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Knights of Malta) 1530-1798. The Semitic-Arabic basis of the Maltese language, however, remained virtually intact throughout these centuries of foreign rule, the language superimposing and grafting Romance vocabulary, idiom, and semantics onto the Arabic base, often Semitizing the European material in the process. Indeed, in a real sense, we may say the Semitic-European symbiosis with Phoenician/Punic-Latin posited before the Arab invasion of 870—merely continued into Medieval and modern times with different Semitic-European languages—Maltese Arabic and especially (Siculo-)Italian—filling the roles in the symbiosis.¹

Even when the British took over the administration of the islands after 1800, (Siculo-)Italian influences remained paramount, and at the beginning the British too used Italian as the language of state. However, from the outset they (obviously) favored English—and Maltese—over Italian. Their attempts to replace Italian with these languages form a saga in themselves, and have been treated in some detail by Aquilina 1964². In brief, after more than a century of language wars, when Maltese was “the most unsettled language in the world”³, Malta’s “questione della lingua” was finally settled in 1934, when Italian was ousted and Maltese was made official (alongside English), and a standard, Latin-based alphabet, orthography, and grammar were adopted, as fixed by the recently founded (1920) Maltese Academy. Article 5 of the Constitution of Independent Malta (September 21, 1964) guarantees the Maltese language her rightful and legal place as the first official language of the islands.

Tsonga Bow Music

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Of the southern African Bantu-speaking peoples, the 2,000,000 Tsonga of Moçambique and the Northern Transvaal are among the richest in variety of musical instruments. Of these, the most popular and the most typical of the Tsonga is the *xizambi* notched friction bow, an 18-inch thin arc rubbed with a fruitshell rattlestick, and bearing a palm-leaf ‘string’ which is mouth-resonated.

A study funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research reveals that Tsonga composition and performance for the bow is carried out according to consistent principles, demonstrating sophisticated musical development and perception among the players and their audiences. The tapes analyzed were by Wilson Zulu of Samarie, John Chauke of Sibasa, Elias Khosa of Machekacheka, Joel Mashava and Njaran-jara of Chief Mhinga’s Location.

#5 combiners

¹ On (Siculo-)Italian influences cf. John Micallef, *The Sicilian Element in Maltese* (Unpubl. thesis, The University of Malta, 1959), and Fernande Krier, *Le maltais au contact de l’italien* (Hamburg, H. Buske, 1976).

² See Joseph Aquilina, *The English Language in Malta* (*Journal of the Faculty of Arts, The Royal University of Malta* 2/3.1964: 181-198).

³ See Anthony Cremona, 1958. *The Study and Teaching of Maltese* (*Journal of the Faculty of Arts, The Royal University of Malta* 1/2.1958: 117-120), p. 120.

swings. A fascinating feature of his adaptations in his stretching and compressing of alternative cycles of the tune, losing meter on one cycle but gaining meter on the next, thus titillating the ears of the audience while maintaining overall metrical integrity of the original.

Summarizing the bow playing of Wilson Zulu, we note that he uses sectional transposition at the 4th or 5th, carries melody on either upper or lower of two simultaneous bow notes, uses endings as introductions, interprets long notes by reiteration, and manipulates the meter for musical interest.

John Chauke works in the copper mines of Messina, and owns a carefully carved instrument from the Sibasa area. He taps the bow, produces popping sounds, and has learned to sing and play at the same time, which is unusual. The vocal line generally consists of paired eighth-notes while the rattlestick accompaniment groups its eighth-notes in threes; this yields polyrhythm because of the staggered accents which are heard between voice and bow.

In some of his performances, Chauke doubles the effective metrical cycle of a song by presenting the whole as a musical question, and then 'answering' it with a variant so interesting as to constitute a new version of the song, double in length. In so doing, he employs an important principle of Tsonga vocal music, that of call-and-response structure.

We have stated that Chauke sings while playing. It is noteworthy that he uses two methods of accompanying his short vocal rests, according to context. An empty area toward the end of a vocal section that precedes another vocal section is accompanied by the rattlestick alone. An empty area toward the end of a vocal section that precedes an instrumental section is accompanied by buccal resonance.

Chauke has an intriguing way of interpolating extra vamp bars between sections, enlarging the composition without violating its basic metrical base. His use of fingers F as a tonic is unusual, as most players use open-tones C and G for this purpose.

Transcription 2

Godini "A Man's Name" (Elias Khosa of Machekacheka)

M.M.: ♩ = 144 Cycle: 16 ♩ Transposition: minor 3rd up (fundamental)

The musical transcription consists of three staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'bow' and begins with a measure number '16'. The music is written in a single melodic line using eighth notes and rests. The second and third staves continue the melodic line. The transcription concludes with a double bar line and the word 'Fine'.

