

Vol. V

THE CULTURAL ROLE OF
TSONGA BEER-DRINK MUSIC

by Thomas F. Johnston

Of seven distinct bodies of vocal music and one body of instrumental music recognized and separately classified by the Tsonga of Mozambique and the Northern Transvaal, beer-drink music is the most often performed and comprises about 40% of the total folksong repertoire of about five hundred items (Figure 1). The other musical styles are exorcism music, girls' initiation music, children's songs, solo instrumental music, boys' drumming school music, and circumcision school music (Figure 2). The order given reflects the estimated man-hours of performance (the circumcision school is organized only every four or five years), and it coincides roughly with sample rankings obtained from informants during the period 1968-70. Variations of the ranking were some women's claim that girls' initiation music is more important than exorcism music, and some men's claim that *muchongolo* (the national dance performed at beer-drinks) is more important than beer-songs or any other single category.

The importance attached to Tsonga beer-drink music stems from the social significance of those occasions which the beer-drink celebrates. for the occasions are forms of life-cycle crises such as birth, dropping of the umbilical cord, closure of the fontanel, first walking, first menses, initiation, return from initiation, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, death, and the various on-going stages in the spirit-world. The Tsonga see in such occasions the transition of an individual or group of individuals from one state to another and modification of the social relationships between implicated kin-groups: the infant joins the world of the living at birth, joins the ranks of the human at twelve months (at the tying-of-the-string ceremony *boha nxale*), sheds childhood allegiances at initiation, diminishes the membership of one group and augments that of another at marriage, and increases the ranks of the ancestors at death. The author attended forty-eight beer-drinks marking such events, between November 1968 and October 1970. In addition to tape-recording about eight hundred musical performances, he gathered information on the function and meaning of each song, of groups of songs, of dances, and of the beer-drinks attended.

Participant observation of human behavior within the context of the Tsonga social beer-drink reveals that it is a regulating mechanism wherein is seen symbolic resolution of various forms of disequilibrium in the society. Witness the following song:

Byala hi lebyi maseve

(see Music Ex. 2)

Here's beer in in-lawship

Call: Byala hi lebyi maseve
 Response: Hi lebyi maseve
 Call: Byala va nyikana hi ku tivana!
 Improvised line: Hatlisa, hatlisa, a ndzi se nwa!

Here's beer at the betrothal!
 In in-lawship
 Sharing beer at the betrothal!
 Hurry, hurry, I lack my share!

The horticulturalists of Bija village were losing a valuable work-party member to the horticulturalists of Dunani village, and prior to the singing of the song the rival groups lined up opposite one another throwing jibes, the one group shouting that the bride was "too good for Dunani people," the other group that the bride was "a lazy gardener." Latent stress was reduced by the sharing of beer and the communal singing of the song.

By redefining the social status of both the individual and the groups affected, the visible and audible formal performance of various sex/age-specific songs and dances functions to ensure conformity to expected new role-sets. Many beer songs are concerned with the initial week of burdensome labor expected of the bride by the in-laws in the husband's village. There she will clear the ashes from the hearths, smear the hut-floors with dung, and show extreme deference. Having no pots of her own and having planted no maize there the previous season, she occupies a lowly rank. A new bride was heard to sing the following at a beer-drink to which her family had come as guests:

Va ndzi kholela

Call: Va ndzi kholela
 Family: Mina ndzi ta famba
 Call: Va ndzi kholela
 Family: Mina ndzi ta famba

They ill-treat me

They ill-treat me
 I will flee this place
 They ill-treat me
 I will flee this place

This is, of course, token complaint to intimate to the husband's kin-group that they expect too much for the cattle which changed hands as the bride-price (*lobola*). The bride cannot flee except under the rarest circumstances; often she must withstand the antagonism of senior co-wives — the Tsonga institution of *vukwele*, co-wife jealousy, is well-known throughout southeastern Africa. Co-wives were heard singing the following at an arrival-of-the-bride beer-drink:

Xi fikile n'wakwele

Call: Xi fikile n'wakwele
 Response: Dumalizwe n'wakwele Dumalizwe!
 Call: Xi nga fika n'wakwele (2)
 Xi ta tlela na le handle (2)
 Xi ta rinzela ye nuno (2)

The complainer arrives

The complainer arrives
 Dumalizwe the complainer!
 The complainer has really come (2)
 She will sleep outside (2)
 She waits for her husband (2)

It is also within the open forum of the social beer-drink that co-wives pool their energies to bring sanctions to bear against a wayward husband:

A wu fangi leswi, hi ku
gangisa vasati va van'wani!

Dead because of
seducing other men's wives!

Call: A wu fangi leswi
Response: Hi ku gangisa vasati va van'wani!
Call: A wu fangi leswi
Response: Wena vula kwenze njhani?

You are now dead
Because of seducing other men's wives!
You are now dead
And how did it happen?

Gossiping and quarreling is reproved via song at the beer-drink:

Swivulavula nkata mina

Gossiping wife of mine

(see: Ex. 5)

Call: Swivulavula nkata mina
Response: Swi na N'wa-Gwayimane
Ha vukwele kaya
Call: N'wa-Maxalani
Response: Wa hembra kosi
Swin'wani swi na wena
Ha vukwele kaya

Gossiping wife of mine
The daughter of Gwayimane
Has co-wifely jealousy
The daughter of Maxalani
You are a liar
A quarrelsome one
And argumentative

The new (more senior) status of an adult at bereavement is declared and formalized in the beer-drink's musical arena:

Tatana va dlele, ndzi ta sala

Father is killed, I remain alone

Call: Tatana va dlele
Response: Xihanyela mangava tatana va dlele
Call: O ndzi ta sala na maxangu mina (2)
O ndzi ya kwiki ka Misengi? (2)
O maxangu ya Gavaza! (2)
Ndzi ta bye' a mani tatana? (2)
N'wana manani va dlele (2)
Leswo kala na makwerhu (2)

Father is killed
I live to suffer, father is killed
I remain alone with my misery (2)
Where shall I go without my Misengi? (2)
Oh the sufferings of Gavazai (2)
To whom shall I tell it about my father? (2)
My mother's child is killed (2)
I have neither brother nor sister (2)

Death among the Tsonga brings the economic and moral support of the extended kin-group to bear in order to alleviate the distress of the bereaved; the fact that the singer has a large gathering of familiar faces to whom she can address her song and with whom she can re-adjust to her new social position, is in itself a buffer mechanism and a resource for new activities. Part of the value of a study of Tsonga beer-drink music lies in the way it highlights the universal human need for social identity. Transition in our own society is often an alienative experience (witness the problems of teenage trauma and the neglect of the aged) due to the operation of disintegrative, 'excluding' forces.

