

THE GUITAR IMPROVISATION OF MWENDA JEAN BOSCO (Part II)

by

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Three of Mwenda Jean Bosco's earliest recorded pieces, *Bombalaka* and two versions of *Masanga*, recorded in Jadotville, Katanga, by Mr. Hugh Tracey in 1952, were considered in part I of this article¹. Ten more of Bosco's recorded guitar-songs will be considered here:

1. <i>Namli-a</i>	Gallotone	G.B. 1588T.
2. <i>Sokuchomale Jikita</i>		G.B. 1587T.
3. <i>Tambala Moja</i>		G.B. 1586T.
4. <i>Mama Kilio-e</i>		G.B. 1728.
5. <i>Susanah</i>		G.B. 1781.
6. <i>Mama na Mwana</i>		G.B. 1700T.
7. <i>Kutembea kwa Wengi</i>		C.O. 82.
8. <i>Usichukie</i>		C.O. 82.
9. <i>Mwami</i>		G.B. 1781.
10. <i>Mnkabe</i>		G.B. 1789.

Since Part I went to press I have still had no definite news of Bosco's present whereabouts apart from hearsay evidence from a Northern Rhodesian Bosco-fan who believes that Bosco is not in Tanganyika (as I suggested in Part I) but in Leopoldville, and who reports that a number of new Bosco recordings are available in N. Rhodesia and are frequently to be heard over the radio there. It may of course turn out in the end that it is only Bosco's recorded personality which has made these widespread African tours, while the artist himself has remained in his native Jadotville all along.

In my view, none of the ten pieces listed above rises to quite the same degree of excellence as Bosco's first *Masanga*. They are all of interest, however, for what they reveal of the different facets of his style. Several of these later songs have distinct affinities with *Masanga*—melodic figures either directly borrowed or more faintly suggestive of ones in *Masanga*. *Namli-a* is closest in this respect. Its song text—though not its vocal notes—consists largely of a rearrangement of the *Masanga* lines plus a few interpolations, notably the refrain: "*namli-a mama*"—I am weeping (or longing) for him (or her), mother. It does not emerge clearly, until the end, who the object of lamentation or longing actually is. But in the last stanza Bosco seems to refer specifically to his father.

Longing or lamentation occurs again in *Sokuchomale Jikita* (line 6), *Tambala Moja* (lines 4, 6 and 7), *Mama Kilio-e* (first line), and *Susanah* (first line). Some light-hearted philosophy—"two's company, three's a crowd" (when walking out)—is offered in *Kutembea kwa Wengi*. *Usichukie* brings a more obscure admonition: "Don't leave your own country; a stranger should stay at home!" It is not clear which foreigner or foreigners are here being referred to—or was it perhaps the field-recording team?

The latter two songs are recorded as vocal duets. The second voice is seemingly also Bosco's own, presumably dubbed in later. The parts proceed almost entirely in parallel thirds.

Vocal Melody.

There are strong grounds for asserting that, in all Bosco's guitar songs, the voice really accompanies the guitar, rather than the reverse. Bosco's choice of vocal notes is

¹ *African Music*, Vol. 2 no. 4, 1961, pp. 81-98.

♩ = 128 M.M. N A M L I A - E
(Gallotone GB1588T) Jean Bosco Mwenda
(Transcribed by D. Rycroft)

Guitar: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Vocal: 11 12 13 14 15

Guitar: 11 12 13 14 15

Vocal: 16 17 18-25

Guitar: 26 27 28 29 30

Vocal: 21 22 23 24 25

Guitar: 31 32 33 34 35

Lyrics:
 Nami na Mwenda ndia yetu Jadotville, Uende umu
 -one baba Rosco ya Rayeke; Umwambi-e mwenye singo pang'a, Uende umwambie ende akalale
 yavu
 kwabo. Namli-a e mama, namli-a e, Namli-a e mama, namli-a e.

* Capotasta fitted at fifth fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written. Vocal line has been transposed accordingly, i.e. should sound one fifth lower (key C).

rather restricted and stereotyped. This seems to arise directly from the fact that his vocal lines are really a kind of descant, tethered to the cycle of harmonic progressions dictated by the guitar. The rudimentary harmonic schemes followed by the guitar in the various pieces impose severe limits on the freedom of the melodic line, particularly when, as in some of the songs, vocal phrases always start and end, respectively, at precisely the same points in relation to the harmonic scheme.

Bosco's harmonic schemes consist always of a short sequence of guitar chords or broken chords, with a set duration of either two, three, or at most four bars, in the various pieces. The chosen sequence of progressions is more or less exactly repeated throughout the piece, and a rather stultified melodic line naturally results when vocal phrases are tied closely to the range of notes allowed by this limited series of chords. This is noticeable particularly in *Mama Kilio-e*, *Kutembea kwa Wengi*, *Usichukie*, and in the

(Namlia-e 2)

Vocal

36 37 38 39 40 41

Nami na Mwenda, Yetu ya Kapanga, Wende uwone baba Bosco alikwenda; Ali-

Guitar

(42&46) (43&47) (44&48) (46)

Vocal

42 43 44 45 46

kwenda, ndia ya kapanga, O uwambi-e ende a-rudie leo. Namlia-e mama, namlia-

Vocal

47 48 49 50 51

e, Namlia-e mama, namlia-e.