Elias Khosa. The tension of Khosa's bow is adjusted so that lower partials are favored at the expense of upper partials, and for this reason he plays many third-harmonic Gs and no sixth-harmonic Gs. Khosa tends to alight on an interesting rhythmic motif and maintain it in every bar of the piece, compensating for this rigidity by plentiful melodic motion. His melody is often derived from motor-sensory impulse, as when he frequently employs B, the lower harmonic of E, a note rarely used by other players. A favorite rhythm consists of a group of three eighth-notes, a group of four eighth-notes, a sixteenth-note, a dotted eighth-note, and a dotted quarter-note (total: 12 eighth-notes, a common African meter). Khosa often sings groups of three eighth-notes while playing in this rhythm, which is no mean feat.

When accompanying his own singing, Khosa does not fill in vocal rests by reiterating the previous note, or play harmonic substitutions (as other players commonly do). Instead, he creates complementary melodic figures that link up with the oncoming phrase.

Joel Mashava first plays instrumental versions of songs, then sings them unaccompanied. When doing this, he employs duple meter in the bow version (such as 24 quarter-notes), but dotted meter in his vocal version (such as 16 dotted quarter-notes). Note that the overall metrical length remains the same. Mashava frequently uses jagged, fragmented rhythm, produced by jerking the rattlestick and then holding it still momentarily. This is in contrast to the usual method of continuous motion.

While most bow music employs 8, 12, 16, or 24 as a metrical base, many of Mashava's bow performances involve units of 7, such as 14+21+21. This is rare in African music, but common in the music of India. Another instance of Mashava's individuality is his use of instrumental E flat to represent vocal E, lending a 'minor' or 'blues' quality to his interpretations.

Transcription 3

N'wana Wa N'anga "Child-of-the-Herbalist"

M.M.: ♩ = 262 Cycle: 24 ♩ Transposition: 4th up (fundamental)

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is labeled 'bow' and contains a melodic line with various rhythmic values and accidentals. The second staff is a vocal line with lyrics underneath. The third staff is labeled 'voice' and contains a melodic line with lyrics underneath. The bottom staff is labeled 'rattle' and contains a series of 'x' marks indicating rhythmic patterns. The score includes a '1 + 2' marking, a 'Fine' marking, and a 'DC' marking at the end.

bow

1 + 2 Fine

voice

n'wa-na wa- n'a- nga xi dya ti hu- ku xi- na- nga- a

rattle

DC

Njaranjara is an elderly member of Chief Mhinga's council, and highly respected. In his playing, juxtaposition of duplet groupings and triplets groupings sometimes derives from exploitation of the rattlestick's rhythmic possibilities, sometimes from the rhythm of the original songwords. Many of his performances exhibit call-and-response structure, often in interesting metrical divisions. A 30-unit piece, for instance, might be played as 11 plus 19.

The Duets of Mashava and Njaranjara

Joel Mashava and Njaranjara commonly perform *xizambi* duets for the council meetings at Chief Mhinga's Location. In order to play with Njaranjara, Mashava re-tunes his *xizambi* so that its open tone is a 5th distant to that of Njaranjara. He does this, not by tightening or slackening as one might expect, but by slicing a sliver off the palm-leaf string edge.

In the first duet, each performer's contribution lasts 16 dotted quarter-notes but is staggered by 5 eighth-notes, creating an iambic phrasing. In the two melodies of the duet, disparate but interlocking pairs of *xizambi* notes yield four-part harmony, mainly in 5ths (inverted 4ths).

The second duet consists of four dotted quarter-notes against six undotted quarter-notes. Irregular accentuation and intriguing rhythmic asymmetry yields a remarkable combined inherent rhythm consisting of four sixteenth-notes, four eighth-notes, four sixteenth-notes, one eighth-note, four sixteenth-notes, one eighth-note, four sixteenth-notes, three eighth-notes, six sixteenth-notes, and four eighth-notes (total: 24 eighth-notes).

The second performer enters on the first performer's fourth eighth-note (third cycle) and every four repetitions of the first performer's 30-eighth-note cycle (every five repetitions of the second performer's 24-eighth-note cycle) finds the juxtaposed phrases back in this position, rather like the cyclic phasing encountered in drumming in India.

In these duets, the intervallic relationship between the two instruments (a 5th or inverted 4th) parallels the intervallic relationship found between the voice and its *xizambi* accompaniment among the players previously noted, and serves to emphasize the importance of the Tsonga concept of harmonic equivalence and note substitution.

The primary role of rhythm in *xizambi* playing (due to the essentially percussive nature of the instrument) is particularly emphasized in duet playing. The rasping against the notched bow, and the rattling of the seeds on the rattlestick, are prominent constituents of the *xizambi* sound, and the rhythmic patterns yielded by them function as a grid against which the voice and/or buccal resonance or another *xizambi* provide interest.

