



# REVIEWS

## BURIED GOLD



**MUSIC | Angola**  
*Soundtrack – the unique sound of Luanda (1968-1976)*  
*Bambara Mystic Soul – the raw sound of*

*Burkina Faso (1974-1979)*  
(Analog Africa)

Analog Africa founder Samy Ben Redjeb braved the odds to unearth the best from Luanda's short-lived golden age, a time of frenetic guitar-driven music, a gorgeous stew in which rumba, salsa, semba, local and Western instruments were thrown in with reckless abandon. The result, compiled on *Angola Soundtrack*, still sounds stunning 40-odd years later.

Redjeb also has reunited musicians from old mythical bands like Os Bongos, Os Kiezos, Jovens do Prenda and others. 'This is better than the Buena Vista Social Club,' I overheard an enthusiast say after one of their European performances. Indeed. The guitar player from Os Bongos, Botto Trindade, told me that he was very happy with the resurrection of his old music, 'We can now pass it on to a younger generation'. And there is much more musical gold buried in the Angolan soil. Maybe Redjeb should have a go again. But meanwhile, he's been to another lesser-known (yet more accessible) country, Burkina Faso. There is an open-air club in the capital Ouagadougou, with live music at the weekend. A band stands on a concrete stage in an open space with bare

walls. People mill about with a drink and when they get bored they simply leave for another club. It would have been the perfect setting for a lot of the bands on the latest Analog Africa release, *Bambara Mystic Soul*.

The local legend is, without any doubt, Amadou Ballaké. He is nicknamed Señor Eclectico and you only have to listen to the wide variety of tracks on *Bambara Mystic Soul* to understand why. He moves from American funk to soul to the soaring melodies so beloved of his Manding neighbours in Mali and Guinea. In fact, he

**'THIS IS BETTER THAN THE BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB!'**

does a full-blown rendition of a classic by Guinean greats Bembeya Jazz on one of the tracks here.

But after Ballaké, there are other bands. Burkina Faso's advantage is its location at some sort of regional crossroad. So on one track you think you are in the company of a Malian orchestra (Abdoulaye Cissé), the next you have the distinct feeling you're sitting next to a Ghanaian highlife orchestra (Orchestre CVD). Take 'Afro Soul System', with its Hammond organs and wild veerings between Africa and America. There is a lot to remind you of that old dance and band club in Ouagadougou. Highly recommended. (*Bram Posthumus*)

