

As a final personal comment, the present reviewer would like to add the observation that African historical studies in general, during the past few decades, have displayed a strong swing away from the earlier concentration on post-Western contact — or colonial history — towards earlier, purely indigenous history. In studying popular culture history, on the other hand, there often seems to be a tendency for evidence of early local cultural roots to be disregarded. As an excuse for this, some writers find it convenient to raise a smoke-screen by questioning homogeneity between present rural culture and eighteenth and nineteenth-century practices (see Erlmann, p.9; and also Coplan, 1985, p.33). But there is a fair amount of relevant documentation on tribal culture, some of it dating back to early last century, which surely needs to be consulted. What about the extensive *James Stuart Archive*, for example, to mention but one source? I think the matter of 'roots', syncretism and continuity calls for more serious consideration in the future. But enough of this nit-picking. It's a very good book!

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SHABA DIARY: A TRIP TO REDISCOVER THE 'KATANGA' GUITAR STYLES AND SONGS OF THE 1950s AND '60s, by John Low, Acta Ethnologica et Linguistica Nr.54, Ed. Engelbert Stiglmayr, Series Musicologica 4 Series Africana 16, Wien-Föhrenau, 1982. *Co-eds*: Franz Födermayr, Anna Hohenwart-Gerlachstein, Gerhard Kubik, 125 pp., photo, music examples, bibliography, discography.

This book relates the details of the author's solitary trip in 1979 to Shaba in Zaïre — partly on foot, with back-pack and guitar — to learn about the 'Katanga guitar finger styles' that dominated East and Central African record sales during the 1950s and '60s. Three of the best-known guitarists of the period are introduced: Jean-Bosco Mwenda, Losta Abelo, and Edouard Masengo; and some of their songs and finger styles are discussed in depth.

The author, John Low, was born in Kenya and lived there until the age of 14, so he has a good command of Swahili which stood him in good stead for his field work. This book covers only the first part of his extensive eight-month East African expedition through Shaba, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Burundi and Kenya, lasting from August 1979 to April 1980. John Low's interest in African guitar styles stems initially from listening to Hugh Tracey's recordings, which he encountered in England. He took pains to learn to sing and play some of these guitar songs, notably those of Mwenda, partly checking his efforts against transcriptions published in *African Music* Vol. 2/4, 1961 and Vol. 3/1, 1962.

The first 102 pages of the book contain edited transcripts from John Low's diary — very intimate and chatty accounts of his various experiences in Zaïre which make fascinating reading. He was eminently successful in his main quest: to meet and take lessons from Jean-Bosco Mwenda in person. In fact, for nearly a month he lived as a guest in the large house of Mwenda and his wife Kiembe, in Lubumbashi, with their nine children. Here he was able to make direct, intimate and detailed studies of

Mwenda's music at first hand, besides getting plenty of practical help and encouragement in the way of informal 'master classes'. As a result, this diary presents the reader with a wealth of extremely valuable analytical notes, transcripts, and practical comments. Low's sessions with the other two guitarists, Losta Abelo and Edouardo Masengo were of shorter duration but are also of interest.

The "Diary" section is followed by four appendices, all of which provide a lot of useful information and stimulating comment. Appendix A, entitled "The origin of non-tribal Katangan guitar styles", discusses the traditional music of Katanga; church music; Katangan semi-tribal guitar styles; the impact of foreign popular music; and European popular music. Appendix B is concerned with "Guitar tablature, musical notation and terminology"; Appendix C discusses "Some research problems"; and Appendix D stresses the urgency of further research. A selection of field recordings from this trip was issued on disc by Original Music, Inc, 418 Lasher Road, Tivoli, NY 12583, USA.