Guitar

49 50 51

Guitar

53 54 55 56

57 58 59 60 61

Vocal

63 64 65 66

O mama namlia baba Rosco, Wakwe-nda payeke kurudi Jadotville. Namlia-e mama, namlia

Guitar

63 (A66) 64 (A67) 65 (A68) 66 (A69)

Vocal

67 68 69 70

mama, Namlia-e baba Rosco wa Bayeke.

Guitar

70

Masanga song (see part I of this article). In my transcribed extract from *Mama Kilio-e*, for instance, the harmonic scheme is a two-bar one: / CG / FG /. All vocal phrases in the song commence on quaver 6 or 7 of an even-numbered bar—G harmony—and end on the fourth quaver of the next even-numbered bar—G harmony again. Slight variety is provided after bar 16, by dividing the phrase into two halves. But even so, each half still begins and ends on a G-chord, and the final note used by the voice over this chord is always B.

Variety in the Vocal Line.

In some of the other songs Bosco achieves greater variety, most often not by changing the harmonic scheme, but by varying the points at which the vocal phrase starts and ends in relation to the harmonic ostinato. In *Sokuchomale Jikita*, which has four-bar / D / C / D / G / harmony, the vocal line at first follows this phrasing exactly (bars 21 to 28). The first four two-bar vocal phrases each start in an odd-

(Namlia-e 3)

Guitar

Vocal

81 Kwasungu nako aku nyanga tumba, Ningekombola baba yangu alikwonda. Namlia-
82 kumba 83
84
85

Guitar

86 -e, mame, namlia-e, Namlia-e mame, namlia Bayeke.
87 88 89 90

Guitar

91 92 93

Fine

numbered bar (or its preceding up-beat) and end in an even-numbered one, so that their underlying harmony is alternately / D / C / and / D / G /. But thereafter, the shortened phrase commencing at the end of bar 28 and ending in an *odd-numbered* bar, no. 29, reverses the process, so that from here to bar 35 the vocal phases proceed above / G / D / and / C / D / harmony without any change having taken place in the guitar ostinato. The next vocal entry (bars 57 to 60) returns to the original order again, with a long four-bar phrase which observes the basic / D / C / D / G / cycle of progression. After this we find an eight-bar phrase of which more than five bars consist of a sustained high D—the Dominant, to Western ears.

Between bars 31 and 37 in *Tambala Moja*, Bosco again employs the device of shifting the vocal phrase in relation to the harmonic scheme, and in *Bombalaka* (see part I) both the voice and the guitar together operate such a shift. This occurs from bar 21 onwards, when an earlier off-beat figure from the guitar part is given prominence. It has of course been noted earlier that Bosco introduces stretches of shifted accentuation in the guitar bass solos of *Masanga*, while the underlying metrical scheme remains intact and little alteration to the harmonic scheme takes place (Part I, p. 83).

In most of the songs the rhythm within the vocal phrases themselves—the grouping of quavers, or subdivision of beats—is unenterprising compared with what happens on the guitar. The vocal phrases consist almost entirely of sequences of regular quaver duplets interspersed with single crotchets. The straight four-square metre which the vocal line maintains is usually in complete agreement with the underlying metrical scheme—i.e. with that repetitive framework set up by the “roughly constant cycle of fingering operations” of the guitarist’s left hand, which was referred to in Part I in connection with *Masanga* (see p. 82). The voice seldom goes in for cross-accentuation like the guitar. In *Sokuchomale Jikita* and *Susanab* some vocal syncopation does occur, but this mainly keeps step with what is happening in the upper guitar part. However, in

♩ = 128 M.M.

SOKUCHOMALE JIKITA
(Gallotone GB 1587)Mwenda Jean Bosco
(Tr. D. Rycroft)

Guitar*

Percussion

Vocal

21 22 23 24
Zoli wangu wa-to-sha, u-ba-ya wangu wa-to-sha; Mama

25 26 27 28
u-ki-zi- di ma- di- vu- no, i- tato- -a wa ku-pi- ta soma-

29 30 31 32
chomale; Ji-ki-ta soma- choma- le; Ji-ki- ta soma-

33 34 35 36 37-56
choma- le, jiki- ta soma- chomale; (guitar solo as in introduction)

Vocal

57 58 59 60 61-64
Na-mu-li- -a, na-mu-li- -a iyo ma- ma na bo- ma.

65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 etc...
A- yu - - - - yo ma- ma na boma.

Guitar* 129 130 131 132 etc..

* Capotasta at 5th fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written.
Vocal line has been transposed accordingly, i.e. should sound fifth lower.
Percussion (struck bottle) continues the same phrase throughout. Guitar repeats phrase of bars 5 to 8 during vocal.

