flexibility. The four highest pitched strings are feminine and the lower four are masculine. When the harp is played these tones intermingle in harmonious ways exactly as male and female intermingle in harmonious ways in the ceremonies. The head of the harp is carved to represent the features of the Sister of God herself.

The most notable contrast in Bwiti music is between the gentle sound of the harp—it can be played, it is true, in a driving rhythms—and the powerful beating of the drums in the periodic dances known as **Nhangu**. The gentle and harmonious dances of the harp, the so-called "roads" of the harp, are thus punctuated throughout the night by the vertiginous dances of the **Nhangu**. The bamboo sounding stave provides rhythmic background for both types of dance. The purpose of the **Nhangu** dance is to free the soul from the body so that it can mingle sociably with the ancestor spirits who have returned to the Chapel from the deep forest. The music of the harp is said to be the music played by the dead in the afterworld. In the more
Christian cults it is said to be the music played by the angels in heaven. Dreams and visions of heaven frequently bring new musical inclinations to the membership. Butit harp players are renowned. It is not an instrument taken up, by those who play it, only during the weekend ceremonies. Harp players frequently go everywhere accompanied by a smaller and more easily portable version of the harp they play during the ten to 12 hours of the Saturday cult. And they can be heard strumming on that smaller harp on every occasion and in any situation. Frequently enough the buti ngambú is a young man or an older unmarried man. On the one hand it is said that a man devoted to the harp cannot also devote himself to women. And on the other hand, it is said that men who are “singing” with women are not pure enough to play the harp which, after all, is the voice and the presence of the Sister of God.

A Language Note

In keeping with the strong influence of southern Ganounse culture and ancestor cults, particularly those of the Htsogó, Balombo, Etshira and Wtonswe, the songs in Fang Butit incorporate words and phrases from these languages. Many of the songs, particularly the prayer songs and the songs of the mbunk and njmba are sung, supposedly, entirely in these languages. The Fang Butit calls this language “Papi Fang” or “our Latin.” It is a language not understood by the majority of the membership and in many Chapels only key words are understood even by leaders. Many of these songs are learned entirely by rote and thus, also, the explanations of them. Naturally where there is no point of reference to a spoken language, these rote lyrics tend to drift and change as they are passed from one chapel to another. Speakers of the original languages are often amused at the result. Because of this often spurious variability, full translations will be provided only for those songs sung entirely or mainly in Fang. These will be, predominantly, the harp songs of the roads of birth and death.
The Recordings

1. Preparatory music of the Harp (nyonmbi). Early in the evening before and during the Njimba the harp is played softly in the cult house in order to "clean" it. Evil spirits are driven away and the ancestor spirits are, at the same time, alerted to the coming ceremonies. Often songs may be murmured in a muffled and unintelligible fashion over the harp. Recorded at Ekwakum Chapel, Oyem District, November 1959. Performer: Mvono Assou Andre.

2. Preparatory music of the Harp (two instruments). Frequently in this cleaning of the chapel, two instruments will be played together. Every Chapel has a number of harp players to spell each other during the long night. This selection shows the driving and lifting quality that can be obtained by the nyanmbi. Recorded at Ekwakum Chapel, Oyem District, December 1959. Performers: Mvono Assou Andre and Essono Ona B. Pastor.

3. Mbiri Harp Song. This is a narrative lament by the leader of a local Mbiri cult house. He laments that men who wish for well being in this world do not listen to the council of the people of Mbiri who can bring it to them. "A kumana me ndele," he sings, which in the Mbone language means, "as it has enabled me to easily prosper." Such people ignore the land beyond this one, ebongat or ebongo, to which Mbiri can make contact. Such people, not listening to the words of the singer, are condemned to suffer while others prosper. Recorded at Assok Ngoum chapel, Oyem District, Performer Elle Amana Michel.