The music of the Tsonga social beer-drink serves another important function: headmen and chiefs frequently assemble groups of kinsmen and drummers in competitive display (Figure 3), entertaining visiting dignitaries at the home court and sending uniformed and rehearsed

dance-teams (*rhambela phikezano*) to 'away' courts to compete in an effort to outdo political rivals. Tribal leaders who can assure their constituents frequent beer-drinks, with all the food, hospitality, and sociability thus entailed, are in return assured the broad pyramid base of political support and the territory-wide prestige necessary to remain in power. Headman Nhongani Chauke of the village of Madonse, aware of the political value of beer-drink music, organized his constituents to raise sufficient cash to purchase a set of three large, hand-carved *tingoma* hemispherical drums (Plate 1) from the drum-maker of the neighboring Venda tribe; these drums in turn became a magnet attracting more farmers to the village and an incentive to contribute more token beer-payments in fealty in order to facilitate the holding of more beer-drinks where the drums could be featured and the Headman praised:

Hosi rihuvahuva

Praise the Chief

Call: Hosi rihuvahuva

Praise the Chief

Response: Yimbelela hosi rihuvahuva: Chauke!

Sing to the Chief in praises: Chauke!

Call: Hosi rihuvahuva

Praise the Chief

Response: Yimbelela hosi rihuvahuva

Sing to the Chief in praises

The reader may inquire how these can be Tsonga traditional songs and yet mention the names of present individuals; it is common practice to utilize known songs as a framework within which to insert topical references. The fixed lines of the song function as a verbal grid in which personal names can appear both by substitution and by descant interpolation. Generally, the first method is used by the caller, who is more free than the responding ensemble; the second method is used by innovative individuals in the chorus. Similar rules apply, of course, to beer-songs wherein co-wives are reproved — verbal improvisation suggests the object of scorn. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that, while praises to the chief may be spoken as well as sung. The strictures addressed to co-wives and other offenders such as individuals accused of witchcraft may be sung only, not spoken. Furthermore, in sung witchcraft-accusations personal names are rarely mentioned, while they are permitted in other kinds of beer-songs. There is thus a continuum of cultural prescriptions and proscriptions surrounding music of the Tsonga social beer-drink; while a description of these must be reserved for another article, we can briefly identify the fourteen main kinds of beer-songs associated with various stages of the human life-cycle and with associated phenomena such as crops and the seasons (Figure 4).

We have noted, then, that criticism via song possesses an immunity from the severe repercussions of a direct spoken insult: the latter would cause an irremediable break in social relations and perhaps retributive action such as a hut-burning. In song, the plaintiff introduces humor, summons relatives to give musical aid, and often produces substantive evidence. The defendant makes counter accusations, states that his "house is in order", and points out that nowadays it is a crime to make accusations of witchcraft:

Vanuna va na nsele

The villagers are cruel

Chorus: Vanuna va na nsele
 Vanuna va na nsele
 Tshanga ra kona ri lunghile
 Tshanga ra kona ri lunghile
 Solo shout: A hi vanhu va kona
 Va nga na nsele wa vuloyi!

The villagers are cruel
 The villagers are cruel
 The kraal is in order
 The kraal is in order
 The people therein
 Are always accusing of witchcraft!

In this case, cattle missing from a headman's enclosure near the River Platz had been traced (supposedly, though the evidence was tenuous) to the kraal of the singer and his extended kin-group, who were now indignantly making their denial in musical ensemble. They were not accused of stealing the cattle themselves, but of utilizing black magic to spirit the cattle to their own enclosure.

Among the Tsonga, most misfortune is attributed to witchcraft; not the witchcraft of supernatural beings, but witchcraft wrought by humans, usually within one's own familiar circle of relatives and associates. Such misfortunes as crop-failure and the spoiling of food or drink appear to occur frequently, and the accused, while often a guilty party easily identified by the wily and intelligent local psychic healer (*n'anga*), may on the other hand be some innocent party whose benevolent activities are rewarded with suspicion:

Va ku bya bava

The beer went sour

Solo: Va ku bya bava, E-ye-e
 Bya dzunga, E-ye-e
 Yi majaha haleni sivi!
 Bya dzunga, E-ye-e
 Bya bava, E-ye-e
 Ndzo dlawela mahala mama
 Ndzo dlawela timbyembye ta mkhisi

The beer went sour, E-ye-e
 They say it, E-ye-e
 Listen, you fellows!
 They say it, E-ye-e
 Yes, it's sour, E-ye-e
 I shall be killed for nothing
 Killed for the skin of a buck

In this case the singer, who had labored for a week over an enormous beer-brew at Valdezia, was being blamed by the villagers for the loss of maize incurred. The same thing happens to the old woman mentioned in the following song — her sons, whose village is distant, show anxiety over their mother's plight:

Mana va n'wi sivela kaya

They threaten my mother at home

Chorus: Va sala va n'wi sivela kaya, he-mm
 Maseve nzela mporosi
 Manana va n'wi sivela kaya
 Va ta dlaya le kaya

They threaten my mother at home, he-mm
 The one who labors for the beer
 My mother is threatened at home
 They will kill her at home

With regard to the function of co-wifely jealousy songs and song of witchcraft accusation, they may be seen as a restorative mechanism smoothing the transition of an individual between two states: the accused passes from an unequivocal social condition to a newly defined and resolved position.

These two functions, then, the ceremonial resolution of various forms

of disequilibrium and the acquisition of power and prestige, lie in part behind the importance which the Tsonga attach to the beer-drink; this should be borne in mind by those observers to whom these occasions might appear to be mere group conviviality or, in the more lively instances, a drinking spree. Tsonga beer is not very intoxicating, is highly nutritious (it contains a large percentage of wholesome sediment), and is partaken of over a longish period of time since no one is in a hurry.

It must not be supposed that the beer-drink is the only social regulating mechanism of the Tsonga, or the only means of gaining chiefly popularity. Social stress among the Tsonga is often reduced by prayer and propitiation, sports and games, traveling and visiting, and those highly cathartic events, the Tsonga exorcism rites (*mancomane*). Power and prestige is often gained by inter-marriage, cattle-loaning, land distribution, and sponsorship by influential Whites in the national administration.

The Musical Transcriptions

The following six musical performances were tape-recorded in their normal social context, and have been cross-checked against alternative performances of the same songs. While basically traditional beer-songs, they incorporate elements unique to the time and place of performance. Impromptu committees of singers and elders helped to verify and clarify meanings.

