PSALMS SUNG IN THE CAMEROONS

The Bamileke/Recorded and with notes by John Phillipson/ Folkways Records FR 8910

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MUSIC LP
psalms of the cameroons
connected and edited by john phillipson

Recorded probably in the region of Ewondo, prior to 1959. The language is similar to that of the Fang inhabiting much of the Gabon, and therefore it is presumed that the tribal group belongs to the Bulu, Yaunde, or related ethnic groups. Little else is known about this recording, except that it was made in a large dwelling, probably a mission church.

The words given in the psalms are phonetic approximations of the lines sung by the chorus. The translation that follows is equally approximate and it may even be fanciful.

PSALM 117

Praise the Lord, all nations!
Exalt him, all peoples!
1 For great is his steadfast love toward us;
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever.
Praise the Lord!

Psalm 8

O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is thy name in all the earth!
Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted
by the mouth of babes and infants,
thou hast founded a bulwark because of thy foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.
5 When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars which thou hast established;
the son of man that thou dost care for him?
Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honor.

6 Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet;
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the sea.
9 O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is thy name in all the earth!

Psalm 104

Zamba ema na ton ma dze ma sand
ai dzo
zamba ema nd ton ma.

God himself nourishes me, why should I be troubled,
god himself nourishes me.

104 Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord my God, thou art very great!
Thou art clothed with honor and majesty,
2 who coverest thyself with light as with a garment,
who hast stretched out the heavens like a tent,
3 who hast laid the beams of thy chambers on the waters,
who makest the clouds thy chariots,
who ridest on the wings of the wind,
4 who makest the winds thy messengers,
fire and flame thy ministers.

5 Thou didst set the earth on its foundations,
so that it should never be shaken.
6 Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
7 At thy rebuke they fled;
at the sound of thy thunder they took to flight.
8 The mountains rose, the valleys sank down
to the place which thou didst appoint for them.
9 Thou didst set a bound which they should not pass
so that they might not again cover the earth.

10 Thou makest springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
11 they give drink to every beast of the field;
the wild asses quench their thirst.
12 By them the birds of the air have their
habitation; they sing among the branches.
13 From thy lofty abode thou waterest the
mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of
thy work.
14 Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the
cattle, and plants for man to cultivate,
that by may bring forth food from the
earth.
15 And wine to gladden the heart of man, oil
to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen
man’s heart.
16 The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon which he planted.
17 In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has her home in the fir trees.
18 The high mountains are for the wild
goats; the rocks are a refuge for the badgers.
19 Thou hast made the moon to mark the
seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.
20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night,
when all the beasts of the forest creep
forth.
21 The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.
22 When the sun rises, they get them away
and lie down in their dens.
23 Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until the evening.
24 O Lord, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all;
the earth is full of thy creatures.
25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
which teems with things innumerables,
living things both small and great.
26 There go the ships, and Leviathan which thou didst form
to sport in it.
27 These all look to thee, to give them their food in due season.
28 When thou seest them, they gather
it up; when thou openest thy hand, they are
filled with good things.
29 When thou hidest thy face, they are dis-
mayed; when thou takest away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
30 When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created;
and thou renewest the face of the
ground.
31 May the glory of the Lord endure for
ever, may the Lord rejoice in his works,
who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they
smoke!
32 I will sing to the Lord as long as I
live; I will sing praise to God while I
have being.
33 May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the Lord.
34 Let sinners be consumed from the
earth, and let the wicked be no more! Bless the Lord, O my soul!
Praise the Lord!

Psalm 23

23 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall
not want;
he makes me lie down in green
pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name’s sake.
4 Even though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil; for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
5 Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
thou anointest my head with oil,
my cup overflows.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall fol-
low me all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for ever.

Psalm 98

98 Sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvelous
things!
His right hand and his holy arm
have gotten him victory.
2 The Lord has made known his victory,
he has revealed his vindication in
the sight of the nations.
3 He has remembered his steadfast love
and faithfulness to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.
4 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the
earth; break forth into joyous song and sing
praises.
5 Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody!
6 With trumpets and the sound of the
horn make a joyful noise before the King,
the Lord!
7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who dwell in it!
8 Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing for joy together
before the Lord, for he comes to judge
the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!
The LORD is great in Zion;
he is exalted over all the peoples.
Let them praise thy great and terrible name!
Holy is he!
Mighty King, lover of justice,
thou hast established equity;
thou hast executed justice
and righteousness in Jacob.
Exalt the LORD our God;
worship at his footstool!
Holy is he!

Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel also was among those who called on his name.
They cried to the LORD, and he answered them.
He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;
they kept his testimonies,
and the statutes that he gave them.
O LORD our God, thou didst answer them;
thou wast a forgiving God to them,
but an avenger of their wrongdoings.
Exalt the LORD our God,
and worship at his holy mountain;
for the LORD our God is holy!

