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## Tsonga Musical Performance in Cultural Perspective (South Africa)

THOMAS F. JOHNSTON

The Tsonga, or Shangana-Tsonga, are a Bantu-speaking people numbering about 1,200,000 in Mozambique and 700,000 in the Northern Transvaal. They grow maize and, to a certain extent, keep cattle, practise polygyny, and worship ancestor-spirits. I studied their musical system 1968-70 in order to fill gaps in the southern African ethnomusicological chart. Previous studies were, in time order, PERCIVAL KIRBY's study of the instruments 1934, HUGH TRACEY's study of Chopi xylophone orchestras 1948, DAVID RYCROFT's study of Swazi and Zulu music 1954, YVONNE HUSKISSON's study of Pedi music 1958, ANDREW TRACEY's study of Rhodesian mbiras 1961, JOHN BLACKING's study of Venda music 1962, CHRISTOPHER BALLANTINE's study of Tswana reed-pipe melody 1965, NICHOLAS ENGLAND's study of Bushman music 1967, DIEDRE HANSEN's study of Xhosa music 1968, and ROBERT KAUFFMAN's study of Shona harmony in 1971.

It is necessary to study the music of a southern African group for at least one horticultural year, because the music is seasonal. A correct cultural perspective can only be obtained if the music is heard and observed in context at the appropriate time. Herding songs do not occur after the harvest when the cattle are brought in to graze freely on the razed gardens; children's story-songs occur mostly around the hearth on long winter evenings. The musical calendar of the Tsonga is as follows.

### The Seasonal Occurrence of Different Musical Substyles for Adults

- Oct-Dec hoeing songs (*tinsimu ta kurima*)
- Dec-Mar weeding songs (*tinsimu ta kuhlakula*)
- Apr-Jun reaping songs (*tinsimu ta kutshovela*)
- Dec-Mar exorcism music (*mancomane*)
- Oct-Sep pounding songs (*tinsimu to kandza*)
- Oct-Sep beersongs (*tinsimu nta le byalweni*)
- Oct-Sep the national dance *muchongolo*
- Oct-Sep solo instrumental music (*xichaya*)
- Oct-Sep Christian church music (*tinsimu ta kereke*)
- Oct-Sep mine-dance *makwaya* in the urban environment

Musical Calendar





Area inhabited by the Shangana-Tsonga

The Seasonal Occurrence of Different Musical Substyles for Children and Adolescents

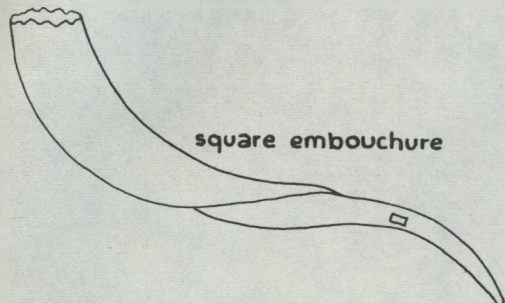
Oct-Apr	herding songs ( <i>tinsimu ta varisi</i> )
Mar-Jun	the children's dance <i>xifase</i>
Mar-Jun	the girl's dance <i>xigombela</i>
Apr-Aug	boys' circumcision school ( <i>murhundzu</i> ) music
May-Sep	girls' puberty school ( <i>khomba</i> ) music
Jun-Sep	small girls' pre-puberty school ( <i>musevhetho</i> ) music
Mar-Sep	children's storysongs within fireside tales ( <i>mintsheketo</i> )
Oct-Sep	children's songs ( <i>tinsimu to tlanga ta swihlangi</i> )
Oct-Sep	boys' drumming school ( <i>xigubu</i> ) music

It can be seen from the above that Tsonga vocal music is divided into specific classes, specific to certain sex-age groups. Before going into this we will describe the way in which the Tsonga classify their musical instruments.

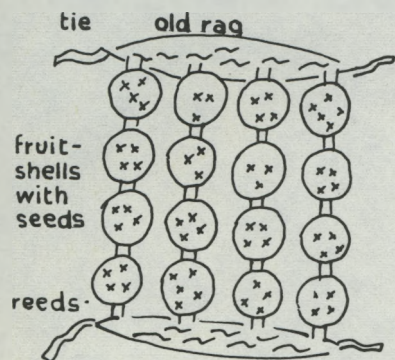


Musical Instruments

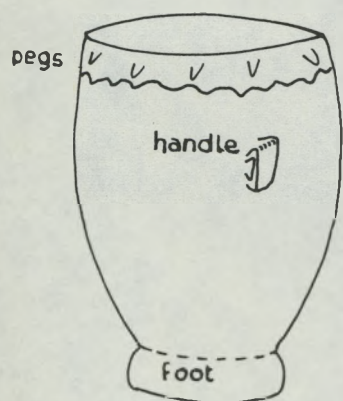
The 'Sacred', Communally Owned Instruments



The *mhalamhala* kudu antelope horn, symbol of authority of the girls' puberty school supervisor, is used to deflower the initiates (length: 3 feet)



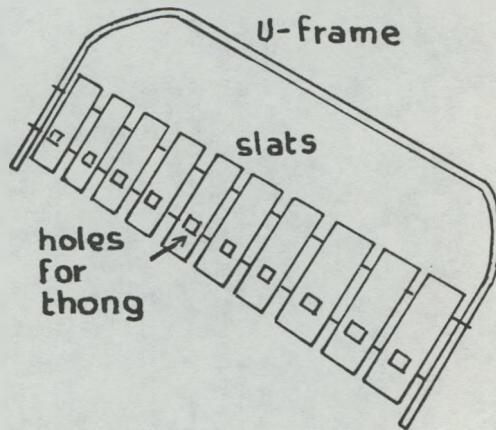
The *marhonge* fruitshell leg-rattles serve to guide dance-steps; they are repositories of ancestor-spirits, and their *chaka-chaka* sound is "the voice of the gods" (size: about 6 x 6 inches)



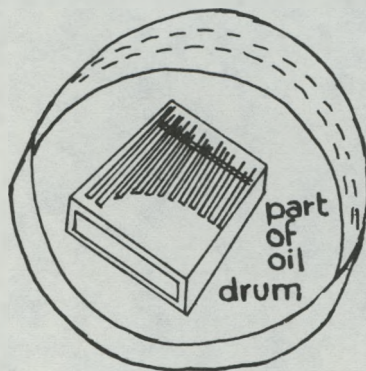
The *ndzumba* fertility drum has phallic symbolism when inverted, and is used for playing and squatting upon in the girls' puberty school (height: 2 1/2 feet)



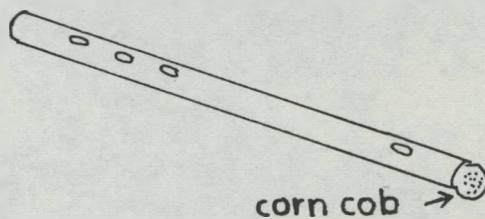
## The 'Secular', Privately Owned Instruments



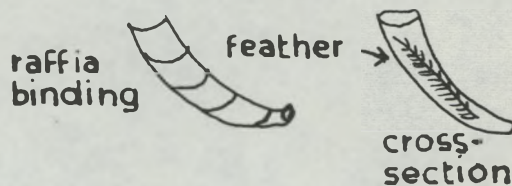
The *mohambi* xylophone is Chopibuilt, and is often played by headmen and others who have travelled extensively. Underside gourd resonators are not drawn here (length: 3 feet)



The *timbila* thumb-piano is played by youths and men to accompany topical walking-songs. Two forms are used: a 17-key single bank, and a 26-key triple bank with hollow body (size of *timbila*: 6 x 6 inches)



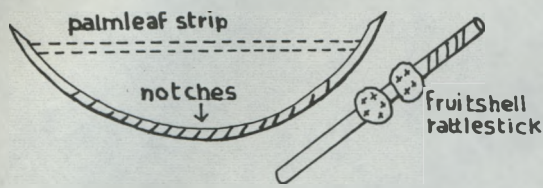
The *xitiringo* 3-hole transverse flute of reed or old metal pipe is played by old men, who hum and grunt while playing (length: 1 ½ feet)