Beer-song Transcription 1

♩ = 160
Cycle: 12

Vukali Bya Xinkwa Na Cheleni
(Longing for Bread and a Shilling)
Transpos.: maj 2nd up

♩ = 160. Cycle: 12 ♩

Vu - ka - li bya xi - nka na che - le - ni

ho ma - ya - na na che - le - ni

call yu -

Beer-song No. 1 was performed by a group of about fifty Tsonga women assembled temporarily in a large, ramshackle dormitory outside

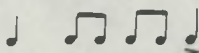
the grounds of Elim Hospital, a French-Swiss mission near Louis Trichardt in the Northern Transvaal. Thus when we state that the performance occurred within a normal social context, we mean that such social situations are a permanent feature of the missionized areas of Tsongaland and that this song is typical of the beer-songs regularly heard at the place in question. Consisting of a long corrugated iron shed rather like a stable, with twined grass protective walls insufficient to keep out the wind and rain (March 1969 saw unprecedented flooding in the Zoutpansberg foothills), the structure serves to house a heterogeneous assortment of female relatives of the hospital's inmates. They pass the time pounding and winnowing maize, brewing a light beer, and singing beer-songs, till their sick kin are released and they are able to set off on the long journey to the home village. The complete text is as follows:

	Vukali bya xinkwa na cheleni	The scarcity of bread and a shilling
Call:	Vukali bya xinkawa	The scarcity of bread
Response:	Na cheleni ho mayana!	And a shilling, Oh I wish!
Call:	Lomu tindlwini, O mayana!	Like those in the house, Oh I wish!
Response:	Wa navelo, majaha	Longing for it, you men
Solo shout:	U ngo kayakaya lomu xibedhela Na ku yimbelerisiwa?	Why do we keep lingering around Singing near the hospital?

The song-words express the hunger of the waiting relatives, their need for a shilling (South African currency is now in rands and cents, but the Tsonga still retain the old coin-names) with which to buy bagged maize from the Indian storekeeper, their envy of the warm and well-fed condition of those patients in the mission buildings, and a self-questioning of the dubious advantages of prolonged waiting around in a strange environment (Ex. 1).

The music possesses a 12-unit overall length, suggested by the fixed clap pattern, and this is divided into a 4-unit call followed by an 8-unit response. Harmony at the 4th occurs in the response, and an incidental minor 3rd occurs via overlap of the call and the response — such overlap may be the wellspring of some forms of harmonic development and of harmonic innovation. The melody observes an overall fall of an octave (C to C), following what Curt Sachs¹ has termed pathogenic descent — progression from an initial peak instigated by full breath inhalation, to a terminal nadir as the breath expires. While, in all Tsonga beer-songs, the use of anhemitonic-pentatonic melodic patterns facilitates compliance with speech-tone requirements, the tendency for pathogenic descent tempers the rigidity of speech-tone control, as do certain other devices such as the use of melismatic nonsense syllables, harmonic equivalence, and terminal musical cadence (Figure 5).

Note that in our song a thrice-repeated drum-pattern



provides the accompaniment for the women's dance *xilala* which invariably is seen on such occasions

The complete text of Beer-song No. 2 has been given on p. 133.

Beer-song Transcription 2

$\text{♩} = 154$

Cycle: 8

Byala Hi Lebyi Maseve!

(Here is Beer!)

Transpos.: dim 5th up

$\text{♩} = 154$. Cycle: 8 ♩

call

response

Bya - la - a hi le - byi ma - se - ve hi le - byi ma -

Drum

Clap

call

response

Bya - la

se - ve hi le - byi ma - se - ve hi le - byi ma

overlap

Drum

Clap

The music possesses an 8-unit overall length, intimated by the fixed clap pattern, and this is divided into a $5\frac{1}{2}$ -unit call followed by a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -unit response. Harmony occurs at the octave and minor 7th due to overlap. Pathogenic descent and pentatonicism is again present — we do not need to refer again to these characteristics. Note the tendency of the drummer to lapse into triple time (the interpolation of triple time into duple time is a common feature of Tsonga beer-drink music), and the alternate raising and lowering of the pitch of the (untuned) drum head by pressing on it with the palm.

The complete text of Beer-song No. 3 is as follows:

Inge ndzi nga swi vonangi!

I would not be
experiencing such anguish!

Call: Hi vuhuza bya ku
Lava ku tekiwa loko a ndzi
Lo tshama ka mhani

I was foolish to marry hurriedly
I wish I had stayed
At my mother's house

Response: Inge ndzi nga swi vonangi!

Call: Hinkwaswo leswi inge (2)
Nhlomulo lowu! (2)
Mahahlwa lowa (2)

I would not be experiencing such anguish!
I was foolish to marry (2)
What sorrow is mine! (2)
Now I have conceived in two's (2)

The line "Now I have conceived in two's" reflects the Tsonga fear of bearing twins. As early as 1897 Henri Junod noted that the Ronga (a southerly branch of the Tsonga) sang laments "quand il est né des jumeaux,"² and Eileen Krige reports of the neighboring Zulu that "when twins were born one of them was killed by having a lump of earth placed in its throat."³ Not only is it difficult to tie two children to one's back when going off to the fields, but there is no allowance for twins in the primogenitural system. Witness the following Tsonga proverb:

Ndzeni ka mhunu a ku nge
huma tihosi timbirhi

From the womb
cannot emerge two chiefs

The twin who was first at parturition would be senior but a struggle for power would be likely. Southern African history is full of such instances.

Beer-song Transcription 3 *Ku Láva Ku Tekiwa Loko A Ndzi Lo Tshama*
(If Only I Had Not Married)

♩ = 151
Cycle: 8

Transpos.: min 6th up

♩ = 151. Cycle 8 ♩

opening call

He - we ha - wu he - we ha - wu bya ku la - va na ku

te - ki - wa lo - koa ndzi tsha - ma ka

Drum

Clap

response

8^{va} 2nd time

mha - ni hi nkwa - swo lesw i nge ndzi nga swa va - nan - gi

Drum

Clap

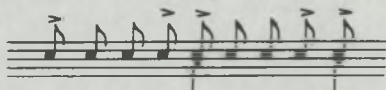
3x

D.S.

Judging by the repeated section, the music appears to possess an 8-unit overall length underpinned by the fixed clap pattern, divided into a $3\frac{1}{2}$ -unit call followed by a $4\frac{1}{2}$ -unit response. The opening call is not generally included in any reckoning of the cycle, for it often takes the form of an extended version highlighting the melody and the song-words for members of the chorus. Note, however, that after every third repetition of the repeated section the caller returns to the point marked by the Sign, and that the structure is therefore $8+8+8+6$, making a macro-cycle of 30 units.

Note the triple time in the vocal part against duple time in the drumming and hand-clapping. Note also the 'offbeat' accentuation of the drumming, giving the impression of staggered downbeats:

drumming stress occurs here



handclap stress occurs here

The complete text of Beer-song No. 4 is as follows:

Xibanzani!