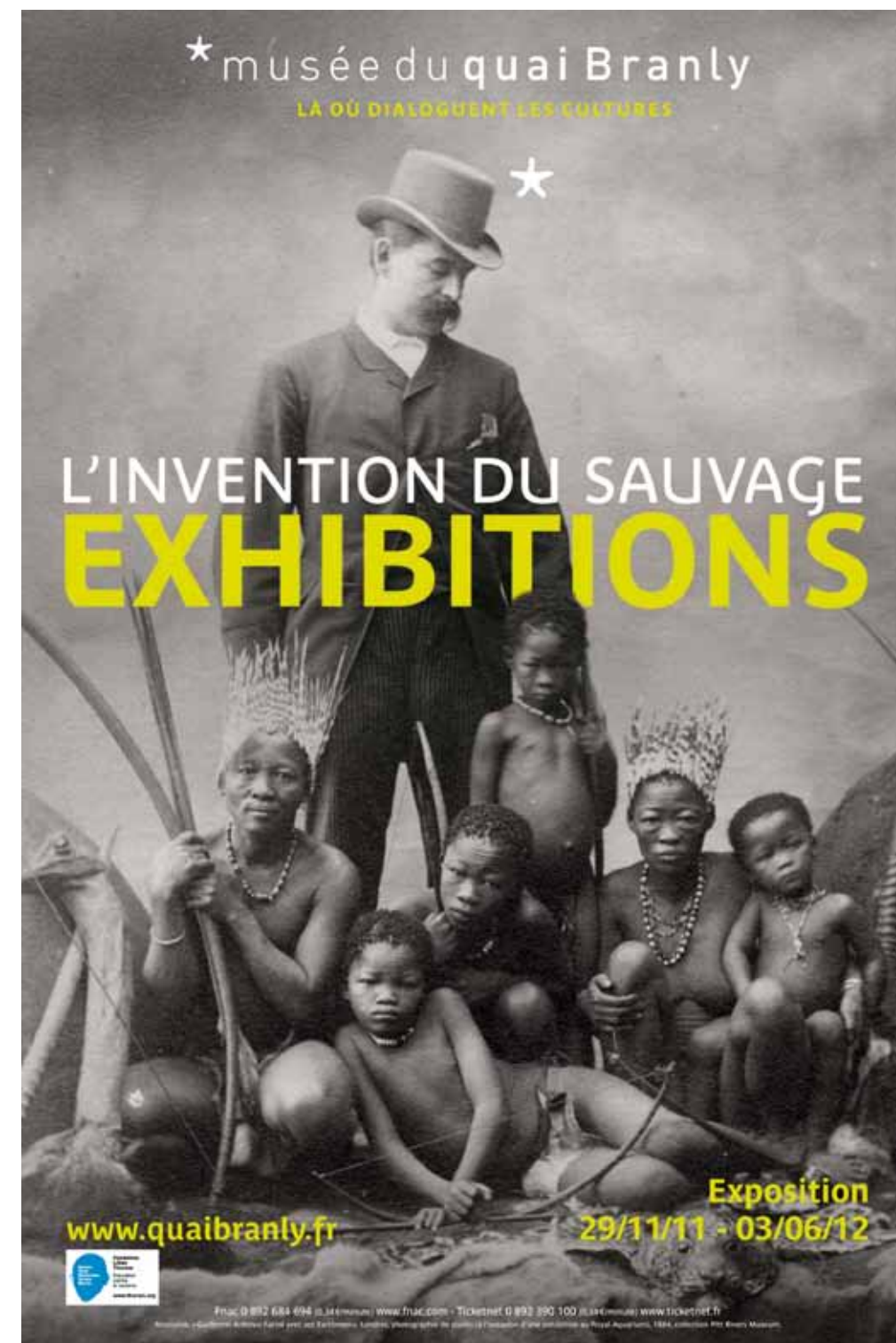
Both albums are available at selected stores and on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

## FROM BEARDED WOMEN TO ZULU TRIBESMEN

**EXHIBITION | Human Zoos – The Invention of the Savage.**  
In Quai Branly, Paris until June 3, 2012.

Footballers usually want to be remembered for their physical prowess. Not so with Lilian Thuram. The former French international may well go down in history for his intellectual pursuits. He is the lead curator of an exhibition currently on at Quai Branly, *Human Zoos – The Invention of the Savage*. In his bid to raise awareness of the roots of racism, Thuram set out to give names back to the thousands of individuals who were stolen from around the world and exhibited across Europe over four centuries. With origins in Guadeloupe, Thuram played football in France when black players had no choice but to accept the ugliest forms of racism as part of the game. He can perhaps empathize with the kidnapped African children who would grab at the coins thrown into their cages by European spectators. Thuram and his assistants at Quai Branly certainly succeed in giving names to some individuals most often associated with negative colonial encounters, such as Saartje Baartman, the Khoikhoi tribeswoman who was exhibited in freak shows under the stage name Hottentot Venus. And Thiob, Cabelou, Gunelle, and Sigjo, four Inuits captured by a Danish explorer and exhibited in Copenhagen. The exhibition, however, fails to give some insight into their personal histories, or even give an idea of how these people felt about their encounters with their colonizers. Instead visitors are taken on a chronological journey of Western curiosity with the 'Other' from the time of exploration to the end of empire. Starting with the seven Amerindians captured by Christopher Columbus and paraded in front of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain in 1493. Visitors learn that royalty in Europe realised at some point that they had counterparts in the lands their countrymen were reaching. Then, tribal leaders and kings were invited to London and Paris as guests. Kosa Pan,