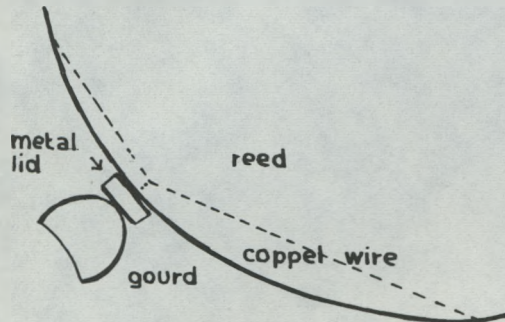
The herdboys' *nanga* whistle provides his 'identity-call' which is highly personal. 'Stealing' it is a crime (length: 5 inches)



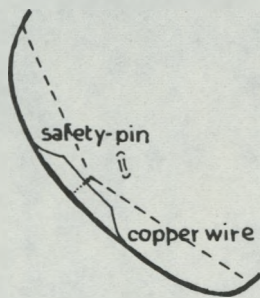
## The Four Tsonga Bows and Their Social Role



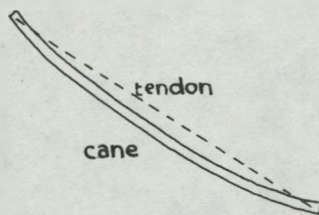
The *xizambi* notched friction-bow is played by the court's professional musical retainer, to entertain the chief and visiting dignitaries (size: 20 inches)



The *xitende* braced gourd-bow is played by the wandering newsteller (*xilombe*), because it leaves the mouth free (size: 5 feet)



The *xipendana* thick-handled bow is played by adolescent girls, often by two schoolgirls in duet. Western clothing must be covered by a salempore during playing (size: 3 feet)



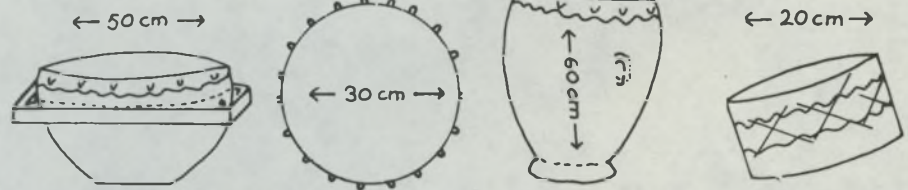
The *mqangala* hollow cane-bow is played mostly by old men, but also by adolescent girls who are the daughters of *mqangala*-players (size: 2 feet)

In addition to the communally-owned *ndzumba* drum, there are three types of privately-owned drums. The contrasting cultural associations of each drum are as follows:



The Drums of the Different Sociomusical Institutions

drum:

*ngoma**ncomane**ndzumba**xigubu*

institution:

beerdrink

exorcism

girls' initiation

boys'  
drumming  
school

dances:

*xichayachaya* (men)*mancomane**nanayila**ku wamikapu**xilala* (women)*managa**xifase**muchongolo* (mixed)*ku thaga**rhambelela phikezano**ku rhwala tingoma*

(competitive teams)

music:

*tinsimu nta le byalweni**mandlhosi**tingoma wa tikhomba**xigubu* songs*xidzimba**ku vulavurisa**xiNdau**switshekashekani*

officiants:

*mufambisi* (leader)*dzwavi* (exorcist)*nkulukumba* (head)*muqambhi* (teacher)*kepengoma* (leader)*thwasani* (ass't)*bangoma* (drummer)*bangoma* (drummer)*ndzabi* ('mother')

The bows will now be described in detail, for both their role and their construction differ greatly.

The Contrasting Musical and Physical Characteristics of the Four Tsonga Musical Bows

*xizambi* notched friction-bow:

1. It produces four component tone-colors (rasp, rattle, fundamental tone, and added resonance).
2. It possesses a large body of solo instrumental music which does not accompany song (though the items are ultimately derived from traditional beer-songs).
3. It possesses the greatest range of any Tsonga bow (over an octave – here it should be noted that the Shona *chimazambi* players sometimes utilize the 7th harmonic, yielding a total range of an octave plus a minor 3rd).
4. It is the most musically versatile, being capable, by reason of its utilization of several different natural series (each yielded by the addition of a further finger), of playing the chromatic scale or any other scale. The Tsonga limit their use of the *xizambi*'s potential to conform with vocal music practices.



5. It is the smallest of the Tsonga bows, and fits neatly under a man's jacket or shirt, to be produced at any propitious moment (such as the arrival of a visiting important personage).
6. Its fruitshell rattlestick is of sophisticated construction, possessing a piston/cylinder type of joint between the two halves.
7. It is the only Tsonga bow not utilizing wire or cord for a medium of vibration (a strip of *milala* palmleaf is used).

*xitende* braced gourd-bow:

1. It is the only Tsonga bow utilizing a gourd resonator, hence it leaves the mouth free and is ideally suited for accompanying the shouting and singing of the wandering minstrel.
2. It is the largest of the Tsonga bows, and therefore possesses the deepest tone quality, and is the loudest (again, this suits the instrument for the task of supporting and enhancing the antics and demonstrativeness of the wandering minstrel).
3. It is the only Tsonga bow which cannot be cut and made operative at a moment's notice – the calabash only ripens at a particular time of the year.
4. It is the only Tsonga bow which is struck with a light stick or reed; bouncing the reed can produce fast repeated tones.
5. It is the only Tsonga bow with a variable tone-color (the gourd resonator is moved on and off the chest).

*xipendana* braced thick-handled bow:

1. Its arc is the most fragile of the Tsonga bows, the ends being cut very thin to render the bow flexible.
2. The bow's fragility means that a light wire or cord must be utilized; consequently there are many occasions when the wire snaps and impromptu repairs carried out before resuming the performance.
3. It is the only Tsonga bow where the performer retains control over the tuning of the two string-lengths during actual performance (she retains the loop of thread with her thumb against the arc, adjusting it as necessary in order to tighten or loosen the bow's tension, and hence pitch. The loop is never tied).
4. It is the only Tsonga bow which is plucked with a metal safety-pin; this gives it a percussive, twanging quality.

*mqangala* hollow cane-bow:

1. It is the only Tsonga bow which acts as its own fingerboard, the fingers being able to press the cord down against the body of the cane arc.
2. It is the only Tsonga bow possessing a hollow body; this feature allows it to be used as a 'pipe-stem' for the smoking of dagga (hemp).
3. It is less flexible and thus straighter than other bows; this makes for difficulty in adjusting the tension of the cord.



4. It is the simplest Tsonga bow to construct, being simply a length of cane with cord attached.
5. It is the only Tsonga bow which is placed inside the cheek during playing.

The name for the notched friction-bow is generally the same everywhere: *xizambi* or *chizambi*. It has a limited distribution. The other musical bows occur in many other parts of Africa:

#### Names for the Gourd-Bow

Tsonga:	<i>xitende</i>	Chopi:	<i>tshitendole</i>
Zulu and Swazi:	<i>umakhweyana</i>	Zambian Tonga:	<i>kalumbu</i>
Venda:	<i>dende</i>	Kenyan Mtembe:	<i>ntono</i>
Pedi:	<i>sekgapa</i>	Congo (various peoples):	<i>dumba, gedo, wangoloko, andobu</i>

#### Names for the Braced Thick-Handled Bow

Tsonga:	<i>xipendana</i>	Pedi:	<i>lekope</i>
Zulu:	<i>isiqomqomana</i>	Chopi:	<i>penda</i>
Swazi:	<i>isitontolo</i>	Kwebo:	<i>kedondolo</i>
Venda:	<i>tshihwana</i>	Lovedu:	<i>kashane</i>
		Sotho:	<i>setolotolo</i>

#### Names for the Hollow Cane-Bow

Tsonga, Zulu and Swazi:	<i>mqangala</i>	Khosa and Pondo:	<i>inkinge</i>
Venda:	<i>lugube</i>	Sotho:	<i>lekope</i>

For two of the Tsonga musical bows learning syllables are commonly used. Note that we include learning syllables for the boys' drum, for comparison.