The small bus

Call: Xibanzani!
 Response: Xibanzani manana
 Ni ya hlayisa vana va mina
 Call: Xibanzani!
 Response: Xibanzani manana
 Ni ya hlayisa vana va mina

The small bus
 The small bus, mother
 I am going to provide for my young ones
 The small bus!
 The small bus, mother
 I am going to provide for my young ones

A feature of the far-flung tribal locations in the Zoutpansberg Hills is the bus transportation system, consisting of a number of old buses plying to and from the villages centers. For those who can afford the fare they save the day or two's journey by foot to visit relatives. Visiting is a positive value of the Tsonga — it is one of the motivations behind virilocal marriage, which links distant villages and provides a reason and destination for travel (Ex. 4).

Beer-song Transcription 4

Xibazani Manane

(The Small Bus, Mother)

♩ = 153
Cycle: 16

Transpos.: maj 3rd up

♩ = 153. Cycle: 16 ♩

call response

Xi - ba-za-ni xi -

16

- ba-za-ni ma-na - - ne ha-a-a-a

Drum

Clap

16

response call

men (bass) hla yi - sa va na va min'... xi - ba - zan'

Drum

Clap

The music possesses a 16-unit overall length, intimated by the fixed handclap, divided into a 5-unit call plus a 3-unit response, followed by another 5-unit call plus a 3-unit response (the structure is not a repeated 8-unit cycle, for the melody changes completely). Harmony occurs at the octave due to the low voices of the men, and at the major 6th, major 2nd, and 5th due to overlap. The writer noted with amazement how unerringly the handclap and drumming entered at just the correct point, despite the slow-triplet 'meandering' of the lead singer when giving the opening call. She, of course, was bearing in mind the underlying rhythmic grid of the song, and derived pleasure from this 'test' of the ensemble's rhythmic sensibilities.

The complete text of Beer-song No. 5 was given earlier in this paper (Ex. 5). The music possesses a 72-unit overall length, divided into a 10-unit call followed by a 22-unit response, and a 5-unit call followed by a 35-unit response. Among southern African tribal musics, the Tsonga musical system is unusual in the complexity and sophistication of the formal structures employed (Figure 6).

Beer-song Transcription 5

♩ = 168

Cycle: 72

Swi Vulavula Nkata Mina

(Gossiping Wife of Mine)

Transpos.: maj 6th up

♩ = 168 Cycle: 72

Swi - vu - la - vu - la nka - ta mi - na swi na nwa -Gway' - ma - ne -

- - e ha mu - kwe - le kay' nwa - ma - xa - la -

- ni wa he - mba ka - si swi n'wa - ni swi na

we - na - ii he mu - kwe - le kay'

The complete text of Beer-song No. 6 is as follows:

Xibanzani!

Unison Chorus: Ximanjemanje! N'wana mhane ahi ku saseka
 Ximanjemanje! Mara hayi ximanjemanje ahi ku saseka
 Va teka masaka! Wa endla minchali
 Nkata Cococo! Mara hayi ahi ku saseka

The modern life!

Unison Chorus: The modern life! Mother, it's so beautiful
 The modern life! Oh but these times are beautiful
 They take gunnysacks! And make shawls of them
 Cococo's wife! Oh but these times are beautiful

Ximanjemanje is one of those countless expressive, ideophonic words so beloved of the Bantu-speaking peoples of the world, and refers to innovations such as the bicycle and the transistor radio and the even more envied possessions of the Whites, such as cars and brick homes (envy caused only by imposed rising expectations, not by greed). Appropriately enough, some of the words of the song are English words, adapted to a Tsonga linguistic environment. *Masaka* means sack, *ma* being a plural prefix. *Minchali* means shawl, *mi* being a plural prefix. There is word-play involved in the relationship between *masaka* and *saseka* (beautiful) (Ex. 6).

Comparison with alternative tape-recorded versions of the song reveal that this item is generally performed in call-and-response style, the initial exclamation being in each case the call, the final statement being the response. There is an 8-unit overall length divided into two even halves of 4 units each. Note the alternation of triple and duple time.

Beer-song Transcription 6.

♩ = 93

Cycle: 8

Ximanjemanje

(These Modern Times)

Transpos.: maj 3rd up

♩ = 93. Cycle: 8 ♩.
Voice: unis. Chorus

Xi-ma-nje-ma-nje - - e n'wa-na mha-ne ahi ku sa-sek

Clap

Voice

xi-ma-nje-ma-nje mar ha-yi xi-ma-njema-nje ahi ku sa-sek

Clap

Summary of the Musical Characteristics of Beer-Songs

A musical analysis of the performances of 60 beer-songs revealed the following:

- (i) overall preference is shown for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and ascending 4th;
- (ii) most of them use pentatonic melodic patterns;
- (iii) all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
- (iv) 40 utilize a rhythmic accompaniment of handclapping, or drums, or both;
- (v) 31 possess a basic cycle of 8 or 16 units;
- (vi) 53 utilize call and response.

Interval Preference in 60 Beer Songs

<i>Interval</i> (Total of 1,797 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending.....	24.5
minor 3rd, descending.....	18
4th, ascending.....	10
4th, descending.....	8
major 2nd, ascending.....	7
minor 3rd, ascending.....	7
5th, descending.....	5
5th, ascending.....	3.5
major 3rd, ascending.....	3
major 6th, ascending.....	3
minor 7th, ascending.....	2.5
major 3rd, descending.....	2.5
minor 2nd, descending.....	2
minor 6th, ascending.....	1
minor 6th, descending.....	1
major 6th, ascending.....	0.5
major 6th, descending.....	0.5
8th, ascending.....	0.5
major 9th, ascending.....	0.5
	100%

The above musical analysis demands a brief interpretation, particularly with regard to the sociocultural implications of scale-usage (such as diffusion patterns between tribes) and the linguistic implications of interval preference. In making such an interpretation, it is imperative to ensure that European musical hearing does not pollute the findings, distorting the data with biased selectivity (utilizing only that music which appears beautiful), prejudiced aural evaluation (flexing the native tuning system to accommodate what appears to be out-of-tuneness), and false analogy. An example of false analogy would be to compare the Uganda xylophone 4th to the Tsonga musical bow 4th. The former is produced by dividing the octave into five equal intervals of 240 Cents each and beating upon alternate xylophone slats tuned to these intervals, yielding intervals of 480 Cents. The latter is produced by inverting the natural 5th of 702 Cents, yielding 498 for the musical bow's 4th. Like or nearly-alike intervals cannot be compared cross-culturally as though the social meaning of the sounds were identical, regardless of cultural attitudes and the psychohistorical background of their production and use within the society. This does not mean that cross-cultural intervallic comparison is invalid; it means that anthropological research must accompany the musicological, and that base-lines and guide-posts must be established before proceeding.