John Low provides fuller biographical details of the proverbial Jean-Bosco Mwenda than had been available heretofore. (For earlier notes about him, see the *African Music Society Newsletter*, Vol. 1/6, 1953; the two *African Music* issues cited above, and also Vol. 6/2, 1982, pp.132-4.) Hugh Tracey first 'discovered' and recorded Mwenda in Jadotville, Belgian Congo (now Zaire) in 1950. A great number of further, commercial recordings of his songs were subsequently made and distributed by Gallotone (see list in *African Music* 3/1, 1962, p.102). In 1956 his celebrated *Masanga* theme (from Tracey's first recording) was borrowed by Sir William Walton and included in his *Johannesburg Festival Overture*. In 1961 Mwenda did a concert tour covering Nairobi, Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, and his recordings became very widely known. In 1964 Pete Seeger published a simplified tablature version of the *Masanga* transcription (from the 1961 *African Music* article) in *Sing Out* magazine, Vol. 14/2, 1964, pp.23-5.

To mention a few later developments (after the time of Low's Shaba trip): in 1981 a classical guitarist Timothy Walker (playing from the transcription of the guitar solo version of *Masanga* in *African Music* 2/4, 1961) recorded it in his album: *Classical Folk Guitar* (London: Hyperion Records A66027). In 1982 Mwenda was invited to Austria and Germany. In Vienna, Dr Gerhard Kubik made a short sound-film of his performance. I understand that this is to appear shortly on a video cassette (together with guitar songs by several other African performers). Ten items by Mwenda are shortly going to be issued by Mountain Records (also connected with EWM — Ethnic World Music GmbH of Hamburg). These were recorded in Cape Town about five years ago during Mwenda's visit to South Africa. Four of the items are old ones, but in lower keys and a little slower. (*Masanga* is in key G, with no voice part; the original version was in C.)

The latest, very tragic news is that there is a strong and widespread rumour that Jean-Bosco Mwenda was killed in a motor accident. I have not yet been able to get any definite confirmation or details of the place, date or circumstances; but if this is true he will be sorely missed, and long remembered!

John Low's *Shaba Diary* is a highly desirable book — especially for 'folk guitar' enthusiasts. Unfortunately, you may not find it easy to obtain. The publisher is Dr Engelbert Stiglmayr, Wienerstrasse 141, A-2822 Föhrenau, Austria.

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DANIEL KACHAMBA MEMORIAL CASSETTE, ed. Mitchell Strumpf, with commentary booklet, 26pp, by Gerhard Kubik, University of Malaŵi, Zomba, 1992.

Every now and then a flowering of particular expertise will occur, unforeseen and either of brief duration or leading on to ripples more widespread than could possibly have been anticipated, in some backwater of the world which nobody till then has much regarded. The phenomenon may have been of more importance than we can possibly know: in the eighteenth century Lichfield threw up the Darwins, the Wedgwoods, the Burneys, the Sewards, David Garrick and Samuel Johnson: after which England, and even the world, were never the same again. Leaving aside such examples, we can only speculate, like Gray in his *Elegy*, about those which are forgotten or may have been fruitless.

When I first went to Nyasaland in the 1950s it might as well have been asked, by the few outsiders who had ever heard of the place, can anything good come out of Singano Village? There was music everywhere; many other villages besides Singano carried on both tradition and innovation; there was no reason to single out any one more than another. Yet even then there was a style building up in Singano, fostered by a close kinship of musicians, which was to have a considerable influence on the directions taken by African popular music.

Daniel Kachamba and his younger brother Donald were both born there, but moved in early youth to Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe). They were the sons of James Kachamba, an accomplished musician, and it was his influence, and that of his colleagues and kinsfolk Mofolo Chilimbwalo and Soza Molesi, which bore more on the development of their styles, and especially the guitar style of Daniel, than did the musical ambience of the foreign city. Daniel was nonetheless both eclectic and highly individual, gleaned what suited him from all he heard, and sometimes as a soloist, sometimes as leader of a band, began to produce music which without departing grossly from the mainstream had an excitement and effervescence of its own,

This cassette is an anthology of his work both as composer and as performer. As such, his self-effacing expertise is very well brought out; Daniel the creator allows his companions to shine while as a player he maintains a vivid background for them. The selection gives a very good representation of his work in both capacities; it also illustrates quite poignantly his good humour and his effortless musicianship, and the breadth of his accomplishment. There have been times when the exuberance of his younger brother has seemed to overshadow him; and though such moments are not absent here, the overall impression is one of his strength and accomplishment. Sadly,