#### Non-Lexical Learning Syllables in Tsonga Music

For the *xizambi* notched friction-bow:

*cha-ka/cha-ka/cha-ka/cha-ka*  
*hla-wa/hla-wa/hla-wa/hla-wa*  
*cha-cha-ka/cha-ka/cha-cha-ka/cha-ka*  
*hla-wa-wa/hla-wa-wa/hla-wa-wa/hla-wa-wa*

For the *xitende* gourd-bow

*nti-ndi/nti-ndi/nti-ndi/nti-ndi*  
*nte-nte-nde/nte-nte-nde/nte-nte-nde/nte-nte-nde*  
*nte-nte/nti-nti/nte-nte/nti-nti*  
*nde-nte-nte/ndi-nti-nti/nde-nte-nte/ndi-nti-nti*

*Census of  
Tsonga*



For the *xigubu* drum:

*Vu-ngi-ndzi/ngi-ndzi/vu-ngi-ndzi/ngi-ndzi*  
*Ndzumba-ndzum'/ndzumba-ndzum'/ndzumba-ndzum'/ndzumba-ndzum'*  
*Nti-ga-nti-ga/ndu-ndu/ndun'/i-yo-zwi*  
*Ndle-nga/ndle-ndle/ndle-ndle/n-ga*  
*Ntiga-ntiga/ndi-ga-ndi-ga/i-lo-ga*  
*Nila-ntla-ngu/ntlu-ntlu-ntlun'-ntla*  
*Ndla-nga-ndza/ndla-nga-ndza/ndla-nga-n dza/ndla-nga-ndza*

Taking the Tsonga musical bow par excellence first, it is noteworthy that there are six ways of playing it:

#### The Various Friction-Bow Routines

1. Alternately play and sing (mouth resonance nearly always ceases during singing, but the rhythm of the rattlestick continues, accompanied by the drone of the fundamental of the unstopped string).
2. Play continuously, while others sing.
3. Play instrumental versions of songs, solo (unaccompanied).
4. Play instrumental versions of song, in duet with another player.
5. In rare instances, play and sing simultaneously (including appropriate mouth resonance).
6. In rare instances, refrain from rubbing the arc and simply tap it instead (producing a pleasant 'popping' sound).

Most Tsonga friction-bow music is produced by adapting Tsonga beer-songs to the instrument, and in this connection there are ten adaptation principles:

#### Tsonga System for Adapting Traditional Songs to the Friction-Bow

1. Low vocal tones become high instrumental tones in order to avoid the bow's soft low register. This practice has a precedent in Tsonga vocal music in the way that some singers transpose upwards the low out-of-range tones of a song. In European music, altering the melodic contour in this manner would change the tune.
2. Tune-sections become reversed, the bow-player starting with the chorus part of the song. This has a precedent in Tsonga vocal music in the way that a caller may begin with the chorus part of the song, the form being circular and leading back regardless of the starting point. The chorus part is considered to embody the heart and the tonality-establishing characteristics of the song.
3. Played episodes are alternated with sung episodes. This is related to vocal call-and-response form.
4. A bow tone one 4th (inverted 5th) away may be used to represent the vocal tone. This follows the rules of Tsonga harmonic equivalence or tone-substitution, whereby the steps of two superimposed descending pentatonic scales are paired off and employed interchangeably.

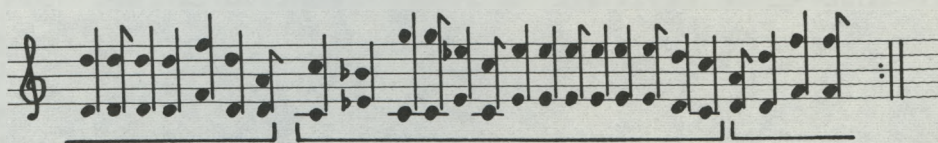


5. Long vocal tones are represented by repetition of short tones on the bow, in order to maintain the overriding numerical factor governing the metrical length of the song.
6. Rests (caesuras) in the song are represented on the bow by repetition of the previous tone, or of its harmonic equivalent, because of the 'perpetual motion' inherent in the use of a friction stick bearing rattles.
7. While the song's metrical length may not be 'mutilated' by being made asymmetrical, it may be radically changed by the bow-player as long as the new metrical length is a logical and common Tsonga cycle. For instance, the 38-unit song *se landze mafahlawa* sung in nineteen 2-unit pulses is instrumentally rendered in a 36-unit bow version, consisting of 20 pulses distributed thus: 1 +2 +2 +2 +2, 1 +2 +2 +2 +2, 1 +2 +2 +2 +2, 1 +2 +2 +2 +2, i. e., four groups of 9 units each.
8. In the hands of some players, major 3rds in songs may become instrumental minor 3rds.
9. Of several hundred traditional songs, any one may be rendered on the bow by the use of a single descending pentatonic tone-row GEDCAG, the row being adjusted for each song, by the use of tone-reiteration and octave transposition.
10. Two songs of different length may be played simultaneously by two friction-bow players, a 5th apart in tonality and the cycles phased to re-start together every few repetitions.

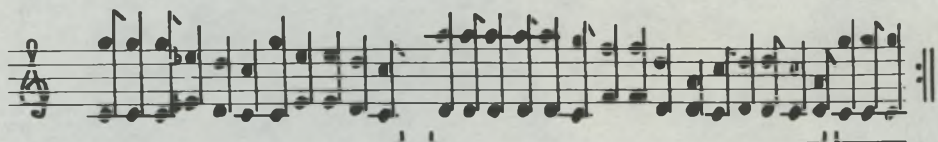
A common practice (related to Principle 9) is the use of two alternating tone-rows to represent one song. This is logical, for the use of one pentatonic tone-row supplemented by the additional tones made available by the use of a second tone-row supply all of the tones necessary in most Tsonga compositions.

**Examples of Friction-Bow Composition Based on the Alternation of Two Tone-Rows,  
Each Derived from a Harmonic Series Based on a Particular Setting of the Fingers**

The piece *ngelengele* (True-Ringing Pot)



The piece *xidavula mananga* (Short-Cut across the Desert)





Musical examples for four of these principles are given below.

The System for Adapting Traditional Songs to the xizambi Notched Friction-Bow

11

voice

bow

Low tones always become high to avoid bow's soft register (song: *selandze mafahlawa*)

voice

bow

Major 3rd above 'tonic' usually becomes minor for reasons unknown (song: *xidavula mananga*)

voice

bow

Rests always filled in by repetition of previous note or its harmonic (song: *ahi si tisiwa ka ndaba*)

An instrumental note one 4th (inverted 5th) away may represent the vocal note (song: *ngelengele*)



It is interesting to note that the Tsonga notched friction-bow *xizambi* is ideally suited to reproducing the kind of note-pairings most preferred by the Tsonga, and that this may account for its popularity:

**The Preferred Melodic Pattern in Tsonga Vocal Music, with a Comparison to the Pattern Best Yielded by the Friction-Bow**

The musical score consists of seven staves. The first five staves are vocal pieces, and the last two are friction-bow items. Each staff has a treble clef and a time signature of 8. Brackets above the notes indicate 'call' and 'response' sections.

**Beersong**  
 Xi- manje-ma nje e mara hayi ahikusa- sek'  
 Yo- o

**Beersong**  
 Meendzikhongo- tela nwana- a la- ye

**muchongolo dancesong**  
 Ha tinyandha yeye vava nuna va tindlop'

**Girls' initiation song**  
 na khomb' he nakhombo na khombo  
 mhanendzina khombo he mhan' ndzinakhombo  
 response response

**Bow item by J. Mathye**  
 bow fundamental  
 bow resonance

**Bow item by W. Zulu**  
 bow fundamental  
 bow resonance



Thus those ethnomusicologists who have expressed the opinion that much southern African vocal harmony may derive from the parallel harmonics of stretched strings, may be viewing the problem backwards. It is more likely that vocal norms dictate which instruments enter popular usage.

**Arguments for the Early Theory that African Parallel Vocal  
Harmony Derives from the Physical Properties of the Musical Bow**

1. African vocal parallelism (singing lines a 4th apart, i. e. an inverted 5th) resembles the sequential parallel 5ths produced by fingering a string emitting the natural series.
2. African vocal parallelism often occurs where the African musical bow is found.
3. African singers using a musical bow accompaniment appear to take cues from its musical 'idiom'.