ambassador to the King of Siam visited Louis XIV in Paris in 1686. His visit caused such a stir in royal circles that prints of Pan circulated throughout France for more than a century after his return to modern-day Thailand. What started out as a pass time exclusively for royals and the rich soon opened up to the masses in the 19th century. Theatres such as the Egyptian Hall in London, Folies Bergères in Paris and the Paroptikum de Castan in Berlin all began putting on shows with whole casts made up of people from far and distant lands. As public interest began to wane, directors started casting people from exotic places in shows with the disfigured or disabled, as though all belonged to a sub-human species. So bearded women would prance about on stage in the midst of Zulu tribesmen. Then, in stepped the anthropologists who began to measure and observe people of different races. The findings of these early anthropologists claimed people from non-white races were intellectually inferior, which helped justify colonialism as a paternalistic undertaking. The final stop of the exhibition caravan was Belgium in 1958, a show to mark the end of the Belgian colony in the Congo. Like other shows in the first half of the 20th century it tried to overwhelm the crowd with sheer numbers, some 2,000 people took part. Complete villages were transplanted from the heart of the Congo to feed Belgian curiosity. But the show failed to attract the crowds who by that time were being entertained by the big screen and television. Thuram's attempt to trace the roots of racism doesn't quite make it to the final whistle. There are no references to the biggest human zoo of all – television. Partway through the second half of the 20th century the big screen helped to keep racial stereotypes and images of the savage very much alive. And in the 21st century, so-called reality TV regularly features white people taking forays into the jungles and plains of faraway lands to live with native people. Still, it's a very interesting exhibition. An exhibition about the shames of previous exhibitions – it's quite ironic. (*Rosie Collyer*)



## RECLAIMING HISTORY



**BOOK |** Samwiri Lwanga Lunyiigo, *Mwanga II: Resistance to Imposition of British Colonial Rule in Buganda, 1884-1889* (Wavah Books).

Noam Chomsky once described historian Howard Zinn as having created a whole new writing genre with the book *A People's History of the United States*. With his book on the life and turbulent times of 'Buganda's last independent King' Mwanga Basammula, Samwiri Lwanga Lunyiigo seems intent on bringing something of this approach to Ugandan letters.

'Blood thirsty tyrant', 'insane youth' and 'lunatic potentate' are only a few samples of the missionary invective against him. Mwanga was the original victim of Western moral maligning, whereby a leader is primed for regime change through systematic vilification, justifying a western-sponsored 'liberating' of the people he governs. This seems to be the ailment Lunyiigo wants to cure, by unearthing a clearer picture of Mwanga and his times, discerning the motives behind his most infamous actions, and reflecting on his political legacy. No small task, even for an African-born professor of African history. There is still an almost instinctive understanding among respectable (Western) academia that Africa has, at best, only an unreliable history to report, and that Africans themselves cannot be relied upon to tell it.

Mwanga inherited the throne of Buganda in 1884 after the death of his father Muteesa. Confronted by the political realities behind the presence of the various visitors in his realm, Mwanga embarked on a strategy of reorganization. With advocates of Islam, Anglicanism and Catholicism – each representing rival imperial interests – all seeking a bigger voice in his court, open warfare eventually broke out. In all, Mwanga was to be driven from his capital three times, and only regain his throne by building alliances between traditionalists, and one or

other of the missionary camps. He was finally defeated by a freshly bolstered triumphant Anglican army in 1899 and imprisoned in the Seychelles where he died, aged 37 in 1903. In the western or western-shaped imagination, Mwanga is remembered for the execution of the first Anglican Bishop in the region and the burning at the stake of over 40 Christian converts. Interestingly, he was also condemned as a homosexual, an affront to European moral opinion at the time. This prompts the author to speculate on why General Gordon, the British soldier outsmarted by Mwanga's father, had not been condemned for the same reason. In the middle of all this, his character,

### HE WAS CONDEMNED AS A HOMOSEXUAL, AN AFFRONT TO EUROPEAN MORAL OPINION AT THE TIME

and therefore the particular nature of his reign emerge as a battleground for interpretation into which Lunyiigo happily wades. In a book replete with remarkable revelations, the author radically strays from the conventional view of this leader and his time in history. The meticulous attention to detail and close referencing, despite many avoidable typographical errors, should force other serious commentators and analysts of Ugandan history and politics to rethink their long-held opinions of Mwanga and his people. In the conventional Ugandan historical narrative Buganda is typically assigned the role of the collaborator who 'let the colonialists in'. The cultural problem among many proponents of contemporary African nationalism is to

conflate xenophobia with patriotism on the one hand, and cosmopolitanism with collaboration on the other, when considering the pre-colonial period. Mwanga said, 'We, the Baganda, want peace to prevail and our independence as in the past. We shall welcome all visitors to our country but will not allow anybody to take over the government of my country'. This perfectly sums up Buganda's attitude and perhaps that of pre-colonial Africa, towards foreigners, whose sophistication seems a little difficult for ideologues to grasp. This also challenges the reader to accept an alternative reading of the Christian executions. After 'fighting slavery' the next Imperial pretext for invasion was the need to 'protect African Christians'. By providing missionary records of their initial protection by Mwanga, coupled with evidence of converts working as spies for the invaders, Lunyiigo brings down another pillar of anti-Mwanga historiography.

