

## THE ENDARA XYLOPHONE OF BUKONJO

by

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In "Tribal Crafts of Uganda"<sup>1</sup>, K. P. Wachsmann reports on a xylophone of the Bakonjo<sup>2</sup>, called *Endara* which consists of 16 to 18 keys played by five men each of them having "a plain stick in his hand". Already, by 1951 and even before, the *Endara* was "very rare" according to Wachsmann.

So we must consider ourselves<sup>3</sup> very lucky indeed to have found the xylophone of Bukonjo in at least three different places in the area around Bwera, although we never saw a complete set played. The first place we went to was some miles away from Bwera right in the mountains. When the people heard that we were interested in hearing this music, they were anxious to "build up" a xylophone of 14 keys on the spot. Very soon, however, we learned that the logs had been cut by small boys as a part of their play and they were no longer properly tuned. The boys used to place the untuned logs on the banana stems in a rising and falling sequence, which we never found again.

At the second place, also near Bwera, we were successful. There we met an old man with two boys about ten or twelve years old playing a xylophone of ten keys.

*Description of the Endara of Bukonjo*

The log xylophone commonly known in Bukonjo as *Endara* (the first syllable is high and stressed) seems, according to African informants, to be constructed in the same way all over the region. The three instruments we saw were very much like the *Amadinda* of Buganda: a base of two fresh banana stems into which a series of sticks are pressed with the wooden logs or "keys" placed between them.<sup>4</sup> One difference between the xylophone of the Baganda and that of the Bakonjo was that the *Endara* logs were much bigger and heavier and, perhaps because of this, not attached by cords to the nearest sticks. Even when striking them hard they did not move out of their positions. Another difference was the number of keys, which according to all our African informants has to be 14 for the *Endara* while the *Amadinda* of Buganda has 12 keys and the *Akadinda* usually 22.

We soon observed how much Bakonjo music is connected with Bakonjo religion; this holds true also for their xylophone music. Its religious background may be one reason for its rapid disappearance nowadays. By comparison the traditional music of Busoga and Buganda (in the prosperous and much more westernized lake provinces) is still played by a few people at least. But *Amadinda* music as an example from that region is much more "l'art pour l'art" and although there are religious links<sup>5</sup>, it is a court music and its social, historical and spiritual background is the Kabaka's palace. Therefore, the fact that its most important living performer, Evaristo Muyinda, is a Catholic does not harm the music.

The old man with his two boys from Bwera told us he had obtained his *Endara* xylophone on the advice of a *Omutabwa* (a native doctor and diviner). The *Omutabwa* had said to him that the spirits of the dead, the *Abalimu*, recommended that "a xylophone

<sup>1</sup> Oxford University Press, London, 1953; pages 318, 319 and 320.

<sup>2</sup> The Bakonjo, a small farming Bantu tribe, live on the slopes of the Ruwenzori massif both on the Uganda and the Congo side. Until recently they had many musical instruments and a distinct way of playing them.

<sup>3</sup> The short research trip into Bukonjo was carried out in May, 1962, together with Mr. Gerald Moore, the Director of the Extra-Mural Department of Makerere University College, Kampala. Here I would like to thank him for his invitation to accompany him on a lecture tour in the Western Province of Uganda. In our spare time we went to visit some Bakonjo villages in the mountains and made recordings of the *Endara* xylophone.

<sup>4</sup> Wachsmann describes an instrument where "the banana stems were supported, close to their ends, by short stumps of banana trunk notched to receive them" (in "Tribal Crafts of Uganda" page 318).

<sup>5</sup> Wachsmann writes in "Tribal Crafts of Uganda" on the *Akadinda*: "At its first performance or sometimes previous to an important function, the instrument is submitted to a ceremony, part of which consists of the sacrifice of a cock or a goat and some beer. The blood of the animal and a mouthful of the liquid are splashed over the slabs . . .".

should always be in the house". After the talk with the diviner the old man walked into the Congo to Emuramba, a small village near the Uganda border, where, as he was told, a xylophone maker was working. He had, however, nothing of sufficient worth to buy a whole set of keys, so he bought 10 logs only for a goat, the remaining four big ones (keys No. XI - XIV) he explained, he would buy at a later time.