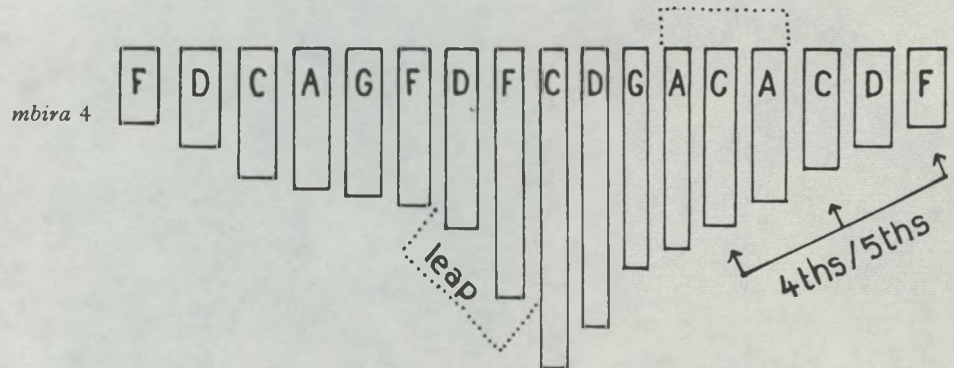
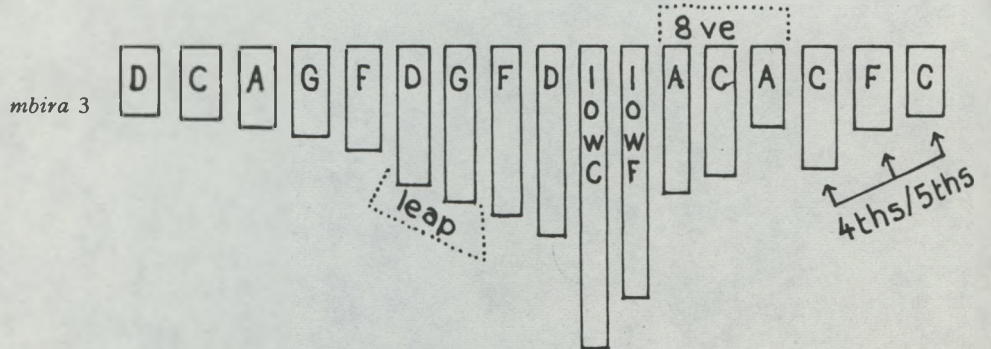
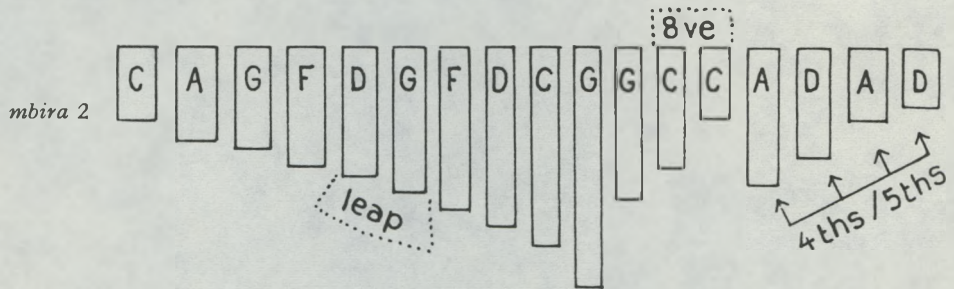
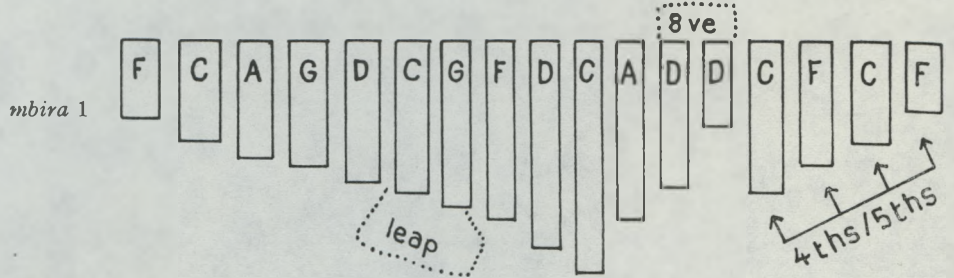
**Arguments for Our Hypothesis that African Musical Instruments Are  
Selectively Utilized as They Coincidentally Fulfill the Society's Vocal Prescriptions**

1. African vocal parallelism is probably due to all parts following the speech-tone rise and fall of the songwords.
2. Much African vocal parallelism is not exactly parallel (4ths often alternate quickly with 5ths, for example) while fingered bow harmonics are exactly parallel.
3. Vocal music is performed by all members of the society, mostly within the context of important social institutions, and throughout a territory.
4. Bow music is found only here and there throughout a territory and is confined to a few individuals.
5. Some bows (the *xizambi*, the *mqangala*) possess much chromatic potential which is never used. This suggests that vocal prescriptions restrict and guide bow music rather than vice versa.
6. Much bow music imitates the overall 'pathogenic' descent of vocal music, suggesting that this is the direction of flow of influences.
7. Much bow music consists of adaptations of known songs, and COOKE has observed that "all Ganda instrumental pieces are renderings of vocal compositions" (1970: 62).

Turning now to the gourd-bow called *xitende*, common tuning systems are as follows.



**'Standard' mbira Tunings from the Northern Transvaal**  
 (left half of 'V' played by left thumb, right half by right thumb)





### Tuning Systems for the Gourd-Bow

Tsonga, Venda and Zambian Tonga	The two string-lengths are tuned a minor 3rd apart, the 4th being obtained by fingering the shorter string-length, thus placing the additional tone outside and above the open tones
Pedi	The two string-lengths are tuned a major 2nd apart, resulting in the fact that, to obtain the 4th, the shorter string-length must be raised a minor 3rd by fingering (i. e. the method of production of minor 3rds and major 2nds is the reverse of that of the Tsonga)
Mtende	The two string-lengths are tuned a 4th apart, meaning that, to obtain a major 2nd or a minor 3rd, the longer string-length must be fingered, thus placing the additional tone inside the open tones

The musical characteristics of the other two Tsonga bows will be described in a forthcoming article. Let us move now to the Tsonga *mbira*, of which there are two kinds. The 26-key *mbira* is derived from the Ndau, and the 17-key *mbira* is derived from the Pedi. The latter is the more common, and well-known tunings for it are given on page 774.

### Tuning of the Present-Day Transvaal Tsonga Mohambi Xylophone

Pitch of the present-day Transvaal Tsonga <i>mohambi</i>	Pitch of the <i>mohambi's</i> Chopi ancestor, the <i>timbila</i>	Western note that the Tsonga slat approximates	Modern pitch of the Western note	Flatness or sharpness of the <i>mohambi</i> slat (compared to Western note)
slat 9: 617.96	617.96	E ♭ <sub>1</sub>	622.25	flat
slat 8: 563.08	563.08	D ♭ <sub>1</sub>	554.37	sharp
slat 7: 515	509.53	C <sub>1</sub>	523.25	flat
slat 6: 461.08	461.08	B ♭	466.16	flat
slat 5: 417.23	417.23	A ♭	415.30	sharp
slat 4: 392	not used	G	392	identical
slat 3: 373	377.33	G ♭	369.99	sharp
slat 2: 341.45	341.45	F	349.23	flat
slat 1: 308.98	308.98	E ♭	311.13	flat

### The Vocal Music

The various categories of communal vocal music mentioned in the Tsonga musical calendar are in fact substyles within seven main musical styles.

