

# Mulonga.net festival and soundbridge

02 Oct 2004

Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 September were LIVE! in Siachilaba with over 160 musicians taking part in a huge gathering of people, who came to celebrate the arrival of computers and electricity at Syanzundu Secondary and Siachilaba Primary School.

It was interesting to note in the many speeches that were given, that several references were made, by different people, to the split in the community which took place over 4 decades ago, and the great opportunity the computers and internet will provide to heal this split.

Around 5000 people flocked to witness the amazing storm of music and energy generated by the Zambian group 'Maliko', and 'Simonga'; the host Ngoma Buntibe group. Naturally, the entire community joined the dance and a horde of musicians, singers and dancers swung from side to side of the huge sandy area in which the performances took place. The famous big baobab tree at the school provided a spectacular backdrop for the 'stage', and a lucky encounter with the young electric band 'Komboka' (lead, bass, drums, percussion, CiTonga vocals) led by Chief Siachilaba's son Alfred, added another twist to the exciting musical exchange. The blend of different styles was remarkable!

The community heard for the first time ever, their kankobela artists, amplified by PA system, and were enrapt with the lyrics of these wonderful 'storytellers', which were so clearly heard. The stories were obviously hilarious, and the two old men had their audience alternatively spellbound and rolling with laughter.

Karl Ritter's performance around mid-afternoon was an experience for everybody! While the audience were still amazed by his guitar, he delivered a performance which offered a whole range of music styles, presented in his own inimitable way; from lilting classical picking to hard-rock riddims, and blues, jazz, even some bluegrass somewhere, it was a journey, a building of pictures in your mind. The crowd was fascinated and appreciative of his music.

Chief Sinazongwe from Zambia wrote onto mulonga website:

'Up to the last day, we have been warmly welcomed and we want to thank (the hosts) for this wonderful welcome that we have been given over our stay of three days. We had no problems, we saw that we were the same Tongas as people across in Zimbabwe, and therefore since we have the same culture we need to continue and revive our cultures in terms of buntibe, &hellip;all these cultures must be seen to come up. We do not want to see that the Tonga culture of the valley finishes, and we should not only remain by the name that 'there were people called Tonga's, whose culture is now dead'. So I am requesting to chiefs on both sides along the lake, that they must continue with cultures as mentioned above. We would like also to request the Tonga.Online project to continue bringing these cultures together'.

AlphaSmarts : Further Donations

During the opening speeches, Peter Kuthan, chairperson of the Austria-Zimbabwe Friendship Association, presented a donation of 25 AlphaSmart keyboards from AlphaSmart UK Ltd to the two new ITCs, of which one each was given to the honourable Chiefs Saba and Siachilaba. One AlphaSmart was also given to Chief Sinazongwe of Zambia to emphasise the envisaged extension of Tonga.Online across the waters. Thanks to AlphaSmart Ltd UK for the useful and generous donation!