Taking into account these considerations, then, we can go on to state that Tsonga beer-song preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd and minor 3rd stem from musico-linguistic practises instilled during childhood, in the learning of Tsonga children's songs, which

concentrate upon these intervals. Proliferation of ascending 4th leaps does not occur in the Tsonga musical system until one reaches that music beyond children's music and adolescents' initiation music, i.e., beer-drink music and exorcism music. Such leaps provide apt musical accompaniment for the high-jumping *muchongolo* dance and other Tsonga leaping dances, and in general provide an expanded expressive outlet for use in the adult sociomusical institutions.

Tsonga pentatonicism would place this group closer to the Nguni people — the Zulu, Swazi, and Pedi — than to the Ndaui in the east and the Venda in the north. However, in certain of their institutions the Tsonga utilize heptatonicism, reflecting the fact that musical acculturation has followed a north-to-south social acculturation in the form of possession cults, which emanate mainly from the Shona and Venda. The network of musical borrowing is illustrated in Figure 7, and the scale-usage map in Figure 8.

Tsonga preference for 8- and 16-unit metrical cycles stems from the choreographic symmetry of their dances and the progressive/regressive dance-steps which they comprise. It also stems from the fact that, in contrast to the Venda (who emphasize 12-unit dotted crotchet rhythmic patterns), the Tsonga emphasize duple meter, particularly in their drumming (Figure 9). In fact, the only triplet drumming patterns occurring with any frequency in Tsongaland are heard at *xidzimba* rites, that form of exorcism where the undesirable alien spirits being expelled have been diagnosed as Shona or Ndaui in origin (the Shona possess a *chidzimba* dance).

Tsonga preference for call-and-response style stems from the custom of issuing verbal directions in dancing, but also from the Tsonga hierarchical ordering of society — the song-leader (*mufambisi* — from the verb *ku famba*, to go) is generally a prestigious individual in the community. Also involved is the custom of varying song-words to suit the occasion and the audience; an ensemble cannot jointly improvise a person's name or topical reference, but a single song-leader can and does.

Special care should be taken in interpreting interval counts, for it all depends on what is being counted. Different ethnomusicologists⁴ may or may not include the interval between the end and the repeated beginning of a song, between the end of a response and the beginning of an internal call, and that major 6th interval resulting from inversion of a normal minor 3rd to accommodate a song to a limited voice range. Keeping these factors in mind, it can be stated that an interval analysis of sixty Tsonga beer-songs reveals that descending intervals predominate over ascending, small intervals predominate over large, the ascending 4th is a frequent means of commencing a new plateau, the dominant-to-tonic 5th—so common in European music—is all but absent in Tsonga music (though the question might be asked: What is the Tsonga dominant, and tonic?), and the consecutive interval patterns appear to suggest that speech-tone is being followed in most cases.

In addition to a cultural and musical analysis, Tsonga beer-drink music lends itself to psychophysiological analysis. In computing the most common speed found in beer-drink drumming, in number of beats per second, it is found to be approximately that equivalent to the basic brain wave frequency of *homo sapiens*: within the range 8-15 c.p.s. (individuals are known to vary by this 7-point margin). Take, for example, Beer-song Music Examples Nos. 1-4. In each case the quavers of the drum-part occur at the rate of just over 9 c.p.s., as can be calculated from the given Metronome markings. Experiments in auditory driving of subjects in psychological laboratories have shown that tapping the human basic brain wave frequency is conducive to building up a state of ecstasy.⁵ The fact that Tsonga music often employs more than one accompanying rhythm — in fact frequently depends upon polyrhythm — may be an attempt to tap simultaneously the differing brain wave frequencies found in a group of beer-drink participants. Similarly, the tactile reinforcement inherent in Tsonga dancing, along with the hyperventilation, low blood glucose, and high adrenaline flow of energetic dancers, tend to facilitate the slightly euphoric effects of Tsonga maize-beer and complement the driving effect of the drums.

The steady rise and fall of Tsonga melody, with its alternate high call/low response and its monotonous repetition, its to-the-point verbal suggestions and (often) drone-type harmony, exert a hypnotic, trance-inducing effect. The assembled kin-group, gathered purposefully in symbolic union, clap hands and sway bodies as one. Their eyes, riveted upon a gyrating solo dancer or upon a swaying song-leader, may experience a mild form of mesmerism as the evening grows into night, the fires burn, and the drums echo off the surrounding hillsides. Certainly the ethnographic reports of anthropologists and ethnomusicologists all over Africa are replete with descriptions of the ecstatic state referred to, and always there is the association with the type of fast drumming described here.

FOOTNOTES

1. Curt Sachs, *The Wellsprings of Music* (The Hague, 1962), p. 68.
2. Henri A. Junod, *Les contes et les chantes des Ba-Ronga* (Lausanne, 1897), p. 38.
3. Eileen Krige, *The Social System Of The Zulus* (Pietermaritzburg, 1936), p. 66.
4. A good interval count analysis is to be found in John Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs* (Johannesburg, 1967), p. 173, but here, and in his many subsequent publications, Blacking points out the many pitfalls of the procedure and counsels caution.
5. Andrew Neher, "A Physiological Explanation Of Unusual Behavior In Ceremonies Involving Drums," *Human Biology*, 34 (1962), pp. 151-160.

Figure 1
The predominance of beer-drink music
in Tsonga musical performance.