#### The Tsonga Classification of Their Musical Styles

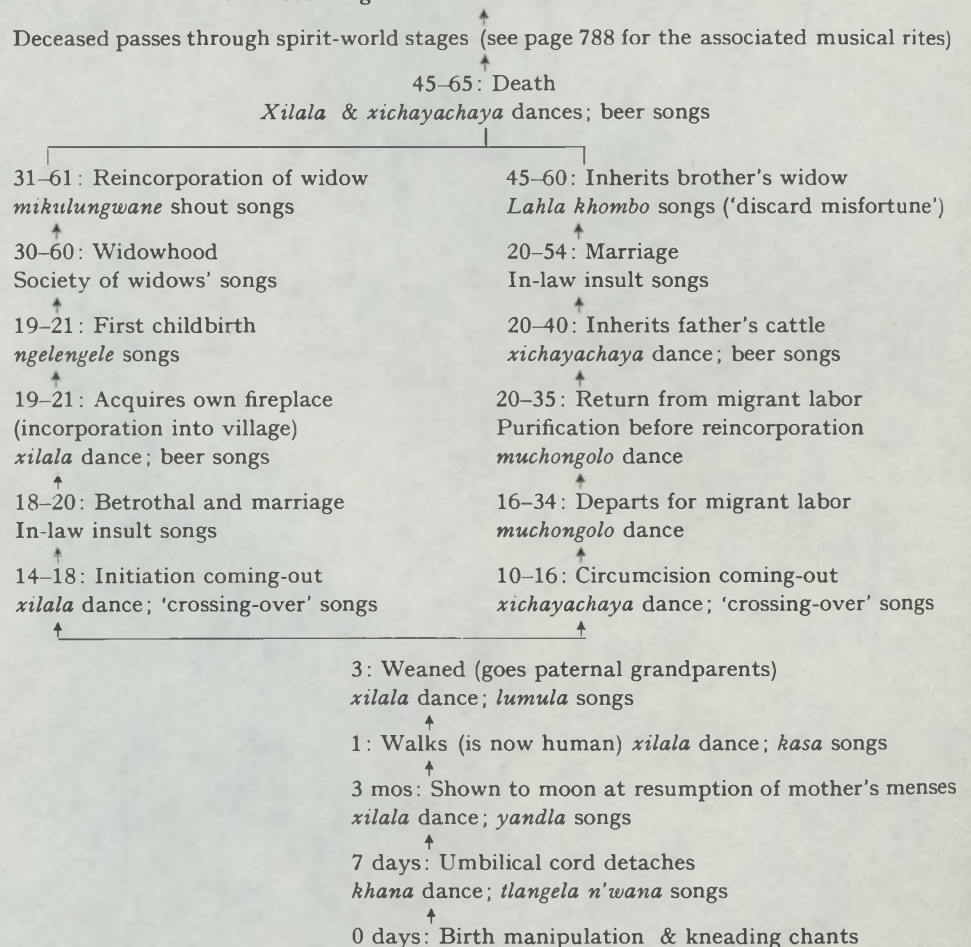
1. Children's music, which in turn has five subdivisions: A. Story-songs; B. Game-songs; C. Songs of mockery; D. Counting-songs; E. Herding songs. The first four are for both boys and girls. The last-named is for boys only.
2. Girls' initiation music, including assembly, dispatch, and greeting-back songs, plus a body of highly secret songs, formulae, dances, and mimes performed at the river.



3. Boys' drumming school music, including a body of non-lexical drum-learning syllables, a body of drum-and-voice conversations, a body of dance-songs, and two main dances.
4. Boys' circumcision school music, including a body of short didactic formulae, and a body of longer songs.
5. Social beer-drink music, which includes work-songs and the music of the national dance, *muchongolo*, as well as beer-songs.
6. Exorcism music, which includes three subdivisions matching the national origin of the spirit to be exorcized.
7. Solo instrumental music performed by quasi-specialists.

Tsonga individuals pass through these musical styles or stages in groups, as they experience social and biological maturation. In fact, knowledge of the various styles is used as an index of maturation. As an example of the various musical occasions occurring within any one person's lifetime, we give an ascending ladder of musical rites:

#### An Ascending Ladder of Life-Crisis Musical Rites





To identify the musical class of a song one naturally asks the singers for its category. The categories exhibit observable differences, including differential interval preference. In counting the intervals, however, there are seven major problems:

#### Problems in the Accurate Counting of Tsonga Melodic Intervals

1. The musical and cultural meaning of the interval between the end of the call and the beginning of the response may be different to that of the non-terminal intervals.
2. The interval between the end of the song and the recommencement of its cycle represents a leap from terminal nadir to initial peak. While assuredly this is a non-countable interval, it is nevertheless a heard interval. Where and how should the analyst account for it?
3. Tsonga intervals (particularly 4ths and 5ths) are regularly inverted to keep low or high sections of songs within individual voice-range. To the Tsonga, the musical and cultural meaning stays the same, but the analyst has few criteria for distinguishing between a true melodic ascent of a 4th and its inversion, a descent of a 5th.
4. The presence of additional polyphonic lines and of interjections frequently obscures what the analyst's experience of alternate song-versions (acquired over a lengthy period in the field, spent in different regions) tells him is probably the true melodic line.
5. It is often not clear whether an interval should be measured from the mean of the previous tone to the mean of the next, or from the end of the downward fall-off to the beginning of the upward slur.
6. The musical and cultural meaning of an interval may vary from institution to institution, and even within institutions. For instance, the ascending 5th yielded by the horn of the girls' puberty school (upon which the speech-tone and speech-rhythm of verbal commands are reproduced for communicational purposes) means 'high speech-tone', being one of three available horn-tones useful for reproducing Tsonga high, low and falling speech-tone. The ascending vocal 5th means 'new musical plateau for a new verbal idea'. The horn's ascending 5th, which is the only ascent above its median tone which the instrument comfortably makes, is a large interval, but only periodically means 'new plateau'.
7. Different cultures assign different meanings to the 'same' interval. For instance, take the interval measuring 480 Ellis cents. This is almost the same as the interval measuring 498 cents, and to the casual listener is the same interval, given that many cultures allow considerable leeway in interval size. The first (480) is used by Uganda xylophonists, who arbitrarily divide the octave (1200) into five equal intervals of 240 each and then play upon alternate xylophone slats, i. e., play intervals of 480. The second (498) is used by Tsonga bow-players, who know it as the non-arbitrary interval yielded unfailingly by the natural series of the stretched strings of their bows. No common meaning links these



intervals, and they are in no way regarded as 'a 4th' in their respective cultures (the Uganda xylophonists' interval is actually their 3rd, in view of the three xylophone slats encompassed). But they are nevertheless given that label by musicologists whose prejudiced European hearing associates any interval of approximately 500 Ellis cents with the four steps of the European scale.

Allowing for these problems, then, we give an interval count.

<u>Interval Preference</u>			
in 80 Girls' Puberty School Songs		in 40 Children's Songs	
(total of 1503 intervals)	% (approx.)	(total of 1011 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	26	major 2nd, descending	31
minor 3rd, descending	19	minor 3rd, descending	20
major 2nd, ascending	9.5	major 2nd, ascending	8.5
minor 3rd, ascending	9	major 3rd, descending	8.5
4th, descending	8	4th, ascending	8
5th, ascending	6	major 3rd, ascending	5
4th, ascending	6	5th, descending	5
major 3rd, descending	4.5	minor 3rd, ascending	4
major 3rd, ascending	3	4th, descending	3.5
5th, descending	2.5	minor 2nd, descending	2
major 6th, ascending	2	major 6th, ascending	2
major 7th, ascending	1.5	5th, ascending	1.5
minor 6th, ascending	1	minor 6th, ascending	1
8ve, ascending	1		100 %
minor 2nd, ascending	0.5		
minor 2nd, descending	0.5		
	100 %		
in 24 Heptatonic 'Exorcism' Songs		in 30 Muchongolo Songs	
(total of 496 intervals)	% (approx.)	(total of 917 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	35	major 2nd, descending	26
minor 3rd, descending	15	minor 3rd, descending	19
minor 2nd, descending	8.5	4th, descending	11
major 2nd, ascending	7.5	minor 3rd, ascending	10.5
minor 3rd, ascending	6.5	major 2nd, ascending	6.5
major 3rd, descending	5.5	4th, ascending	6
4th, descending	5	major 3rd, ascending	5
4th, ascending	4	5th, ascending	4
minor 2nd, ascending	3.5	minor 6th, ascending	3.5
5th, ascending	2.5	5th, descending	2.5
minor 7th, ascending	2	major 6th, ascending	2
major 3rd, ascending	2	minor 7th, ascending	1.5
5th, descending	1.5	8ve, ascending	1.5
major 6th, ascending	1	major 3rd, descending	1
major 7th, ascending	0.5		100 %
	100 %		