4. Mbiri Harp Song. Of the same genre as #3, but rather than a lament the song celebrates the power of the harp to carry men into contact with the powers of the hereafter. Recorded at Assok Ngoum Chapel, Oyem District, February 1959. Performer Elle Amana Michel.

5. Minkin Song. Song of first entrance into the chapel. (Sung in Popi Fang) The song recorded here follows the group of men and women as, starting from far outside the chapel, they dance their way slowly within. Given the subject matter it is appropriate the song be led by a woman.

   Call: Ezigo zama wondo ya tena tena.
   Response: Yo wo, ezigo zama wondo ya tena tena.

This is translated by the members of this Chapel as "The blood, Eve has seen her first menstrual blood." Ezigo wood of the redwood tree is used metaphorically for the menstrual blood. Recorded at Ekwakum Chapel, Oyem District, December 1959.

6. Njimba Chants (sung in Popi Fang). These chants take place in a hut accessory to the cult chapel either before or after personal prayers. They seek to prepare the cosmos and the chapel for ensuing ceremony. In this particular selection the eboka plant is hailed as opening man to the discovery that God is ready to make contact with them in the cult house. The pillar of heaven and earth, mbanga, is placed ready to mediate that contact. All the authorities of the cult, named in order, also stand ready. There are three stanzas to this selection each ended with the customary incantation:

   'Banjie, Nima na kombo, Benganga, Bokaya.' Recorded at Kouyoulou Chapel, Kango District, February 1960.

7. Minkin song of the first entrance into the chapel (sung in Popi Fang).

   Soya, soya biga mivo... God's afterbirth, the egg of the spider descends to the sea.

Recorded at Ekwakum Chapel, Oyem District, December 1959.

8. Thirteen songs of entrance (minkin) into the chapel. (Sung in Popi Fang) These songs, as all songs of the minkin, recount the creation of the cosmos, the earth and the first man.

   a. Engadi na duma... Male and female like lightning and thunder come together to create the first man.

   b. Zambi avang... God who has created has finished with the first Creation. His presence is in the water.

   c. Soya biga mivo... The afterbirth of the Creator God is an Egg floating on the ocean out of which the three first beings appear.

   d. Dido Nkama ye bokong... The first man is created.

   e. Ngomandan ao wa ya... The creation of woman. (Women sing, men respond)
The references in the song are to the beginnings of worship brought about by the various instruments and the transformations brought about in the members through worship. The globule is the female principle of creation which has been sent down from the Sister of God as the Spider’s egg was sent down from God himself. Recorded at Kougoulou Chapel, Kango District, February 1960.

10. Harp song of the Road of Birth and Creation (in Fang). An early song in this cycle. Here it is sung in solo although in cult it is sung by the entire membership.

Ryama, Ryama, Ryama
A lak eki, banganga nyamo.
Kaze a kobo ening.
Tara Zyame da ya kire, Father He, it finds its place
Nyama Zyame da ya kire, Father God, it finds its place
Banganga nyamo, place, adepts of God.
Banganga za, Bondani, Mbosseyko, yeke. (Popi Fang)

The song celebrates the breaking open of the cosmic egg sent down by sky spider—dihoba, carrying out God’s will. The egg is the first point of reference in the endless inchoate ocean. The final line in Popi Fang is the beginning of an Obang— the rapid often vertiginous dance to drums.

Recorded at Ekwum Chapel, Oyen District, February 1959.

Performers: Mvomo Asumu André.


Ndende a kobo ening oh, Zama oh.
Ndende a kobo ening oh, a sighle mbamba.
A kobo endama, ba ghe kobo.
A kobo ening betara Zama.
Ndende a kobo ening oh, a sighle mbamba.
That which is suspended speaks to (kindles) life, Oh Father
That which is suspended speaks to (kindles) life, it descends definitively,
It speaks to the bat, they speak together.
It speaks of life, fathers God.
The suspended thing it speaks of life, oh it forever descends.