The old man continued saying that the keys for the *Endara* must be made of the wood of a special tree called *Omulumgulu*, which could be found on the other side of the mountain in the Congo. But the logs could only be cut by a "special person" and only after a hen or a goat had been sacrificed.

After having played many compositions for us until late in the night, he agreed to give us some information on the music as well, if we gave him money. This money was not to increase his personal income, he asserted, but should be considered as a sacrifice for the *Abalimu*. He advised us to put the coins under the xylophone keys to assure that not he but the *Abalimu* would come and take it.

#### *The musical information by the old man*

Music for *Endara* is not usually for this instrument alone. There should be singing to it and dancing with foot-bells (*esyonzenda*). Then three drums have to be used, one of which is called *Engoma eneene ey'okwandara* (the big drum of the *Endara*), and *Ebitsetse* (rattles). The *Endara* should always have 14 keys and there should be seven people playing it. The seven performers are called *Abawathi*. (Compare the term *Abawuzi* in Luganda for the players of the *Akidinda*). Five musicians sit on one side of the *Endara* and two opposite them. The five on the one side (with the smallest keys on the left) are:

- |                 |     |  |
|-----------------|-----|--|
| (From top keys  | I   | <i>Ow'obwaana</i> (of the biggest of the children) |
| to bottom keys) | II  | <i>Ow'obwaana</i> (of the biggest of the children) |
|                 | III | <i>Enzobooli</i> (the one who speaks)              |
|                 | IV  | <i>Mutangi</i> (—name of a clan)                   |
|                 | V   | <i>Omusyakulu</i> (old man)                        |

The two on the other side are called:

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| VI  | <i>Omukekulu</i> (old woman)                 |
| VII | <i>Ow'eneene</i> (one who drums the biggest) |

There are not only names for each of the seven performers but also for each of the 14 keys. These names according to the old man are (from the smallest to the biggest key):

- |      |                             |                           |
|------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| I    | <i>Akaana</i>               | A child                   |
| II   | <i>Akandi 'kaana</i>        | Another child             |
| III  | <i>N'akandi 'kaana</i>      | And another child         |
| IV   | <i>Enzobooli</i>            | One who speaks            |
| V    | <i>Omukekulu</i>            | (Old woman)               |
| VI   | <i>Omusyakulu</i>           | Old man                   |
| VII  | <i>Enzobooli eyakabiri</i>  | The second one who speaks |
| VIII | <i>Omusyakulu owakabiri</i> | The second old man        |
| IX   | <i>Omukekulu owakabiri</i>  | The second old woman      |
| X    | <i>Ekbikekulu</i>           | (The fat old woman)       |
| XI   | <i>Ngalanga</i>             | (Dried)                   |
| XII  | <i>Mabula</i>               | — a name                  |
| XIII | <i>Mutangi</i>              | — name of a clan          |
| XIV  | <i>Nzebe</i>                | Rhythm pattern            |

A basic rhythm is played on key No. XIV *Nzebe* with two sticks only.

The second place we visited on another day was a small village called Gisavo, near Karambi, right on the Congo border. There, again, we found only one grown-up man

playing the *Endara*, and there were two boys who played with him. His xylophone also was incomplete, having 11 keys<sup>6</sup> — three, he said, were missing. His name was Petero Kivinga and he was about 40 years' old, a person quite different from the old man who was very quiet and seemed to live entirely in his tribe's spiritual traditions. Petero belonged to another, more materially minded, generation, and enjoyed telling us about his many shops on both sides of the border which did good business. He spoke both French and English and proudly stated that he knew "many things", even how to play the xylophone. About his music he did not like to say much, but he played it and could repeat the same pattern again whenever we wanted. Therefore we made a number of analytical recordings here, asking the three musicians to play each part alone and then together. During the afternoon we were there, Mr. Kivinga taught me a few passages on the *Endara*.

From this I soon understood how different this music was from the *Amadinda* music of Buganda and the *Embairé* music of Busoga, which I had studied two years before. And not only in the tone system but also in the rhythm, melody, and in the whole organisation of the music. Bakonjo xylophone music seems to be strongly linked with xylophone playing in the Congo.