Make a joyful noise to the LORD,
all the lands!* Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!
Know that the LORD is God!
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him, bless his name!
For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Praise the LORD!
O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures for ever!
Who can utter the mighty doings of the LORD,
or show forth all his praise?
Blessed are they who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times!
Remember me, O LORD, when thou showest favor to thy people;
help me when thou deliverest them;
that I may see the prosperity of thy chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation,
that I may glory with thy heritage.
Both we and our fathers have sinned;
we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.
Our fathers, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider thy wonderful works;
they did not remember the abundance of thy steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea.
Yet he saved them, for his name's sake,
that he might make known his mighty power.
He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry;
and he led them through the deep as through a desert.
10 So he saved them from the hand of the foe, and delivered them from the power of the enemy.
11 And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left.
12 Then they believed his words; they sang his praise.
13 But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel.
14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness; and put God to the test in the desert;
15 he gave them what they asked, but sent a wasting disease among them.

16 When men in the camp were jealous of Moses and Aaron, the holy one of the Lord, the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.
18 Fire also broke out in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.
19 They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a molten image.
20 They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass.
21 They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea.
23 Therefore he said he would destroy them—had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

24 Then they despised the pleasant land, having no faith in his promise.
25 They murmured in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the Lord.
26 Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them that he would make them fall in the wilderness, and would disperse their descendants among the nations, scattering them over the lands.
28 Then they attached themselves to the Ba'al of Pe'or, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;
29 they provoked the Lord to anger with their doings; and a plague broke out among them.
30 Then Phinehas stood up and interposed, and the plague was stayed.
31 And that has been reckoned to him as righteousness from generation to generation for ever.
32 They angered him at the waters of Mer'ibah, and it went ill with Moses on their account;
33 for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke words that were rash.

34 They did not destroy the peoples, as the Lord commanded them,
35 but they mingled with the nations and learned to do as they did.
36 They served their idols, which became a snare to them.
37 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons;
38 they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
39 and the land was polluted with blood.
40 Thus they became unclean by their acts, and played the harlot in their doings.
41 Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he abhorred his heritage;
42 he gave them into the hand of the nations, so that those who hated them ruled over them.
43 Their enemies oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their power.
44 Many times he delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purposes, and were brought low through their iniquity.
45 Nevertheless he regarded their distress, when he heard their cry.
46 He remembered for their sake his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
47 He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive.
48 Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to thy holy name and glory in thy praise.

49 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the Lord!

Psalm 84
Besamim mum, mbol ba tobo a nda dzo e, besamim mum.
Happy he who lives in the house, happy indeed.

84
How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

3 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
4 Blessed are those who dwell in thy house, ever singing thy praise! Selah
5 Blessed are the men whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
6 As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.
7 They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.
8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah
9 Behold our shield, O God; look upon the face of thine anointed!
10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.
12 O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in thee!
34 I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul magnifies the LORD; let the afflicted hear and be glad.
3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!
4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.
5 Look to him, and be radiant; so your face shall never be ashamed.
6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.
8 O taste and see that the LORD is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!
9 O fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
10 The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
11 Come, O sons, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 What man is there who desires life, and covets many days, that he may enjoy good?
13 Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.
14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.
15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous, and his ears toward their cry.
16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.
18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.
19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.
20 He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.
21 Evil shall slay the wicked; and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Psalm 88

88 O Lord, my God, I call for help by day; I cry out in the night before thee.
2 Let my prayer come before thee, incline thy ear to my cry!
3 For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol.
4 I am reckoned among those who go down to the Pit;
I am a man who has no strength,
like one forsaken among the dead,
like those whom thou dost remember no more,
for they are cut off from thy hand.
6 Thou hast put me in the depths of the Pit,
in the regions dark and deep.
7 Thy wrath lies heavy upon me, and thou dost overwhelm me with all thy waves. Selah
8 Thou hast caused my companions to shun me; thou hast made me a thing of horror to them.
9 I am shut in so that I cannot escape;
my eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon thee, O Lord; I spread out my hands to thee.
10 Dost thou work wonders for the dead? Do the shades rise up to praise thee? Selah
11 Is thy steadfast love declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in Abaddon?
12 Are thy wonders known in the darkness, or thy saving help in the land of forgetfulness?
13 But I, O Lord, cry to thee; in the morning my prayer comes before thee.
14 O Lord, why dost thou cast me off? Why dost thou hide thy face from me?
15 Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer thy terrors; I am helpless.
16 Thy wrath has swept over me; thy dread assaults destroy me.
17 They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in upon me together.
18 Thou hast caused my companions to shun me; my companions are in darkness.