Mama na Mwana, which has the raciest rhythm of all the songs, the vocal line plays twos against threes with the guitar part for a lot of the time.

Modality and Harmony.

Many of Bosco's songs, but not all, seem to employ a Hepta-Do mode, i.e. the common Western diatonic major mode. But in *Mama Kilio-e* the vocal phrases end with a Western Imperfect Cadence, i.e. on what in Western music feels to be the Dominant,

$\text{♩} = 148 \text{ M.M.}$ **TAMBALA MOJA** Mwenda Jean Bosco
(Callotone GB 1586T) (Tr. D. Rycroft)

The musical score is arranged in five systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with measures 1-3. The second system contains measures 4-8 with the lyrics "zi-ki-ta ma-ma mu-vwa-la ma-ba-ya-e;". The third system contains measures 9-12 with the lyrics "Ma-ma na -nsumba zi-ki-ta mama muvwa ma-ba-ya-e;". The fourth system contains measures 13-16 with the lyrics "Ki-tambala mo-ja mi-fungi yo ba-li- mba (le).". The fifth system is a guitar solo for measures 16-18. The score includes staves for Vocal, Guitar, and Percussion. The guitar part features a 3:3:2 rhythmic pattern in the first 15 bars, with an all-embracing 8/8 time signature starting at bar 15. Measure numbers 1 through 18 are indicated above the respective staves.

* Capotasta at the fifth fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written. The vocal line has been transposed accordingly, i.e. should sound one fifth lower. Despite the regularity of the 3:3:2 rhythmic pattern in the guitar part for the first 15 bars, an all-embracing $\frac{8}{8}$ time signature is shown at the head of the piece owing to variations of rhythm - all within 8-quarter units - which occur after bar 15.

not the Tonic. The song could thus be said to employ a Hepta-Sol mode—diatonic with flat Seventh (the key of G, but with F natural instead of F sharp, for example). In *Tambala Moja* and *Mnkabe*, on the other hand, the phrases resolve on our Subdominant chord, suggesting a Hepta-Sol mode—diatonic with sharp Fourth (the key of G with C sharp instead of C natural). *Mnkabe* here affords interesting comparison with *Namli-e*. The two songs are melodically almost identical except for their modality, *Namli-e* using C natural (Hepta-Do mode) where *Mnkabe* uses C sharp.

Apart from *Mama Kilio-e*, *Tambala Moja* and *Mnkabe*, all the other songs appear to use the common Western Major mode, Hepta-Do. Their phrases resolve—to Western ears—onto Tonic chords, with a Perfect cadence (Dominant-Tonic) or, occasionally, a Plagal cadence (Subdominant-Tonic). I have borrowed Western harmonic terms here

(Tambala Moja - 2)

Vocal

19 20 21 31 32
 0 Ma-ma o namli-a Bos-co-e; Namlia, mama namlia,

33 34 35 36 37
 Mama namlia RuKasa, namlia Bosco, namli-a uendo mama muvvala mbaya.

Guitar

38 39 etc. 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 (as 2) etc..

for economy of description. It should not be inferred, however, that the scale of values which Bosco may attach to harmonic relationships such as Tonic/Dominant, or Perfect cadence, etc., is necessarily identical with conventional Western feelings towards such phenomena.

Bosco's Guitar Style.

Similarities hinted at earlier, between *Namli-a* and the original *Masanga* song, are not confined to the vocal line alone. *Namli-a* on first hearing sounds rather like an additional set of variations on the *Masanga* theme, but their harmonic schemes are not the same. *Masanga's* rudimentary two-bar scheme- D / A-minor, D / G (as transcribed in Part I) is replaced in *Namli-a* by a four-bar sequence: G / D, D / A-minor, D / D, D / G. Nevertheless, there are several places where melodic phrases are very close to some of those in *Masanga*. Compare, for example, bars 31-35, 71-73 and 79-80 of *Namli-a* with bars 7 and 8 of *Masanga* (guitar solo version).

The *Namli-a* bass solo, of bars 49 to 57, is rhythmically reminiscent of *Masanga's* second bass solo (from bar 37, guitar solo version) with its 3 + 3 + 2 organisation. Melodically, however, it is not a direct borrowing from *Masanga*, but arises out of the earlier subsidiary G-B-D bass figure which is first evident from bar 5 (third beat) to bar 6 (first beat). This figure recurs every odd bar from bar 13 onwards, and alternates with a contrasting A-D-G progression. These earlier bass figures, marked by slurs in the transcription, are used antiphonally against the treble melody of the guitar, somewhat after the fashion of "breaks" in jazz. When developed into an independent bass solo, however, the position of these notes in the bar is slightly altered. There is preparation for this by some filling up, in bar 49. Organic development of an earlier latent figure into a secondary main theme in this way was of course also evident in *Bombalaka* and in the second bass solo of *Masanga*.