Buganda's and Busoga's xylophone music is a system of music unique in East Africa, reminiscent somehow, in its striking "intellectualism", of the deep metaphysical experiments with Canon, Cancrizans, Inversion and Mirror of the polyphonic European composers towards the end of the Middle Ages. The compositions of Kiganda xylophone music reflect something like research into the structure of the (inner) universe, if I may express myself in this way. Bakonjo xylophone music on the other hand as we heard it is more "earthy", less "abstract" in its spiritual contents — it is a fascinating and entertaining play of rhythm, melody and harmony, and it is partly improvised. The rhythmic constructions as used in Bakonjo xylophone music seem to be mostly on the lines of cross rhythm and polymeter. The phenomenon of inherent rhythms which I have described elsewhere<sup>7</sup> seems not to be so important here although definitely present.

Let us get an idea of rhythm as employed in Bakonjo xylophone music by a short transcription which I made there on the spot, after my hands had gone through the phrases several times.

The basic rhythm of the composition "Loan" (Fig. 1) played on keys No. VIII, IX and X is a 6/8 pattern repeated throughout the tune. Against this rhythm (which develops strictly in triplets), *Musician A* adds a more complicated rhythm, which develops approximately in duplets, but is in itself really an additive pattern. The total form of this rhythm is in time units:  $3/16 + 3/16 + 2/8 + 2/8 + 2/8 + 2/8 + 2/8 = 12/8$ .

#### EXTRACT FROM THE COMPOSITION "LOAN"<sup>8</sup>

The figure shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Musician A' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Musician B'. Above the staves, 'Key No.' is indicated with Roman numerals I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XI. The notation includes rhythmic markings 'r' and 'l' above and below notes, and a tempo marking 'M.M. = 128'. The music is written in a style that combines Western notation with specific performance instructions for the xylophone.

Fig. 1

#### The Endara Xylophone

<sup>6</sup> Key No. XI had a crack and could not be used in the recording of the scale.

<sup>7</sup> In "The Structure of Kiganda Xylophone Music", *African Music*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1960, and in "Musikgestaltung in Afrika", *Neues Afrika*, Heft 5, Jahrgang 1961.

<sup>8</sup> A note on the transcriptions: Fig. 1 gives the exact image as it is played. The staves do not represent notes of the European tone system. Each line stands for a xylophone key. — The letters above or under the notes indicate the way of performance. *r* means right hand / left hand.

Out of the combination of these two cross rhythms no inherent rhythms emerge. The reason is that they are played on different ranges of the xylophone. None of the notes played by either musician are *near* enough in their pitch to be associated in the listener's mind to form an inherent rhythm pattern.

However, there are inherent rhythms emerging from the part of the second player alone. (*Musician A* in Fig. I). This part is constructed by the unknown composer in a way to make the listener perceive a conflict of two rhythms. Those notes of the second part falling on Key I are themselves arranged in a definite rhythmic group forming a "pattern"; and also those notes falling on Keys II, III, IV and V are arranged in a way to give another "pattern". The human ear — like the eyes which do not perceive isolated particles but always a "gestalt" — perceive *two* "gestalten" here, a conflict of two inherent rhythms which are the following:

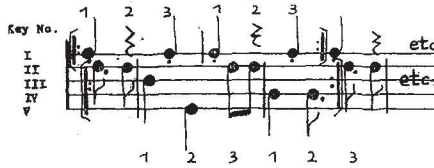


Fig. II

*The scales of the two recorded Endara xylophones<sup>9</sup>*

During a visit to the I.L.A.M. in August, 1962, I had the opportunity of using the library's set of tuning forks to measure the pitches of the recorded xylophone scales. The result was strange and I do not exclude the possibility that some of the xylophone keys were considerably out of tune. There are also no pure octaves! It is, however, striking, that three notes were the same on both xylophones, which had been made at different places by different persons. They were not only the same in their intervals but in their *absolute pitch* as well.<sup>10</sup> We have, therefore, arranged the following disposition in a way that comparison is easily possible

<i>The Endara of the Old Man</i>				<i>The Endara of Petero Kivinga</i>			
Key No.	V.p.s.	Cts.		Key No.	V.p.s.	Cts.	
I	532	100	1080	I	622	176	1425
II	502	136	980	II	562	251	1249
III	464	148	844	III	486	80	998
IV	426	148	696	IV	464	148	918
V	391	124	548	V	426	148	770
VI	364	170	424	VI	391	158	622
VII	330	254	254	VII	357	152	464
VIII	285	000	000	VIII	327	149	312
IX	285	000	000	IX	300	163	163
X	285			X	273		
				XI	(cracked, pitch could not be measured).		