The song celebrates the descent of the sky spider’s egg which brings life down with it and also light to the dark inchoate ocean. It chases away the bat, the creature of darkness.
Recorded at Ekawukum Chapel, Oyem District, February 1959.

Performer Nyvemo Asumu Andre.


An early Harp song celebrating the arcane secrets and practices known to God and to the members of Bwiti.

Bwiti mendongo  Secret arcane practices of Bwiti
Mendongo     Oh,Oh,Oh
Bwiti Mendongo Oh,Oh,Oh etc.

Recorded at Ekawukum, Oyem District, February 1959. Performer

Nyvemo Asumu Andre.

13. Harp song of the road of birth and creation (in Fang).

This is a song from the midpoint of the creation cycle in which the coming of the great flood has covered over and drowned all the clans.

Neyong me nga dziba The clans have been covered over
Tara, oh, me dziba Father they are covered over
Zama, oh, me dziba God they are covered over
Nysam me dziba Old one they are covered over,
Ye me dziba And they are covered over
Dimano mikodia, The waters covered by the rainbow
Mikodia atsenga, The rainbow by the heavens
Atsenga dibobia, The heavens by the spider.
Zamba a pōngō God who prepares all
Mwagabenda, me dziba God who announced all, they are covered over.
Tara oh, me dziba Father, oh, covered over.

Recorded at Ekawukum Chapel, Oyem District, November 1959.

14. Obango Chants (in Popi Fang). These short chants characteristic of the vertiginous dancing of the Obango drumming (see selections 20, 22 and 23) are interspersed between the Harp songs. These chants, here given in solo, come midway along in the second cycle of Harp songs, the Zen Avu or Road of death and destruction.

a) Nsane a duma The Child of God is struck down by the spear.
b) Nganga ma duma The Divine One is struck down.
c) Monganga ma duma The Child of God is struck down and remains a cadaver.
d) Bokaya wo boka oh. Secret power of the unseen, oh, eboka.
e) Malula, malula, ngombi nya we. The cadaver of the Child of God is swung over his shoulder.

Recorded at Ekawukum, Oyem District, January 1959. Performer

Nyvemo Asumu Andre.

15. Eight mwanga songs and four prayers to the Sister of God (in Popi Fang). The mwanga songs are sung at the funeral of a member of Bwiti and occasionally during cult at the moment in which the Child of God is killed. The prayer songs, there are ten in all, usually take place at midnight but may also occur along with the mwanga songs.

I Mwanga songs:

a. Nanga koko.........Death has taken the Child of Man.
b. Habiga na membwe...The Child of Man falls into obscurity.
c. Ngakjo, ngakjo.........The Child of Man is revived for his journey to God.
d. Ye kongkongo katina luba.......The dead is shown the way to God.
e. Oh kula mba ye...The dead now makes its way to God.
f. Mwanga a ndu mwanga.The dead arrives at the land of the dead.
g. Eziga Zama wondi...Two pygmae girls mark their way to the land of the dead.
h. Ye mwanga ma bō kameye.......The land of the dead receives the newly dead.

II Prayer Songs:

a. Ahh kasa na mme ye...The evocation of the Sister of God.
b. Eyame wome, oya yùba................The milk of the sister of God is of the sweet water of the vine.
c. Mnzogo bida tsume manga................The spirit of the Sister of God arrives in the water of the Sacred Pool.
d. Metonga ndo wo metonga nya mwe...............A child is born through intervention of the Sister of God.

Recorded at Sougoudzapville, Oyem District, February 1959.

Performer Meto ogo Zogo Vincent.

16. Yombó song of the women's chamber (in Popi Fang). This song though here performed by a male singer is, in cult, exclusively performed by women. This is the second song of a 22 song cycle and is sung just after midnight.

Bôngo oh, me zabe zabe bong...I proclaim my virginity.
The women are proclaiming the various powers that make them fertile. Recorded at Sougoudzapville, Oyem District, February 1959. Performer Meto ogo Zogo Vincent.