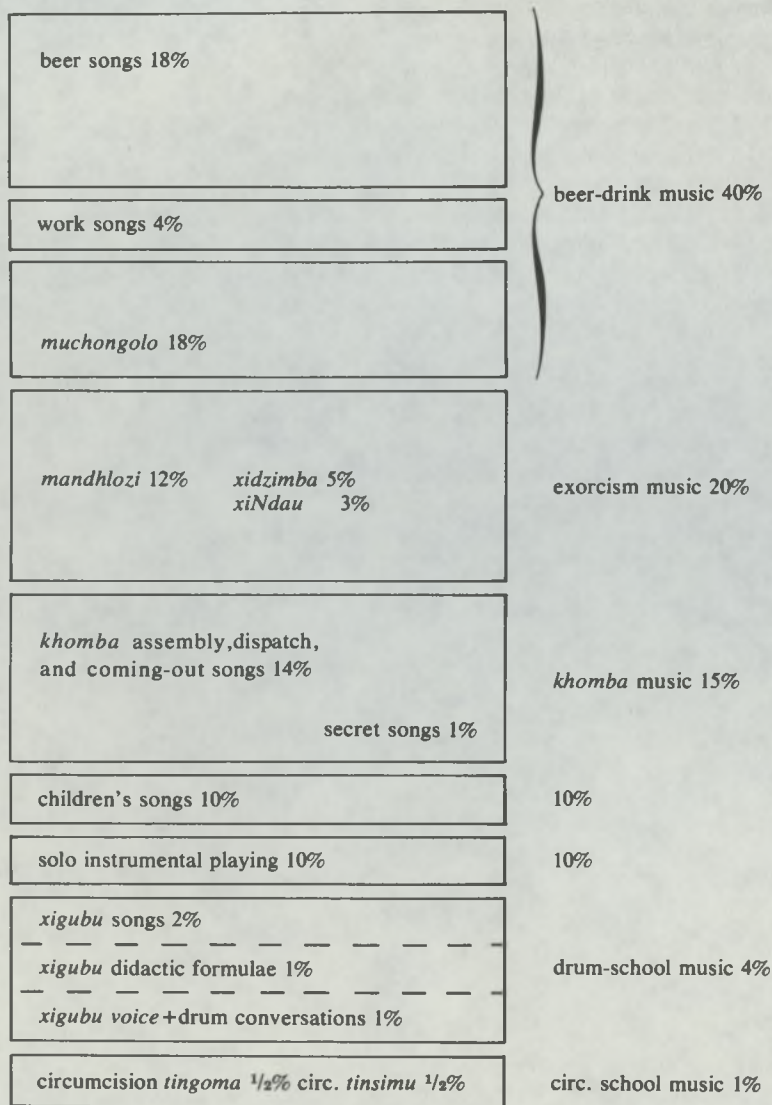


Figure 2
The relation of beer-drink music (top left center) to the other musical styles on the Tsonga musical 'ladder'.

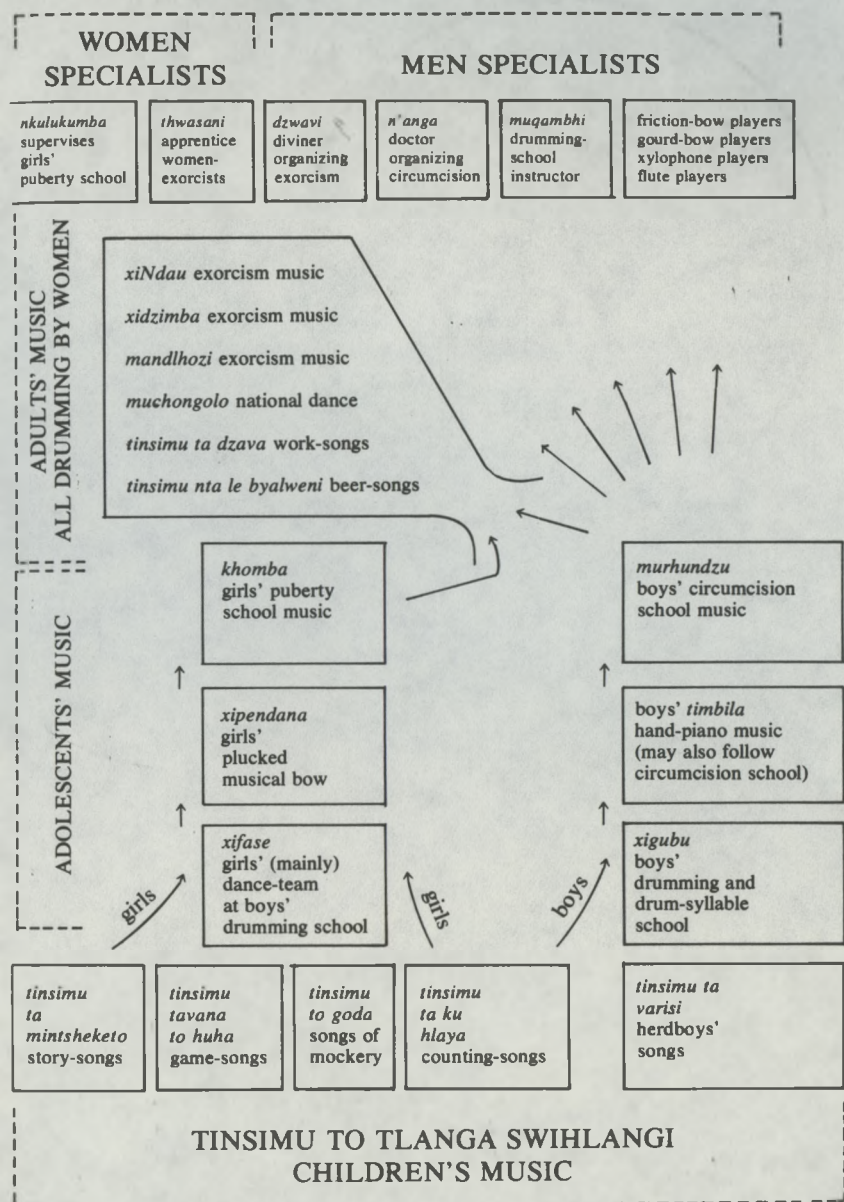


Figure 3
Beer-drink music as a form of competitive display.