Fig. III

<sup>9</sup> The recordings of both music and scales of the *Endara* xylophone are now stored in the Phonographic Archive of the Academy of Science, Vienna, to the Director of which, *Herrn Univ.-Doz. Dr. Walter Graf*, I am most grateful for continuous support with recording equipment.

<sup>10</sup> The *Endara* of P. Kivinga may as well have been an equidistant heptatonic scale. If Key No. III would be sharpened a semi-tone, the lower octave at least would be almost equidistant heptatonic. Wachsmann observed more than ten years ago, that on the *Endara* "six keys separate a pair tuned — approximately — (!) to the interval of an octave." This statement eventually supports our last view.

It is not easy to find out which key in either of the two xylophones is regarded as the tonic. I would guess it is Key No. X on the *Endara* of P. Kivinga. Certainly this is not proved by anything; and, even if it were the tonic it could be so much out of tune that, relating all other notes to 273 V.p.s. would completely disguise the nature of the scale. I find, we should start with those notes of which we have at least some guarantee that they are in tune. These are: 464, 426, 391 V.p.s., being *identical on both xylophones*. The interval 464 to 391 V.p.s. is a clear *minor third* and the note 426 V.p.s. divides this third just into the half, being 148 Cts. *apart from either side*. These are a few facts which can hardly be coincidental. May we assume that the approximate standard interval of the Bakonjo xylophone is 148 Cts.?

The difficulty in the investigation is that only two scales have been available for comparison and even these seem to be out of tune in some parts. Let us try to "arrange" all the other notes of the two xylophones around this nucleus of 2 ..... 148 Cts.

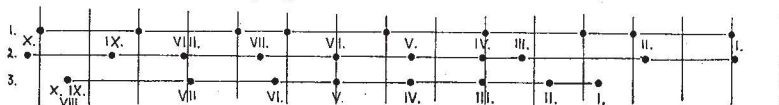


Fig. IV

We see from the graphs that it would be very risky to make any definite conclusion on the nature of the Bakonjo xylophone scale, without proof from further field work. It is striking that on the *Endara* of P. Kivinga all two-key-progressions are in the lower range something like minor thirds. If this would consequently be kept throughout the range of the xylophone, then we would have a tempered eight-tone scale consisting of 3/4-tones!<sup>10</sup> But the Keys I, II and III do not fit into this scheme. It may be worth mentioning that the top keys despite this fact have relations to other keys of Kivinga's xylophone. Key I, for example, is a fourth from Key IV.

A short analysis of form and harmony in the composition "Loan" shows a cycle of chord progressions, which, as I found, is basically the same in the other compositions recorded:<sup>11</sup>

$$\text{Harmonic cycle: } \left[ \begin{array}{cccc} \text{II} & \text{II} & \text{I} & \text{V} \\ \text{VIII} & \text{X} & \text{IX} & \text{X} \end{array} \right] + \left[ \begin{array}{cccc} \text{II} & \text{II} & \text{I} & \text{IV} \\ \text{VIII} & \text{X} & \text{IX} & \text{X} \end{array} \right]$$

II/VIII and IV/X are slightly sharpened major sixths, V/X is a minor sixth and II/X and I/IX are octaves sharpened almost a quarter tone. Am I right in assuming that they should be pure octaves?

## APPENDIX.

### A. The musical instruments of the Bakonjo:

Most of the musical instruments cited below we could not see ourselves, since there seemed to be nobody who still played or possessed them. We had to get the instrumentarium of the Bakonjo through descriptions and drawings made by our various informants. A cultural and tribal inferiority complex is so pronounced in present-day Bakonjo society, that there is not only a feeling of shame for all playing of native instruments but even for speaking the mother tongue — Lukonjo. We discovered after three days research work that both the names of the instruments and religious terms had been constantly told us in Ruturo, the language of the neighbouring and obviously "superior" tribe. This, we then had to correct.