## Interval Preference

## in 24 Songs of the Boys' Drumming School

(total of 494 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	30
minor 3rd, descending	25
major 2nd, ascending	14
minor 3rd, ascending	10
4th, descending	8
4th, ascending	5
5th, ascending	4
major 6th, ascending	3
8ve, ascending	1
	<hr/>
	100 %

in 6 Heptatonic Songs  
of the Circumcision School

(total of 102 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	31
minor 2nd, descending	19
minor 3rd, descending	15
4th, ascending	8
minor 2nd, ascending	6
major 2nd, ascending	5
minor 3rd, ascending	4
5th, ascending	3
5th, descending	3
minor 7th, ascending	3
major 3rd, descending	2
4th, descending	1
	<hr/>
	100 %

## in 51 Pentatonic 'Exorcism' Songs

(total of 1014 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	29
minor 3rd, descending	21
major 2nd, ascending	15.5
minor 3rd, ascending	9
4th, descending	8.5
4th, ascending	5
major 3rd, descending	3
5th, descending	3
minor 7th, ascending	1.5
major 3rd, ascending	1.5
8ve, ascending	1
5th, ascending	1
major 6th, ascending	0.5
major 9th, ascending	0.5
	<hr/>
	100 %

in Tsonga Communal Vocal Music  
(i. e., all categories combined - 334 songs)

(total of 7,631 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	29
minor 3rd, descending	19
major 2nd, ascending	10
4th, ascending	7
4th, descending	6.5
minor 3rd, ascending	4.5
minor 2nd, descending	4
major 3rd, ascending	3.5
major 3rd, descending	3
5th, ascending	3
5th, descending	2.5
major 6th, ascending	2
minor 6th, ascending	1.5
minor 2nd, ascending	1
8ve, ascending	1
minor 7th, ascending	1
major 7th, ascending	0.5
minor 6th, descending	0.5
major 9th, ascending	0.5
	<hr/>
	100 %

## in 60 Beer Songs

(total of 1797 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
8ve, ascending	0.5
major 9th, ascending	0.5
	<hr/>
	100 %



## Interval Preference

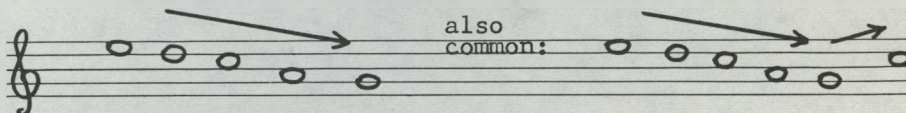
in 14 Pentatonic Songs of the Circumcision School		in 15 Work Songs	
(total of 99 intervals)	% (approx.)	(total of 198 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	37	major 2nd, descending	36
major 2nd, ascending	18	minor 3rd, descending	22
minor 3rd, descending	14	major 2nd, ascending	11
major 3rd, ascending	9	4th, ascending	9
4th, descending	8	major 3rd, ascending	5
4th, ascending	5	4th, descending	4
major 3rd, descending	2	5th, descending	3
5th, ascending	2	minor 3rd, ascending	2.5
5th, descending	2	major 3rd, descending	2
major 6th, ascending	2	5th, ascending	2
minor 7th, ascending	1	major 6th, ascending	2
		8ve, ascending	1.5
	100 %		100 %

Having given the interval count, we now add other differences between the Tsonga musical styles, and present a set of distinguishing characteristics for each major style.

## Summary of the Musical Characteristics of Children's Songs

A musical analysis of 40 different children's songs revealed the following:

1. all exhibit preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and ascending major 2nd;
2. all utilize exclusively pentatonic melodic patterns;
3. all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
4. 16 descend from a peak of D, E $\flat$ , E, or F, to a nadir of A or G, in a truncated version of the common descending melodic pattern GEDCAG, thus:



5. 12 exhibit the limited vocal range of a 4th or 5th;
6. all either have no rhythmic accompaniment or utilize only hand-clapping. Drum-accompaniment is not employed;
7. 31 possess either an 8-unit or a 16-unit overall cycle;
8. 15 are sung either solo or by a chorus throughout, though the structure of the melodies is basically call-and-response.

The step-by-step melodies, short pentatonic patterns, simple metrical structure, restricted range, and avoidance of 'harmonic' and rhythmic complicating factors and of drum accompaniment, indicate that children's songs are one distinct and homogeneous stage within a larger musical configuration.



**Summary of the Musical Characteristics of Songs of the Tsonga Boys' Circumcision School**

Each of the pentatonic *tingoma* songs consists of a brief musical setting of a single repeated verbal idea. By avoidance of musical digression and elaboration, the didactic nature of the words is reinforced and their symbolism accentuated. For the same reason vocal range is limited so that *tingoma* songs often span only a 4th or 5th – in 50% of instances they can be analytically reduced to the tritonic descent EDC. *Tingoma* are not so much sung as chanted, and vocal quality takes on the nature of a hoarse whisper. This is in contrast to the more open and exuberant type of delivery heard in the performance of *murhundzu* songs.

While the *tingoma* didactic and symbolic formulae consist mainly of short pentatonic chants, the Tsonga language *tinsimu ta murhundzu* are more substantial musical compositions exhibiting structural elaboration.

A musical analysis of the performances of 20 different songs of the circumcision school revealed the following:

1. the *tingoma* didactic formulae show a preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, ascending major 2nd, and descending minor 3rd (*tingoma* utilize exclusively pentatonic melodic patterns);
2. the *tinsimu ta murhundzu* show a preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 2nd, and descending minor 3rd (the *tinsimu ta murhundzu* utilize mainly heptatonic melodic patterns);
3. all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
4. 19 are performed without drum-accompaniment (the sole exception being a coming-out song);
5. 13 use uncommon meters (only 6 possessing a cycle of 8-units);
6. 14 utilize call and response.

**Summary of the Musical Characteristics of *Xigubu* Songs**

A musical analysis of the performances of 24 different *xigubu* songs revealed the following:

1. all exhibit preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and ascending major 2nd;
2. all utilize exclusively pentatonic melodic patterns;
3. all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
4. all utilize a rhythmic accompaniment, which may consist of handclapping, drumming, or both;
5. 21 possess either an 8-unit or a 16-unit overall cycle;
6. all utilize call and response;
7. 14 utilize polyrhythmic principles, either between voice and rhythm or between two of the accompanying rhythms.



#### Summary of the Musical Characteristics of Puberty School Songs

A musical analysis of the performances of 80 puberty school songs revealed the following:

1. all exhibit preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and ascending major 2nd;
2. all utilize exclusively pentatonic melodic patterns;
3. all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
4. most use a rhythmic accompaniment which may consist of drumming, handclapping, or both;
5. half of the songs use either a 16-unit or an 8-unit metrical length;
6. all but twelve employ call-and-response alternation (seven are sung in unison chorus and five are sung solo);
7. all but six are monodic rather than 'harmonized';
8. when a song is shared with a neighbouring Southern African culture, the Tsonga version usually omits those passing tones which in the neighbour's version render the music heptatonic (this is due to cultural selection);
9. when a song is shared with a neighbouring Southern African culture, *parts* of the song may appear to be 'transposed' a 4th lower (this is due to the principle of 'harmonic equivalence');
10. when a song is shared with a neighbouring Southern African culture, the Tsonga version may *appear* to 'commence' in the middle of the neighbour's version (this is due to 'circular' form).

#### Summary of the Musical Characteristics of Beer-songs

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

1. overall preference is shown for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and ascending 4th;
2. most of them use pentatonic melodic patterns;
3. all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
4. 40 utilize a rhythmic accompaniment of handclapping, or drums, or both;
5. 31 possess a basic cycle of 8 or 16 units;
6. 53 utilize call and response.

#### Summary of the Musical Characteristics of Work-songs

A musical analysis of the performances of 15 worksongs revealed the following:

1. all show a preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and ascending major 2nd;
2. all utilize exclusively pentatonic melodic patterns;



3. all observe pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
4. all show a tendency for the rhythm to be paced by some point of physical exertion;
5. 9 employ a basic cycle of 8 units;
6. 11 utilize call and response;
7. 10 make direct verbal reference to the task being performed.