In *Sokuchomale Jikita* the short ascending bass figure, G to C, in bar 129 is not derived in this way but seems to mirror the *descending* treble figure, G to C, of bar 1. Similarly, in *Tambala Moja* the G to D bass ascent of bar 83 may be regarded as an inversion of the initial treble descent of bar 1.

MAMA KILIO-E
(Galletone GB 1728) Mwenda Jean Bosco
(Tr. D. Hycroft)

♩ = 138 M.M.

Guitar

Vocal

Ma- ma kilio-na-li-a-li-a kilio-o-e; Ma-
 ki-li-o na-si-ki-ti-ka kilio-o-e; Ma- ma ki-li-o na-imba le-o
 kilio-o-e; Ma- ma kilio-o-e, Ma- ma kilio-o-e, Ma- ma
 ki-li-o-e, Ma- ma ki-li-o-e.

21 (Guitar solo as bar 5 et seq.) etc...

* Capotasta at 5th fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written.
 Vocal line transposed accordingly, i.e. sounding one fifth lower.

Descending scale passages in the treble seem to be one of Bosco's favourite devices. The *Masanga* theme itself consists, of course, of two such descents—an arrested one, followed by a complete one from G to G (as transposed in the transcription). An initial descending figure of four or five notes turns up in the guitar part of most of his songs, most noticeably in *Namli-a*, *Sokuchomale*, *Tambala Moja*, and *Mnkabe*—but also sometimes in more disguised form, as in *Mwami*.

Metrical Organisation.

The underlying metrical scheme of *Masanga* which, as was suggested in Part I, appears to have its roots in Luba tribal dance music, is to be found in many of Bosco's other pieces. The eight-quaver framework is physically bound up with a roughly constant cycle of fingering operations performed by the guitarist's left hand, as was described earlier. Within this framework, the distribution of accents, and the grouping of quavers into duplet, triplet, or mixed rhythmic figures is frequently altered—and at times, or in some pieces continuously, treble and bass give the impression of maintaining two contrasted lines of phrasing which are offset one from the other.

♩ = 132 M.M. SUSANAH Mwenda Jean Bosco
(GallotoneGB1781A) (Tr. D. Rycroft)

The score consists of several systems of music. The first system shows the guitar and percussion parts. The second system shows the vocal line and guitar accompaniment, with the word 'Mama' written above the staff. The third system continues the vocal line with lyrics 'Su- sa- nah, namu-li- a' and guitar accompaniment. The fourth system shows the vocal line with lyrics 'Su- sa- nah. Mama' and 'Su- sa- nah.' and guitar accompaniment. The fifth system shows the vocal line with lyrics 'Mi na-to-ka Jadot- ville' and 'Mi komve bile mi na-tumi-ka be se-be'. The sixth system shows the vocal line with lyrics 'Su- sa- nah. Ma-ma D. ♯' and 'etc...'. The guitar parts are written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

* Capotasta at 5th fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written.
Vocal line transposed in accordance, i.e. should sound one fifth lower.

The guitar parts of all the songs dealt with in these articles are based on an eighth-quaver scheme of this kind, with the exception of *Mama na Mwana* and *Mwami*—where the foundation is regular compound time with triplet subdivision of the beats—and *Sokuchomale Jikita*, which could be said to employ regular 2/4 with syncopation.

MAMA NA MWANA
(Gallotone GB 1700)

Mwenda Jean Bosco
(transcribed
by D. Kycroft)

guitar voice 168 M.M.

GUITAR

Transposed -
(Actual pitch one fourth higher, key F) (capotasta fitted at fifth fret)

VOICE (actual pitch)

GUITAR (transposed)

VOICE

GUITAR

VOICE

GUITAR

Apart from these exceptions, the eight-quaver framework forms the basis of all the other songs considered here. In some pieces the main bass notes fall on the first and fifth quavers, except in some of the variations—particularly bass solo passages. This can be seen in the two *Masangas* or in *Namli-a* and *Mnkabe*. Bass solos in these three pieces often bring into prominence not the first and fifth, but the first and *fourth* quavers, together with either the sixth or seventh, since $3 + 2 + 3$ or $3 + 3 + 2$ grouping is used in place of the standard $4 + 4$ bass organisation—see *Masanga* solo, bars 37-47, or *Namli-a*, bars 50-56.

In *Mama Kilio-e*, and in *Kutembea kwa Wengi* and *Tambala Moja*, however, we have a

VOICE
6 kwenda, Mama, fo Ma-ma Mama, Mama, yo Mama- Mama.
27 28 29 30 31

GUITAR
32 33 34 35 (as 21) 36 (as 22) 37 38

VOICE
39 Namwana, ku-ya leyo twende ba-ye-ke; Namwana ku-ya leyo twende
40 41 42
(guitar simile to bar 50)

VOICE
43 bayeke, Mama-, Mama-, Mama-, Mama-, Mama-, a-yu - - -
44 45 46 47 48 49 50

GUITAR
51 52 53 54 55-60 61-62 63-64 65 66 (as 6)
(as 31) (as 32) (as 21) (as 22) (as 1-16) (as 3-4) (as 2-22) etc...

reversal of this procedure. Here the initial, standard bass organisation is not a 4 + 4 grouping, with main notes on the first and fifth quavers as in *Masanga* e-c., mentioned above, but a regular 3 + 3 + 2. The main bass notes fall regularly on the first, fourth and seventh quavers. But temporary variation is later provided by changing to 4 + 4 grouping, using quavers 1 and 5 (see *Tambala Moja*, bar 16 et seq.).