This book allows us a clearer picture of not just Mwanga, but the complexities, nuances and sophistication of 19th century indigenous African politics, diplomacy and military affairs, especially in the face of great calamity. Alexander Mackay, the pre-eminent Presbyterian missionary to Buganda at the time observed that, 'In former years the universal aim was to steal the African from Africa. Today the determination is to steal Africa from the African'. That was then, but the Africa of today remains a place whose history has been stolen and hidden. The challenge Samwiri Lunyiigo has put to other African historians is to boldly reclaim this history. After all, many more figures need to be revisited to truly understand their true nature and significance. (*Kalundi Serumaga*)

*Mwanga II: Resistance to Imposition of British Colonial Rule in Buganda 1884-1889* is available for purchase on [www.wavahbooks.co.ug](http://www.wavahbooks.co.ug)

## RWANDA WITHOUT HOLLYWOOD



**FILM |** *Kinyarwanda*. Directed by Alrick Brown

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 has formed the basis of many narratives in books and films. One thing binds these different offerings: the harrowing and inescapable experiences of men, women and children, left helpless on the basis of tribal origin. Films like *Sometime in April* and *Hotel Rwanda* have given us a chance to witness the stories of those at the forefront of the tragedy at a political level. The new movie *Kinyarwanda* focuses on the human voice at its most vulnerable moment, without the added 'effects' of Hollywood. Based on true events and shot entirely in Rwanda, *Kinyarwanda* interweaves the stories of characters during and after the genocide: an Imam, whose mosque would serve as a refuge for many; a young woman at the mosque, whose murdered parents were Hutu and Tutsi; the RPF soldiers who rescued people in hiding; the Hutu militias, who went on a killing spree and men in re-education camps after the genocide ends. The film is an exploration of forgiveness – what it means to forgive and be forgiven on the way to reconciliation. Written and directed by Alrick Brown,

this chilling tale has been making the rounds at film festivals, including the prestigious Sundance Film Festival, where it won the Audience Choice Award in the World Dramatic Cinema category. It was nominated for Outstanding Independents Motion Picture at the 43rd NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Image Awards, in the US. It has been screened at the Hillywood Film Festival, Rwanda's film industry annual festival, where approximately 300 people laughed, cried and reminisced about the events in the film. *Kinyarwanda* was screened at Hôtel des Mille Collines, better known as 'the real Hotel Rwanda' and the set for the film starring Sophie Okonedo and Don Cheadle. At both screenings, local media gave warm reviews. There have been talks about priests and nuns who alerted militias to Tutsis hiding out in churches and the impact that would ultimately have on people and their faith after the genocide – a tale well narrated by Leah Chishugi in her book, *A Long Way From Paradise*. Part of Alrick Brown's movie focuses on the role of the Muslim community in Rwanda during the genocide – a story that has often been overlooked. While this is not a film about religion, *Kinyarwanda* illustrates the importance

### A WOMAN PRETENDING TO BE A POSSESSED VILLAGE WITCH IS TRYING TO RESCUE TUTSI MEN AND WOMEN FROM SLAUGHTER

of faith and conscience during the darkest of times. A powerful scene features a woman pretending to be a possessed village witch in front of soldiers, to rescue a group of Tutsi men and women from slaughter. In a way, the scene redeems the humanity that seemed lost during the genocide. There are moments when you have to recall previous scenes to make sense of the plot and here the film runs the risk of losing its audience. Despite this, *Kinyarwanda* is a very powerful offering. (*Belinda Otas*)

*Kinyarwanda* is currently on screen in selected theatres and is scheduled for screening at the UN's annual commemorative event for the Rwandan Genocide on April 4 2012. More info at [www.kinyarwandamovie.com](http://www.kinyarwandamovie.com)