#### Summary of the Musical Characteristics of *Muchongolo* Songs

A musical analysis of the performances of 30 *muchongolo* songs revealed the following:

1. *muchongolo* songs show an overall preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and descending 4th;
2. all utilize pentatonic melodic patterns;
3. all observe pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
4. typical *muchongolo* drumming patterns contain irregular accents and dramatic gaps;
5. 22 employ uncommon meters (only 8 use a basic cycle of 8 or 16 units);
6. 26 utilize call and response

#### Summary of the Musical Characteristics of 'Exorcism' Music

A musical analysis of the performances of 75 'exorcism' songs revealed the following:

1. *mandhlozi* songs show a preference for intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and the ascending major 2nd;
2. *xidzimba* and *xiNdau* songs show a preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, the descending minor 3rd, and the descending minor 2nd;
3. *mandhlozi* songs utilize exclusively pentatonic melodic patterns;
4. *xidzimba* and *xiNdau* songs utilize mainly heptatonic melodic patterns;
5. all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;
6. most *mandhlozi* songs utilize a rhythm embodying quadruplets (the 'exceptions' were recorded without drums);
7. most *xidzimba* songs utilize a rhythm, embodying drumming-triplets (the 'exceptions' were recorded without drums);
8. *xiNdau* songs utilize a rhythm embodying broken quadruplets, sometimes in bimetric style;
9. 35 employ a basic cycle of 16 units;
10. 69 utilize call and response.

The different Tsonga musical styles fulfill different functions within Tsonga society, hence there are different reasons why Tsonga individuals are motivated to learn the styles. According to one's sex and age, there are seven main reasons Tsonga musical styles are learned:



### Motivation in Tsonga Musical Learning

Tsonga musical style (all styles listed are enculturative)	MAIN MOTIVATION FOR PERFORMANCE OF THE MUSICAL STYLE LISTED (all motives listed are present to some degree in each style)						
	delectative	educative	coercive	accreditative	remunerative	curative	annunciative
xylophonic (and <i>mbira</i> ) boasting music of returned migrants .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	..... x
exorcism music .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	..... x	.....
beer-drink music .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	..... x	.....	.....
girls' puberty school music .....	.....	.....	.....	..... x	.....	.....	.....
circumcision school music .....	.....	.....	..... x	.....	.....	.....	.....
boys' drumming school music .....	.....	..... x	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
children's music .....	..... x	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

Examining more closely certain aspects of Tsonga musical performance we will take three important musical styles: the girls' puberty music, the beer-drink, and exorcism music. In the first and the last of these it is noteworthy that many of the drum rhythms used occur at the same rate as that of the basic human brain wave (8-13 c.p.s.), suggesting psychological manipulation of the subject. It is even more indicative that it is in precisely these contexts that drugs are used, in combination with the suspected auditory driving.

#### The Proximity of Drug-Rite Drum-Rhythms to Alpha Rhythm (8-13 c.p.s.)

##### A. Songs of The Girls' Puberty School (*khomba*)

song	drum rhythm
<i>Ndzi ya ka homu</i> (I'm travelling to Homu)	8.82 c. p. s.
<i>Nhwanyana xo managa</i> (The girl wore a headcloth)	8.32 c. p. s.
<i>Va teka vuhlalu bya mina</i> (They took my beads)	8.83 c. p. s.
<i>I yivile</i> (She has stolen)	9.33 c. p. s.
<i>Va ta mi khomba</i> (Coming to arrest you)	8.32 c. p. s.
<i>Va ta dlaya Ndaheni</i> (They will kill Ndaheni)	9.33 c. p. s.
<i>Bamba ni Chiawelo</i> (I'm going to Chiawelo)	9.65 c. p. s.

##### B. Exorcism (*mancomane*) Songs for Zulu *mandhlosi* Spirits

song	drum rhythm
<i>Dzelela moya</i> (Scold the spirit)	11.33 c. p. s.
<i>Yingwe ya mavala</i> (The leopard has spots)	9.16 c. p. s.
<i>Hayi lele Zulu</i> (The Zulus never sleep)	10.50 c. p. s.
<i>Nhgunghunyane m'hlovo ya vantu</i> (Chief Nghunghunyane, personification of our people)	9.33 c. p. s.



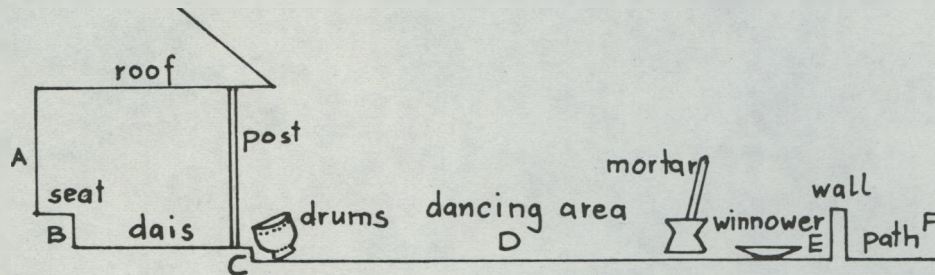
C. Exorcism (*mancomane*) Songs for Ndauxidzimba Spirits

song	drum rhythm
<i>Vayi voni nanga</i> (Whistle of the sellers)	8.33 c. p. s.
<i>Ni chava mbhambhaze</i> (I fear the ants)	8.88 c. p. s.
<i>Nyenyenyana tilo</i> (Bird of heaven)	8.33 c. p. s.
<i>Mavuluvulu yi sukile</i> (Tadpoles, Hammerkop has gone)	8.00 c. p. s.
<i>Manana va dlele</i> (Mother is killed)	8.50 c. p. s.

Taking the music of the Tsonga social beer-drink, it is noteworthy that the dancing reflects social structure. The following figure shows how sex and age differences lead to a kind of territoriality in the seating and dancing arrangements.

## Territoriality at the Musical and Social Beer-drink

(positioning causes the emergence of situation-specific harmonic lines provided by the different sex and age groups)



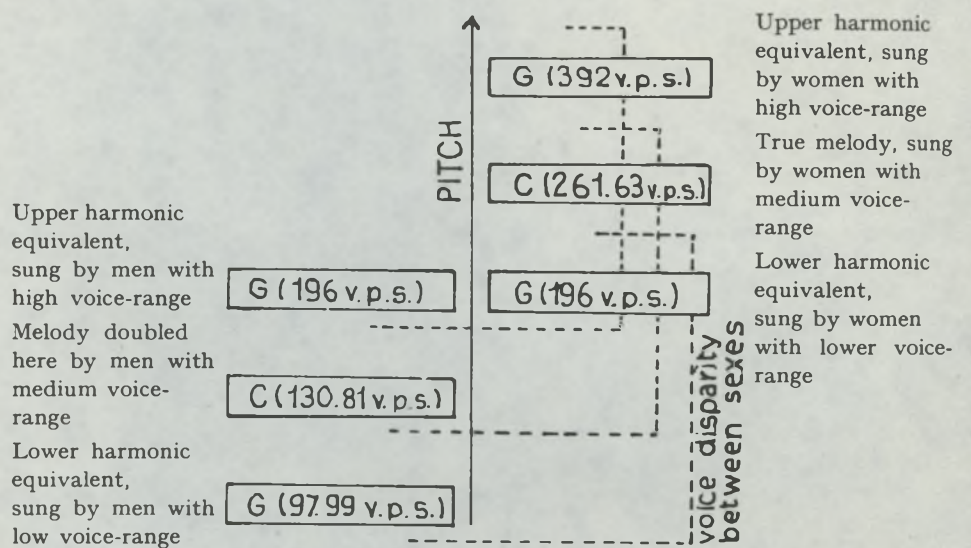
- A) Children peer out from security of hut.
- B) Old men seated here are: out of sun; out of the rain; raised for status; able to survey all of their wives; on their property; comfortable; able to rise easily; within a bass reflex favoring their singing.
- C) Middle-aged women seated here are: able to survey junior wives; able to lean on post; raised for drumming.
- D) Junior wives dancing here are: lowest; in the sun; dancing where they have smeared clay; entertaining (as the prettiest); upright and thus on display as wealth symbols; given most space (as dancers); vulnerable to seduction, so surrounded; carrying infants, who thus feel the rhythms; close to their pestles, for work; able to view and flirt with the young men.
- E) Senior wives seated here are: partly shaded; able to empty the winnower into mortar; 'enclosing' (together with the old men) all of the lesser wives; facing their husbands; within a reflex aiding their singing.
- F) Young men standing here are: diametrically opposed to their power rivals; furthest removed (they pose a threat); outside (they possess new values); participating least (they rather deride); on the path (they are 'on the move'); able to observe the young women; able to lean lazily elbows on wall; in the best place militarily (reflecting ancient needs).