Here I wish to thank Mr. Semu Kiyonga Abwolikiyonga, a teacher from Bwera Secondary School who was not only our host during the time we stayed in his area, but also an inexhaustibly helpful interpreter. It is due to his efforts, that at this time, when it already seems to be too late for a profound study of Bakonjo music, we could at least collect valuable hints and reports. He is apparently also the only man

<sup>11</sup> Stored in the Phonographic Archive of the Academy of Science, Vienna.

in this area who clearly sees the cultural loss which his country has suffered during the past twenty years, and who is trying to encourage traditional music among his people.

The Lukonjo names of some instruments are:—

1. *Ekiibbulughe*, musical bow.
2. *Enzenze*, flat-bar zither with gourd resonator and three strings.
3. *Kinanga*, eight-string bow harp.
4. *Enanga*, seven-string trough zither.
5. *Endara*, fourteen-key log xylophone.
6. *Erikembe*, Likembe, usually of twelve metal prongs.
7. *Ebitsetse*, seed-shell rattle with three dry *oncoba* fruits threaded onto a stick serving as a handle.
8. *Akeyamba*, reed-box rattle, filled with dry seeds.
9. *Eseerera*, one-gourd rattle.
10. *Ekitukulende*, ground bow.
11. *Akasai*, iron gong.
12. *Eluma*<sup>12</sup>, a set of flutes, each of them being called *Erireng*.
13. *Omupelo*, "a long flute played walking", no detailed information was obtainable.
14. *Enghubi*, animal horn.
15. *Enyamulera*<sup>13</sup>, notched flute with four stops.
16. *Enzenza*, sing. and *Esyonzenza*, (pl.), foot-bells.

#### B. Musical ceremony at funerals:

The foot-bells (*Esyonzenza*) were usually put on at funeral ceremonies. At such funerals the people used to dance to the rhythm of three conical drums of different size: the smallest was called *Omughali*, the middle-sized *Eritundu*, and the biggest *Eneene* (or *Enzinzi*).

The day after someone had died the people started to dance and this lasted for about a week. If the dancing was not performed, the consequences would be very bad, "because the spirits of the dead (*Abalimu*) would kill a number of people". It is the purpose of the funeral dance "to chase away the spirit of the dead". (*Eribinga omulimu ow'oyulabola*).

But when a child dies which cannot yet talk, it is not necessary to drum and to perform the ceremony; because "only from the moment it speaks is it a person".

On the last day of the drumming the relatives of the dead bring sacrifices — a domestic animal and some cooked food. "An old man" (a priest) offers the meat to the departed spirit in a "special house used for this purpose" (a shrine).

In the olden days there were many other kinds of ceremonies and feasts, most of them taking place after the harvest of millet, in November.

<sup>12</sup> Recordings have been made of flute sets called *Luma* by Hugh Tracey among the Bambyti pygmies and the Batoro. Both recordings show close affinity in the musical style and may give an idea how the *Eluma flute ensemble* of the Bakonjo once sounded.

(a) "Luma" (Nyoro-Toro Tribe) LF 1173 Music of Africa, No. 8, Uganda Protectorate, fifth item, side A; recorded at Bundibugyo near Fort Portal on the 23rd August, 1950.

(b) "Luma" (Mbuti Pygmies); 10 pipes and two laced drums, recorded at village Mbaumbili, Beni, Congo. In the field cards there is the following interesting remark: "The end-blown flutes (*Luma*) were kept for the Pygmies by Bantu of the *Nande* tribe, who consider they have proprietary rights over them. The pipes may have been made by the *Nande* and not by the pygmies themselves". (*Nande* is the name given to *Bakonjo* people who live on the Congo side of the *Ruwenzori* massif).

<sup>13</sup> In a previous number of "African Music" there is a detailed analysis of *Nyamulere* music of the *Nande* tribe by John Blacking. The analysis is based on eight flute tunes from Butembo, Congo, which had been recorded by Hugh Tracey in the summer of 1952. The recordings are worth listening to for a student of Bakonjo music. Some of them are published on Gallotone GB 1703, and LF 1171, Music of Africa Series, No. 6. The article by Blacking deals in great detail with various musical and physical aspects of *Nyamulere* playing. (John Blacking: "Eight Flute Tunes from Butembo, East Belgian Congo" in African Music, Volume I, No. 2.)