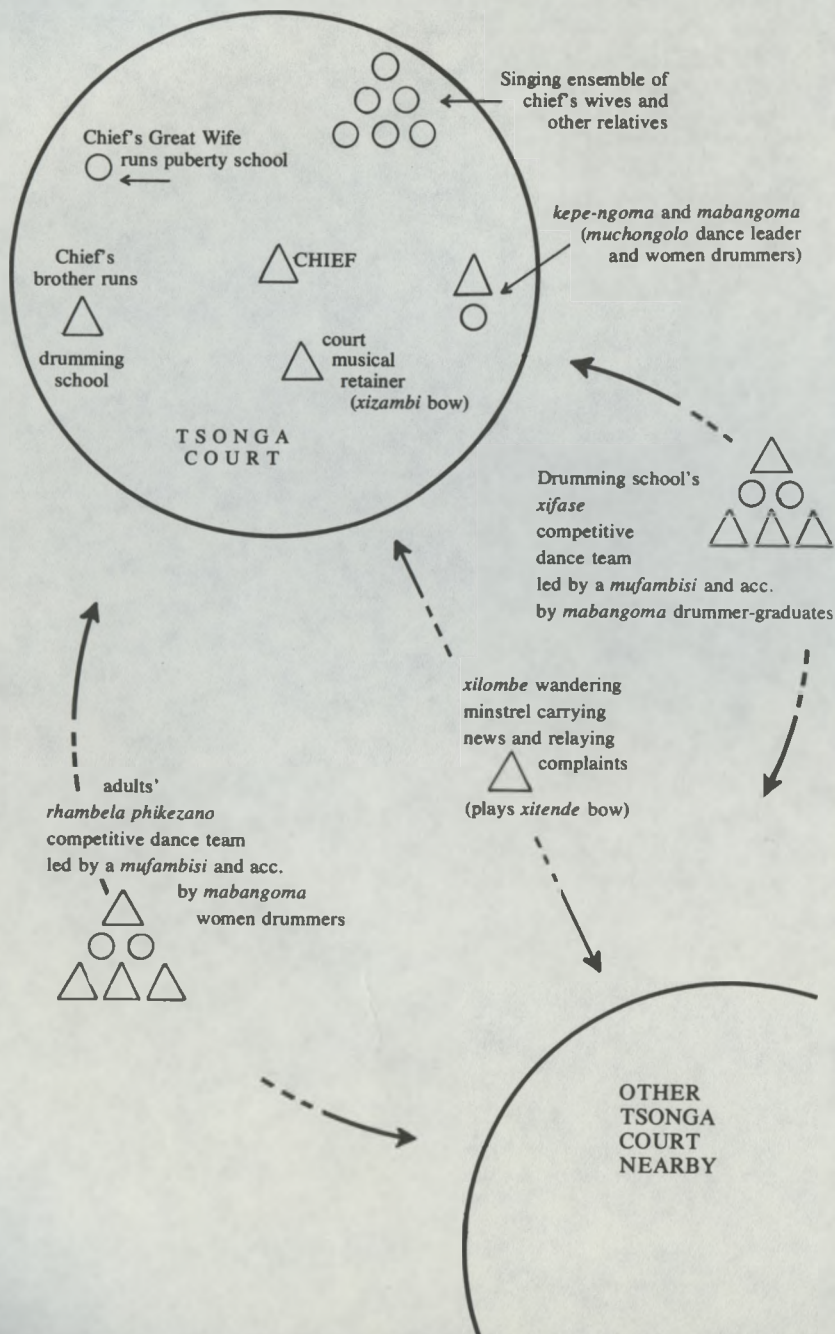


Figure 4

The fourteen main kinds of subject-matter categories in Tsonga beer-songs (note the reference to life-cycle crises in 1-7). Co-wifely jealousy songs and witchcraft-accusation songs are particularly prescription-bound, being expressive of interpersonal tensions.

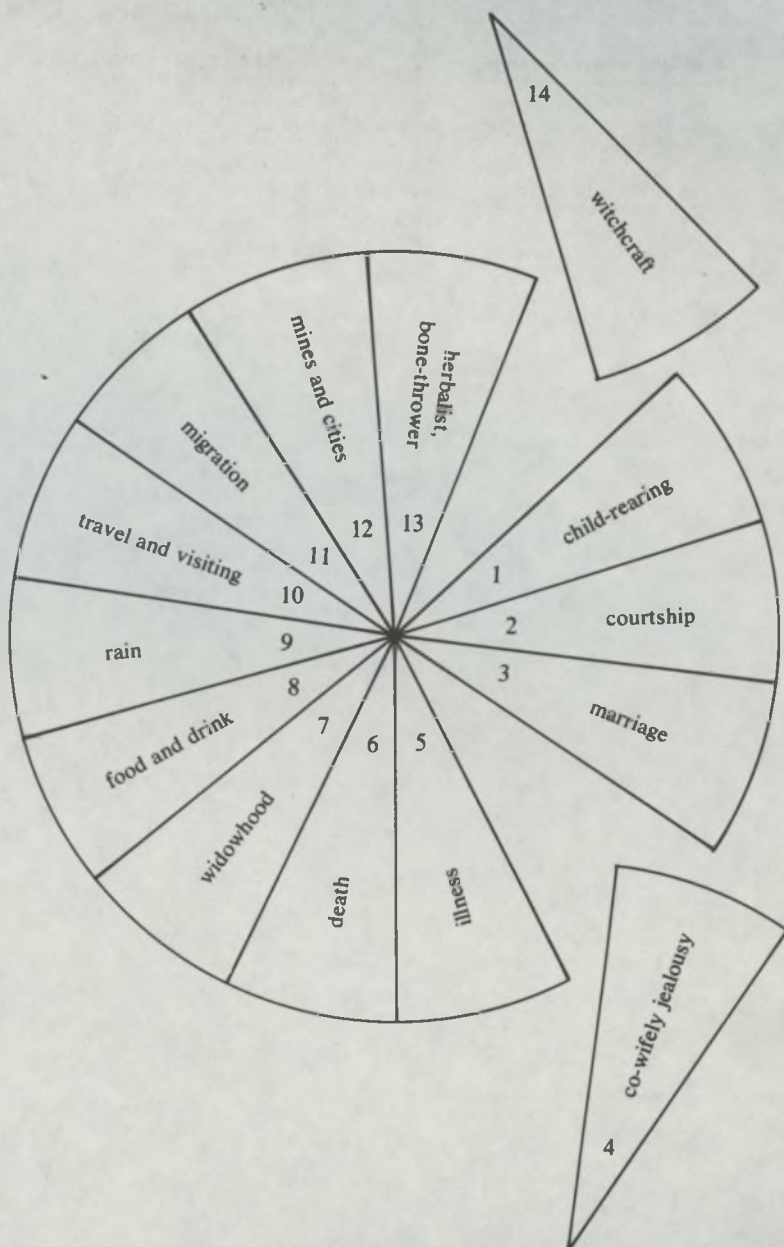


Figure 5
Factors tempering the rigidity of speech-tone control in Tsonga beer-drink music.

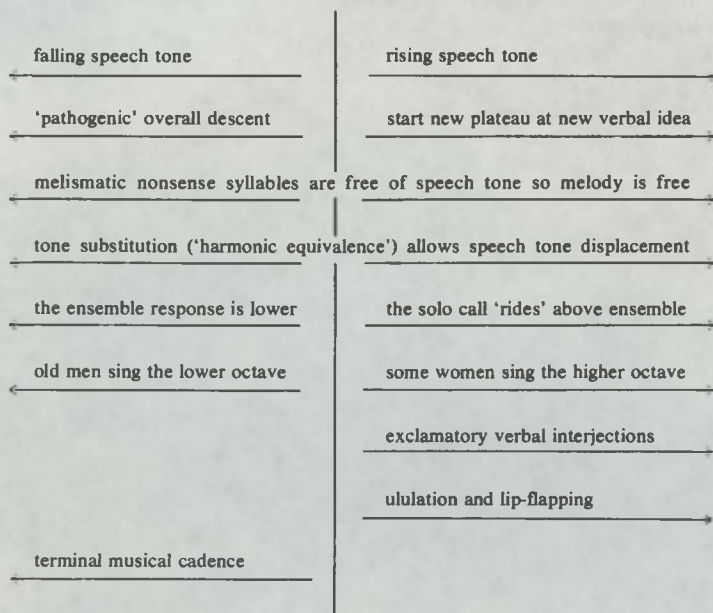


Figure 6
The complexity of formal structures occurring in Tsonga beer-drink music.