From the way in which I have placed the bar-lines in *Bombalaka* (see Part I) and *Usichukie*, these two pieces give the impression of being exceptional in that their main bass notes are consistently *off* the apparent main beat. It might perhaps have been more in keeping with my treatment of the other pieces if I had scored *Bombalaka* as follows, with the bar-lines placed one quaver earlier than they appear in the full transcription.

BOMBALAKA—an alternative transcription.

VOICE
10 Marie Je - sé na kvambia ka -ye bwana ya - ngu,
11 12 etc.

GUITAR
etc...

$\text{♩} = 184 \text{ M.M.}$ KUTEMBEA KWA WENGI (Gallotone CO. 82) Mwenda Jean Bosco (Transcription by David Lycroft)

Guitar

Percussion

Vocal

kutemba-a kwa ve-bki ku-ha-ya

Guitar

9 10 Kutemba-a kwa wengi ku-ba-

12 Vocal 13 14 T-ya. Kutemba-a

15 16 17 kwa wa-wi-li ku-zu-ri. etc...

* For the recording, this piece was played with a capotasta fitted at the fifth fret, i.e. sounding one fifth lower than written here. The vocal line has here been transposed in accordance with the guitar scoring. The percussion phrase, played by striking a bottle with a stick, is repeated exactly throughout. After bar 11, the guitar merely repeats the two-bar phrase of bars 10 and 11 as accompaniment for most of the recording.

Scored in the manner indicated above, both the guitar treble line and the vocal phrasing fall one quaver off the beat throughout the piece. As a listener, it is difficult to conceive of this form of barring as being the correct one for *Bombalaka* because the vocal line and the treble melody of the guitar are so convincingly phrased that it requires quite an effort of will-power *not* to accept *them* as expressing the main metrical scheme. The illusion is particularly strong since the bass never comes into prominence as an accentually expressed metre, and at one point Bosco even forsakes it entirely—between bars 37 and 44 in the transcription (see Part I). But if one tries playing the piece on the guitar—and Andrew Tracey, who manages better than I can, has finally persuaded me

♩ = 144 M.M. USICHUKIE Mwenda Jean Boace
(Gallestone CO.82) (Transcription by David Rycroft)

GUITAR
(Capotasta at 5th fret)

PERCUSSION

VOCAL
U-si-chuki--e, na mwenye i--nchi, mu-ge--

GUITAR

11 --ni a-ki-fika konyumba--ni. 12 13 etc...

* Capotasta at fifth fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written. The vocal line has here been transposed in accordance with the guitar scoring. Actual pitch should be one fifth lower than written. In the guitar part, the second voice stands out more strongly than the highest notes, i.e. initial G-F-E etc. are prominent. In repetitions of the verse the following variants are used in the guitar part: 1st repeat: Bars 5 and 6 replace 13 and 14; 2nd repeat: Bars 1 and 2 replace 13 and 14. In the vocal line, bars 10 and 11, the superscript accidental indicates slight flattening, the notes lying between B and B flat in pitch.

on this point—one cannot but feel that the main metrical scheme does in fact lie in one's fingers, and that only the bass is *on* the beat.

In *Usichukie* the two-note bass figures seem to be used antiphonally against the treble melody and the vocal phrases, and to stand in polymetric relation to them at a distance of half a bar measure. In my transcription of *Usichukie* which accompanies the present article I was swayed by the more prominently expressed metre given out by the voice

$\text{♩} = 116 \text{ M.M.}$ **MWAMI** Mwenda Jean Bosco
(Gallotone GB1781B) (Transcription by David Rycroft)

Guitar $\text{♩} = 116 \text{ M.M.}$

Percussion $\frac{6}{8}$

Vocal
5 Kal- sandi ve- le lo, Kal- sandi ve- le
6 7 8

Guitar

Perc.

Vocal
9 lo ma- yo mu- te- mi wa- lo ba- nga; Kal- sandi ve- le
10 11 12

Vocal
13 lo, ma- ku tandula ma- go- la ma- ma si- kushi a ke- na
14 15 16

Vocal
17 kubga, Kal- sandi ve- le lo. etc.
18

* Capotasta at fifth fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written. The vocal line has been transposed in accordance with the guitar scoring. Actual pitch should be one fifth lower than written. Guitar and percussion (bottle struck with a stick) repeat the phrase shown in bars 5 and 6 throughout the vocal extract shown here.