17. Five Yombo songs of the women's chamber (in Popi Fang). These songs are mainly devoted to women's fertile powers of creation and sexuality.

a. Ah dzige Nzambëwo oh Zambëwo...The woman is ready to give birth.
b. Inanga oh.....................The woman gives birth.
c. Inanga me kwiang oh...The Sister of God blesses the birth left it be stolen.

d. Ndangame mikodia, mikodia...A glass of eboka (Tabernacle eboka) is brought to the Child of Man that he may sip of it.

e. Diveyo, diveya enganga a sumena diveya...the Child of Man takes up his powers in this world.

Recorded at Kougooule Chapel, Kango District, February 1960.

18. Harp (n'gambi) song of the road of death and destruction (Zen Awa). (Sung in Fang.) A song occurring relatively early in the Death Cycle. The explanation; though a good man like the Child of God should die yet his soul will go to heaven as a star. Shining there it inspires men enabling them to constantly renew themselves.

Call: Monanga da kobe ening oh The star speaks to (kindles) Life
Response: Oh Zame oh All is well. Oh God

Call: Monanga da bile ening oh The star holds life Response: e sumeya mbembe. It forever renews itself.

Recorded at Kougooule Chapel, Kango District, February 1960.

19. Harp song of the Road of Death (in Fang). This song is sung towards the end of the second Harp cycle when the Child of Man becomes the Child of God.

N'vwan a Zamba Kanga a king bakobo. The Child of God vanishes following the trail to the creators.

A n'o'k'vwan Zamba vanga He becomes the Child of God, the pacifier, the Savior of Man.

Recorded at Ekukam Chapel, Oyem District, January 1959.

Performers: N'gambi Asumu André.

20. Obangô. One of the vertiginous dances for loosening up the soul within the body in preparation for its ecstatic reunion with the ancestors.

21. Three chained Harp songs of the Road of Death (in Fang). These songs are part of those celebrating the death of the Child of Man. Very similar songs are sung in the Road of Birth (Zen Abiala).

Ecam a yine awua The group understands death.
Tara a kôbô awua Father speaks of death.
Awu a ne mbembe ah Death is forever Nana Nyepe

Chorus - Oh Nana Nyepe Me wua Nana Nyepe
Chorus: Oh Nana Nyepe I die Nana Nyepe
Me wua, enyi a vu fuo, I die, he has truly died, Nana Nyepe
Me wua, Oh Oh Nana I die oh, Nana Nyepe
Nganga a tua wona The Divine (Adept) has truly disappeared from the earth.
message.

It will be noted that the "death" of the singer, as well as the individual member is celebrated along with that of the Child of God. The death referred to is the ecstatic release of the soul from the body. Nana Nyepe is another name for Nanging Mebege, the Sister of God. The name is from the Tsogo word, n'yepe, which means "to know how to live, to beautify, to make better, hence "she who makes life better." Recorded at Kougooule Chapel, Kango District, February 1960. Principle Performer: Ngamba Anana ilvindja.

22. Obangô of the Road of Death (in Popi Fang).

Ngamba ma dumeya...The Divine One cries out.

Recorded at Kougooule Chapel, Kango District, February 1960.


24. Harp Song of the Road of Death (in Fang). This is the penultimate song of the Death Road and one of the final songs of the night long rituals.

Oh Tara, Oh Nana Nyepe Oh Father, O Beneficent Mother
Oh Nanging Mebege Oh Sister of God
Chorus: A hì hì Zame Nkembe God is forever
N'gambi a n'o'k' mbembe Zame M'bembe The Harp has arrived in its good place,
Chorus: It is surely there, it begins!
N'gambi a so wa yala etc. Chorus: God forever
Chorus: The Harp forever.

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Suggested Reading:


Midnight:
Preparation
for the Yombe
songs in the
women's cham-
bers. Ayol Chap-
el, Mitzik
District.

Women dancers
replacing the
men. Ayol
Chapel, Mitzik
District.