Conclusion

Many of the distinctive features of Tsonga *xizambi* music are seen to be related to factors governing Tsonga communal vocal music, as follows:

- 1) 8ve 'transposition' to avoid low harmonics—this resembles the upward 'transposition' (by singers) of low, out-of-range tones;
- 2) reversing the tune-sections—this derives from the use (in vocal music) of 'circular' form, where a caller may *begin* with the chorus part;
- 3) alternation of voice and bow—this is in accordance with the use of call and response in vocal music;
- 4) tone-substitution—this derives from Tsonga concepts of harmonic equivalence;



Joel Ngoveni plays his *xizambi* notched friction bow for his wife and an appreciative group of youngsters

- 5) use of 'fill-ins'—observance of a tune's overriding metrical basis may be an essential communicative factor, for the audience has an awareness of that basis;
- 6) rhythmic mutation—this follows rules pertaining to the instrumental abbreviation of sustained vocal tones;
- 7) creation of 'inherent' rhythms—this is related to Tsonga concepts of rhythm production, whereby *one* desired pattern generally emerges from the playing of *two* or more drummers.

The foregoing features of *xizambi* music are seen, by their derivation from outdoor situations, by the use of 'circular' form, by the use of call-and-response structure, by the use of principles of harmonic equivalence, by their derivation from drumming practices, and by their dependence upon principles governing communal music-making activities, to be related to characteristic features of Tsonga communal *vocal* music.

Certain other features, such as musical adaptation by the use of expansion or contraction, by the apparent use of instrumental crystallizations of vocal melodies, and by the use of an instrumental descending tone-row derived from harmonics GECG tempered

by fingerings to yield GEDCAG, seem to be the prerogative of Tsonga notched friction bow players. While friction bow playing is subject to general principles governing the entire Tsonga communal music tradition, we see that individuality, spontaneity, the creative process, and developed musical perception are recognized and acknowledged.

The contribution of an ethnomusicological study focussing on musical activity at the perimeter of Tsonga music rather than within the mainstream, lies in its illumination of the flexibility of Tsonga sociomusical sanctions, the provision built into the culture for innovative artistic endeavor, and the possibilities for extending ever-outward the musical horizons and boundaries of a folkmusic system. The Tsonga concept of 'progress' is cyclical rather than linear as in Western civilization, and no doubt Tsonga *xizambi* players have excelled for centuries. Nevertheless this study aims at dispelling the notion that, in non-Western societies, musical behavior is severely circumscribed, while only in the West is there musical initiative and enterprise.

The existence of southern African folk musicians who play intellectual 'games' with traditional songs, who encode familiar sequences of intervals for audience decipherment, and who spontaneously produce mathematically based permutations of known melodies while retaining the essence of each, presupposes the existence of a southern African audience whose range of musical comprehension includes the perception of concealed melodic line, inverted melodic contour, compressed/expanded metrical cycle, and complex rhythmic overlay.

In Africa, the European's naïve impression of inconsistent pitch, primitive harmony, coarse vocal quality, random drumming, and intolerably monotonous repetition, gives way to the realization that man everywhere possesses equal capacity for musical intellectuality, finesse, and subtlety.

Faced with the proven musical sophistication of 'untutored' audiences in the southern African veld, the lesson for the West is that perhaps all members of our own society are born with the potential to share in and contribute to music, actively rather than passively, discriminatingly rather than tastelessly, knowledgeably rather than uncomprehendingly. Apparently, through each phase of the Western social maturation process, an insidious network of negative social values erodes latent musicality among the underprivileged, and fosters musical snobbery among the privileged, perpetuating the myth of the unartistic majority. Whole musical genres have arisen as a result of these values, so that there exists music to keep music exclusive by. One dubious result of this exclusiveness is the reactionary wave of gross amateurism which has lately engulfed popular music. With the specialized society's innuendo that musical intelligence is beyond the common man, the only recourse is mistakenly assumed to be unintelligent music.

Such a study also illuminates the South African human condition. Given the depressed economy of the Bantustans and the cheap migrant labor system by which white South Africa prospers, the *xizambi* players must leave their homes and families for a degrading existence in the lowest stratum of a racist society. When one considers that a prime rationale for this is the African's intellectual 'inferiority', then illumination of remarkable intellectual musicality condemns continued derogation to inferior social and political status.

Ethnomusicology is not the study of 'quaint' musical customs. It is concerned with the meaning and variety of man's musical endeavor in a world where junk entertainment is touted everywhere via all possible media by powerful institutions for greed and material gain. Ethnomusicology is concerned with (1) music as the mirror of society, and (2) music as man's spiritual need. In South Africa we see the interdependence of the two. A society which accepts concepts such as 'upper class music' and 'the ungifted', has potential for promoting upper and lower races. Elitist use of music may not only inhibit broad development of musicality in the West, but may leave man's spiritual needs unfilled and inhibit ability to understand fellow man and the merit of his esoteric but equal art forms.