$\text{♩} = 168 \text{ M.M.}$ Introduction from guitar song Mwenda Jean Bosco
"M N K A B E" (Tr. D. Rycroft)
(Gallotone GB.1789)

Guitar $\text{♩} = 168 \text{ M.M.}$

(cf. "Namia-e") etc..

* Capotasta at fifth fret, i.e. sounding one fourth higher than written.

and the guitar treble line. It would probably be more consistent to base the barring on the bass again here, in which case the bar-line would fall in the middle of my present bar measure.

Apart from these various eight-quaver metrical scheme pieces, two of Bosco's guitar songs, *Mama na Mwana* and *Mwami*, have a fixed compound duple bass organisation in the guitar part, with triple subdivisions of the beat. Off-beat orientation of the guitar treble line in relation to the bass is permanent in both these pieces, but the vocal metre agrees with the main beats of the bass and, consequently, the principal metre here actually comes to prominent expression, while the guitar treble line is the only "odd man out", in syncopated relation to it. A few further remarks about Bosco's off-beat phrasing will be added at the end of the present article.

One interesting feature of *Mama na Mwana* is the quaver duplet grouping in the vocal line, which holds out against the guitar's triplet subdivisions of the beat. At

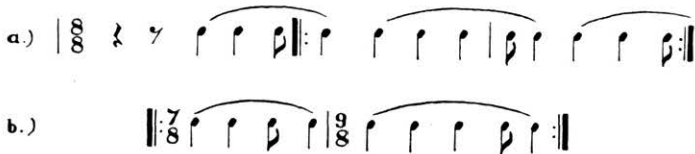
certain points, voice and guitar swop over—exchanging duplets for triplets—as in bars 16 and 21.

Bottle Rhythms.

In six of the songs at present under discussion, an additional touch is supplied by the percussion accompaniment—a “bottle rhythm”, provided by an anonymous accomplice striking on an empty bottle with a stick. His commonest bottle rhythm, in the various pieces, is one or other version of that pan-African “standard pattern”:



in its sixteen-quaver-length form². Precisely this same pattern occurs as a “stick rhythm” in two items of Luba tribal dance music from Bosco’s area (recorded on Gallotone G.B. 1581 T). With Bosco’s *Kutemba kwa Wengi* the bottle rhythm is phrased in the manner shown above: one measure off, and one measure on the beats, alternately. In *Sokuchomale Jikita* and *Tambala Moja* the other well-known version of this pattern, that with $7/8 + 9/8$ phrasing, is employed as a bottle rhythm. Depending on whether or not one presupposes a single main metrical scheme underlying the music—such as that pertaining to Bosco’s fingering cycle on the guitar—this pattern may of course be scored in either of the following two ways. From the uppermost of the two transcriptions the relationship of this version of the pattern to the version shown earlier can most clearly be seen. They may in fact be regarded as two different phrasings of the same pattern.



For the song *Mwami* a shorter, twelve-quaver-length form of this type of pattern is used as a bottle rhythm, phrased as $6/16 + 3/8$. It may be noted that the $6/16$ half of the pattern here agrees with the vocal phrasing and the guitar bass notes (which express the main metrical framework) while the $3/8$ half agrees more or less with the off-beat phrasing of the guitar treble line.

Usichukie has a less subtle, eight-quaver-length bottle rhythm, made up in $3 + 2 + 3$ grouping. *Susanah* has a rapid sixteen-semiquaver-length pattern, grouped as $3 + 3 + 4 + 2 + 4$, which agrees almost exactly with the guitar’s treble phrasing—but the latter only syncopates from the bass *within* the measure, being in step with each downbeat. Though much faster, this bottle rhythm pattern is suggestive of the common Cuban Rumba claves figure:



The same pattern occurs again with two of Bosco’s later songs, *Mbele ya Kuenda* and *Kutemba Njjiani*, which I have omitted from present consideration.

Syncopation or Polymetre?

Where to draw the line between syncopation and polymetre raises a rather vexed question—or do we need to revise our terminology? “Syncopation” conventionally

²This pattern has frequently been referred to by Dr. Jones. See A. M. Jones: *Studies in African Music*, OUP, 1959, pp. 210-213. See also Anthony King: “The Standard Pattern in Yoruba Music”, *African Music*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1960, pp. 51-54.

implies deviation, usually by an upper part and usually only temporarily—*within* the measure or extending over not more than two or three measures—from an established and continuing “main” metre maintained by another part. “Polymetre” seems to cover divergence on a larger scale, but without necessarily asserting that there is predominance of one over the other or others.

Deciding whether a given piece has in fact a single “main” metre, from which the phrasing of the other parts diverges, is often a difficult question, and one over which there has in the past been some controversy—A. P. Merriam has summarised the main points of dissent aptly in his “*African Music South of the Sahara*”. It seems that in much African music, and in some jazz, one finds evidence of a “main” metrical scheme which is given little or no accentual prominence, while the various “off-beat” phrasings are expressed so convincingly that they hardly seem to be satisfactorily covered by the term “syncopation” in its normal, restricted sense. Constant Lambert noted something of this kind in jazz when he wrote, in the early ‘thirties: “In (American) Negro jazz bands the irregular cross-accented are given so much more weight than the underlying pulse, that the rhythmic arabesques almost completely obscure the metrical framework . . .”⁴.