<i>Representative Formal Structures Evinced By Tsonga Songs</i>		<i>Total</i>
Song A	(call = 9 + J response = 3 J + call = 9 + J response = 9 J + call = 3 + J response = 3 J )	.....36 J
Song B	(call = 4 + J response = 4 J + call = 4 + J response = 14 J )	.....26 J
Song C	(unison chorus = 2 J + call = 4 J + unison chorus = 2 J + call = 4 J + divided chorus = 4 J )	.....16 J
Song D	(call = 6 + J response = 3 J + call = 6 + J response = 9 J )	.....24 J
Song E	(call = 4 + J response = 4 J + call = 4 + J response = 8 J )	.....20 J
Song F	(call = 10 + J response = 4 J + call = 4 + J response = 4 J + call = 4 + J response = 4 J )	.....30 J
Song G	(call = 4 + J response = 7 J. + call = 1 + J response = 12 J. )	.....24 J

Song H	(call = 6 + ♪ response = 10 ♪	
	+ call = 6 + ♪ response = 10 ♪	
	+ call = 5 + ♪ response = 27 ♪	.....64 ♪
Song I	(call = 2 + ♪ response = 3 ♪	
	+ call = 2 + ♪ response = 11 ♪ )	.....18 ♪
Song J	(call = 18 + ♪ response = 18 ♪	
	+ call = 2 + ♪ response = 4 ♪	
	+ call = 3 + ♪ response = 3 ♪	
	+ call = 3 + ♪ response = 3 ♪	
	+ call = 3 + ♪ response = 3 ♪ )	.....60 ♪
Song K	(call = 6 + ♪ response = 4 ♪	
	+ call = 6 + ♪ response = 4 ♪	
	+ call = 2 + ♪ response = 4 ♪	
	+ call = 2 + ♪ response = 4 ♪ )	.....32 ♪

Figure 7
Network of musical borrowing
in and around Tsongaland

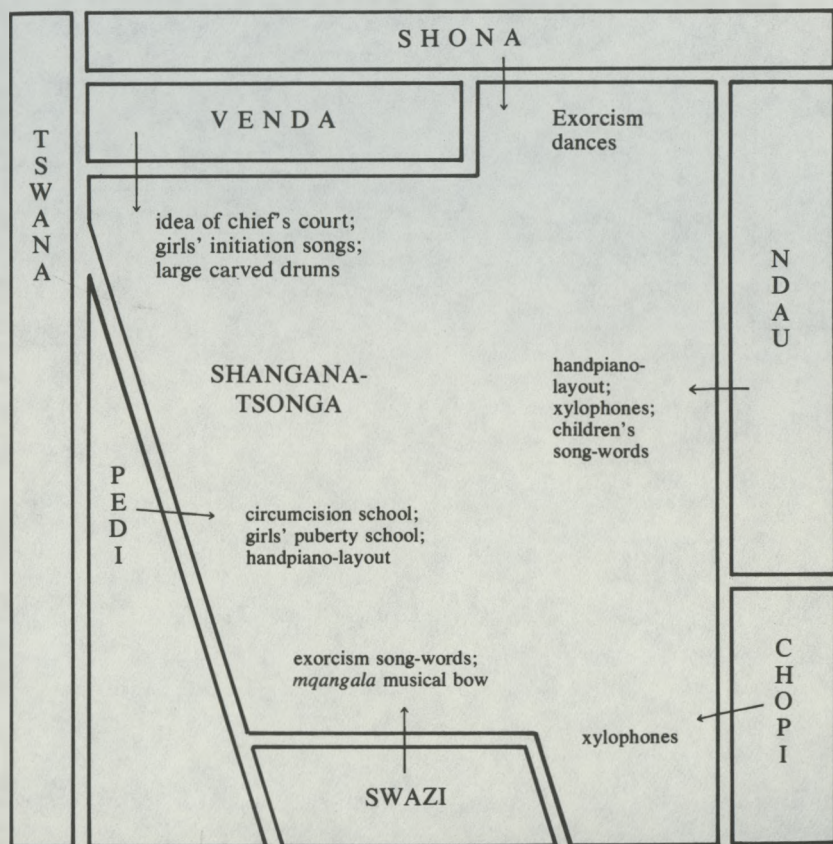


Figure 8
The S.E. African scale-usage map

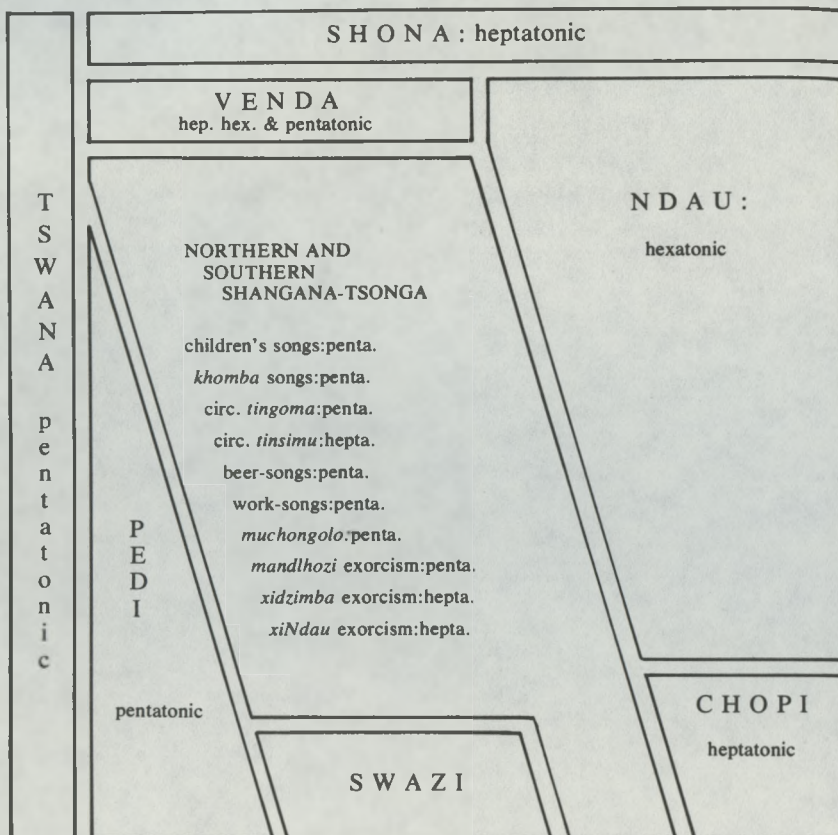


Figure 9
The importance of duple time in Tsonga music.

||: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ :|| CORE PATTERN

||: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :|| *nyanyula* rhythm in girls' initiation

||: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :|| *xisotho* rhythm in girls' initiation

||: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ :|| a *xigubu* drumming-school rhythm

	: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :	
	: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :	
	: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :	
	: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :	

beer-song rhythms

||: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ :|| 6 ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :|| 4 ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ - :||

two *muchongolo* (national dance) rhythms

||: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ :|| ||: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ :||

pointing *stamping*

||: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :|| *mandlhozi* exorcism rhythm

||: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ :|| *xidzimba* exorcism rhythm