Bosco, of course, frequently succeeds in *entirely* obscuring his framework—and, beyond this, in juggling with two divergently off-set phrasings or apparent metres simultaneously—and this might, one fears, possibly also be the case in some other African music which has initially struck the non-African investigator as polymetric, without any single main organising principle.

The question of the presence or absence of a single “main” metrical framework cannot, it seems, safely be answered on the criterion of whether or not this actually comes to overt expression through accentuation. Playing any of Bosco’s tunes for oneself on the guitar, one becomes conscious of the framework tied up with the repetitive cycle of fingering operations in the left hand. This cannot but be felt as a basic unifying principle whether or not, in one or other of the tunes, it comes into prominence through accent placement. Sometimes it *cannot* be expressed—as happens temporarily in many of the pieces, and permanently in *Bombalaka*—without completely spoiling the deceptive subtleties of the seemingly independent phrasings in the upper parts.

Bosco’s rhythmic technique might be regarded as basically a form of syncopation—or “off-beat phrasing”, if “syncopation” will not stretch far enough—but one in which the main metrical framework is at times partially or completely obscured in favour of the off-set line or lines, which are often phrased in such a way as to pose as individual, independent metres in their own right. But the problem of invisible “main beats” is still a bit of a strain on our present terminology.

Editor’s Note.—As far as we know, these are the broad details of Mwenda’s movements.

He was working as a junior clerk at a ‘paspott’ office in Jadotville when I discovered him, and through his first recordings with me, especially of ‘Masanga’ and ‘Mama na Mwana’ he was launched on a part time musical career.

Shortly after my visit to Jadotville he left his post there and went to Elizabethville the larger centre where in 1953 he obtained a job as messenger for a local bank, a position he has held for ten years. He has continued to sing and play the guitar, making several appearances in Elizabethville from time to time, and, it is understood, has only once left the province of Katanga. This was in 1961 at the request of a commercial film company which wanted him to take part in a short advertising film in Nairobi. While in East Africa he undertook a round of concerts in Nairobi, Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, and also recorded for a third time. This once again was with Gallotone having already recorded for them in Elizabethville in 1953. The same company recorded Mwenda in Elizabethville last November, 1962, his fourth session.

Unfortunately his recent songs do not fulfill the promise of his early ones. With the law of diminishing returns only a stroke of the old genius on Mwenda’s part would be likely to keep him in the ranks of recording artists in future.

He still lives in Elizabethville, where his address is c/o M. Capelouto, Box 397, Elizabethville, Katanga, Congo. Letters to him should be written in French, his second language.

Hugh Tracey.

⁴in: *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, ed. Bascom and Herskovits, University of Chicago Press, 1959, Constant Lambert: *Music Ho*, Pelican Books, 1948, p. 159. (First published 1934).

DISCS RECORDED BY MWENDA JEAN BOSCO

and published by

Gallo (Africa) Limited under the Gallotone Label

- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|----------|---------------------------|
| | Published in 1952. | | |
| G.B. 1586 | Masanga. | C.O. 123 | Chaffeur Mulevi. |
| | Tambala Moja. | C.O. 126 | Kufika kwa Mfalme. |
| G.B. 1587 | Sokuchomale Jikita. | | Zamani Congo. |
| | Mama Kilio-e. | C.O. 130 | Kwimba Nako Nikuzuri. |
| G.B. 1588 | Namila-e. | | Kabumba Part 1. |
| | Bombalaka. | C.O. 133 | Kabumba Part 2. |
| G.B. 1700 | Masanga. | | Kijana Moja. |
| G.B. 1725 | Majengo sita kwenda. | C.O. 138 | Ninikukosea. |
| G.B. 1726 | Paulina-e. | | Uninikuta ku Meza. |
| | Teresa walala. | C.O. 142 | Bibi Twende Kwetu. |
| G.B. 1728 | Mama killo-e. | | Safari Mena Kwenda. |
| | Paulina mubaya. | C.O. 143 | Bwivu. |
| G.B. 1754 | Mama na mwana. | | Bingina Mbiri. |
| | Published in 1953. | C.O. 145 | Shiku ya Kangua. |
| G.B. 1789 | Mari Kiloko. | | Munongo Watwa. |
| | Mukabi. | C.O. 149 | Kwenda ku Soko. |
| G.B. 1790 | Soya. | | Kucheza Mizuri. |
| | Kubisha Na Bakuba. | C.O. 152 | Bibi Sofia. |
| | Published in 1954. | C.O. 155 | Kutemba yu Sheko. |
| C.O. 23 | Bundugu bwa Mukizungu. | | Kilamuntu ana Penda. |
| | Mara Mingi. | C.O. 156 | Bibi Kunua. |
| C.O. 24 | Sae Inapita. | | Masimango. |
| | Ee Bibi ee Bwana. | C.O. 157 | Mungia. Kutemba. |
| C.O. 25 | Kuvae Kula Kunwa. | | Musana Bongo. |
| | Kitu Gani Kumulango. | | Published in 1958. |
| C.O. 26 | Mwendo Tulikwenda. | C.O. 168 | Tuende Turupi. |
| | Mtoko Kidogo. | | Vidiwa. |
| C.O. 34 | Muchoko wa Mukwazi Moja. | C.O. 175 | Mukisema na Bwana. |
| | Kulia mi Nalia Maria. | | Ukiwa na Maneno. |
| C.O. 35 | Wauzaji wa Mankinga. | C.O. 176 | Mama Lillianne. |
| | Tuwaashimu Wazazi. | | Safari. |
| C.O. 36 | Tembea Uwone. | C.O. 177 | Miakaya Zaman. |
| | Bibi Vasangushi Mtoto. | | Wavijana. |
| C.O. 37 | Uisfawye Matata Vasilu. | C.O. 181 | Kizeng Unakevea. |
| | Mwendo Wasipo Tayaki. | | Bibi wa Oumba. |
| C.O. 38 | Kuwowo Pasipo Kunwaza. | C.O. 182 | Usafi. |
| | Kubudongo. | | Ukifuki she Sikombiyo. |
| C.O. 39 | Pole Pole njoa Mwendo. | C.O. 188 | Wakubwa Wazaman. |
| | Ukinikuta Mubar. | | Safari Bunyeka. |
| C.O. 41 | Mukwenu Wadima Madima. | C.O. 190 | Kufwa. |
| | Singa Tumbo Yawa. | | Rudia Mpezi. |
| | Ndumba. | C.O. 193 | Marianne. |
| | Published in 1955. | | Uziwaze Mingi. |
| C.O. 30 | Cheka Mama. | | Published in 1959. |
| | Bibi Mpenzi. | C.O. 194 | Turudi Nyumbani. |
| C.O. 81 | Kupendana Tuapendana. | | Kulia Stephanie. |
| | Kupokelewa Vizuri. | C.O. 195 | Wakati Nilikupenda Rosa. |
| C.O. 82 | Usichukie. | | Hutu wa Bwana Masasi. |
| | Kutambea kwa Wengi. | C.O. 196 | Baba Muko. |
| C.O. 88 | Bulofua. | | Shangwe Mkubwa. |
| | Nimemukata. | C.O. 197 | Kulia Sousane. |
| C.O. 89 | Kuturizana. | | Siwezi Kurudi Lucia. |
| | Watoto Wawili. | C.O. 198 | Ustingizike. |
| C.O. 96 | Kufuata Mpenzi. | | Kisqahili Inaachana. |
| | Usiseme Wongo. | C.O. 199 | Tajiri na Mali Yake. |
| C.O. 97 | Usiwe Nasikitiko. | | Pita Bakuone. |
| | Mbele Yakuwina. | C.O. 200 | Pilipili Yasipo Kula. |
| C.O. 98 | Watu Wapuzi. | | Bembeliza Mapendo. |
| | Wageni Wanafika. | C.O. 201 | Mama Maria. |
| C.O. 100 | Unge Nikatala Mbele Bibi. | | Congo Inaendelea. |
| | Tukizungumuza Wawili. | | Published in 1950. |
| C.O. 101 | Nbele ya Kuenda mu Bar. | C.O. 202 | Bwana Alisema. |
| | Kutemba Nijama. | | Wakati Wa Kuowa. |
| C.O. 102 | Bosco Pishi. | C.O. 203 | Walikwambia Poa Moto. |
| | Masikitiko ya Mpenzi. | | Bibi Cha Cha Cha. |
| C.O. 103 | Mukini ja Contiense. | C.O. 204 | Usitoke Nyumbani. |
| | Mtoto. | | Kukumbuka Bayeke. |
| | Published in 1956. | C.O. 205 | Magontwa Yatakwishia. |
| C.O. 110 | Kitu Unapenda. | | Eshima. |
| | Wanga Walote. | C.O. 206 | Sema Wazi. |
| C.O. 111 | Siku Moja Nilikwenda. | | Pole Kwa Bwana. |
| | Tukianja Kulewa. | C.O. 207 | Wezi Ni Wabaya. |
| C.O. 113 | Mapendano Bosco. | | Owa Bibi. |
| | Lizzie. | | Published in 1962. |
| C.O. 115 | Wakati Nilikuwa Mtote. | ASL 523 | Bilombe Distingue. |
| | Wakati Bali Kuowa. | | Na Kezengela Yo. |
| C.O. 116 | Wa Bibi Zetu. | ASL 519 | Njila Takwenda. |
| | Bakikuowa Usiombe Kinga. | ASL 520 | Wapi Suzune. |
| C.O. 121 | Wakati Muli Owana. | | Juu ya Franka. |
| | Tukienda Jadotville. | ASL 521 | Safari ya Mpenzi. |
| | | | Kipenza Wee. |