Beer-drink music, furthermore, reflects sex and age differences in the *sound* of the melodic line and the supporting lines. For instance, a heterogeneous beer-drink assembly of old men, old women, young men, young women, and boys and girls, will produce singing in which there are not only spread octaves but filling in of the 4ths and 5ths between the octaves, as voices go out of range and seek to transpose parts of the melody downward or upward.

#### The Sex- and Age-Specific Derivatives of a Given Melody-Tone

(the breaking of the voice in boys is a particularly noteworthy instance of age-specificity in music)



To move on now to the music of the Tsonga exorcism rite, one notes that there are spirit-specific rhythms recognized. If the rhythm utilized is incorrect for exorcizing the spirit possessing an individual, the procedure will fail. Generally, the rhythm used is that which is of the same national origin of the spirit (or thought to be so).

#### The Spirit-Specific Characteristics of Tsonga Exorcism Songs

possessing spirit	language of songwords	melodic pattern	drumming pattern
<i>mandhlozi</i>	Zulu	pentatonic	fast fours
<i>xidzimba</i>	Shona or Ndau	heptatonic	fast threes
<i>xiNdau</i>	Ndau or Rotse	heptatonic	fast fours and twos



Tsonga exorcism music is an importation from the north, and its use followed social contact and interaction. Here there are seven main points to remember:

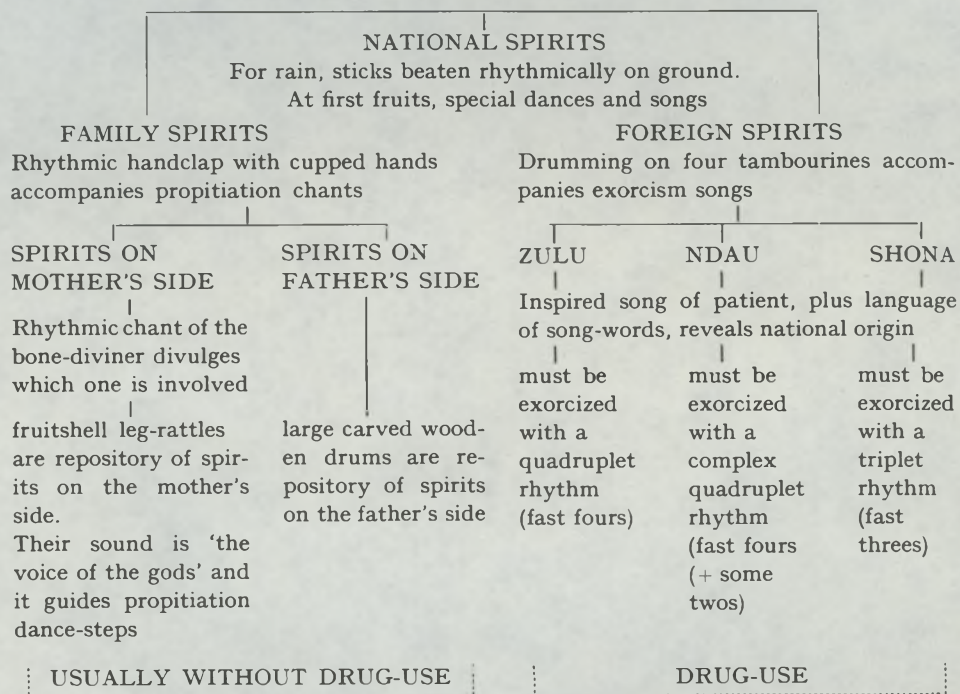
**Origin of the *Xidzimba* Songs in Tsonga Exorcism**

1. The use, by the generally pentatonic Tsonga, of a limited body of heptatonic music in their exorcism, confirms the theory that musical variety increases proportionately with outside contact. The Tsonga 19th-century migration greatly intensified intertribal acculturation.
2. In line with the theory that the possibility of multiple origin decreases with the complexity of the trait, the Tsonga specialized use of heptatonicism in conjunction with triplet drumming in *xidzimba* songs most likely had one source.
3. In line with the theory that the direction of change remains the same (i. e., Penta → Hexa → Hepta) and with the theory that the more complex influences the simpler, it is probable that the generally pentatonic Tsonga were influenced by the heptatonic music of the neighboring Shona, with the hexatonic music of the neighboring Ndaou providing a transitional model.
4. In line with the obvious maxim that musical acculturation does not occur in vacuo but follows social acculturation, it is logical to assume that Tsonga adoption of certain musical traits for use in their exorcism followed their adoption of Shona possession cults.
5. To trace *xidzimba* back still further it is useful to employ the theory that characteristics at a culture's geographical edge are older than those at its center: the Shona are at the perimeter of the former Monomotapa empire, thus it is likely that *xidzimba* and the cults it serves emanated from this ancient kingdom.
6. For the Tsonga, *xidzimba* rhythm is, as a trait, less specialized than *xidzimba* melody. Because specialized traits adapt slower than generalized ones, it is likely that the Tsonga took over the triplet drumming of *xidzimba* songs more readily than they did the heptatonic melodies.
7. When the Tsonga adopted Shona possession cults and incorporated some of the behavior patterns and music into their own exorcism rites, it is likely that the latter tended to consolidate *xidzimba* songs by intensifying their specialized characteristics. Generalized features in Tsonga exorcism music are steadily undergoing metamorphosis in the direction of becoming specialized, and nowhere faster than where ceremony dictates that a particular group of songs are appropriate to a specific stage of the rites.



Exorcism is, of course, a part of the religious system, the complete system being as follows:

The Role of Music in the Tsonga Religious System



There are eleven main religious beliefs in Tsonga music, as follows:

**Tsonga Music and the Supernatural**

1. Singing and dancing is prohibited in the vicinity of a hut under construction lest the wizards be attracted therein prior to the provision of protective charms. It is also prohibited near a large beer-brew, lest the beer turn sour.
2. Whistling is forbidden in the maize-fields between sowing and reaping, lest the witches be attracted there.
3. Certain work-party songs are believed to possess the power to kill a crop-pest known as *nunu* (a type of beetle).
4. A whistle made from the leg-bone of a Bateleur eagle is thought to possess the power to bring rain and to provide protection from being struck by lightning (this bird flies in a zig-zag pattern).
5. The same whistle, when lent by an exorcist to the relatives of a patient who has died, is thought to possess the power to destroy the responsible witch.
6. Patients who live are often adorned with *mafowa* cocoon rattles as a protection against witchcraft.



7. The bone-thrower, when pointing to the astragalus of the goat, usually chants that "the goat is dancing".
8. Ancestor-spirits are thought to sing, dance, and blow the *mhalamhala* antelope horn in the sacred woods.
9. Ancestor-spirits are thought to reside in the fruitshell leg-rattles and in the large carved wooden drums.
10. Undesirable alien spirits possessing Tsonga patients are 'revealed' by an inspired song indicating, by its language, melody, and other aspects, the national origin of the spirit.
11. Many rhythmic subtleties permeate Tsonga religious observances: sticks beaten on the ground bring rain; the rhythmic handclap at propitiation differs from the secular handclap in that the hands must be cupped (*ku losa gupsi*, to humble oneself with hollowness); the rhythmic chant of the bone-diviner reveals where propitiation must occur; drumming in fast fours dispels Zulu spirits while drumming in fast threes dispels Shona spirits.

It is difficult and perhaps inappropriate to separate Tsonga religious beliefs from fertility beliefs and other beliefs. Music and fertility are linked as follows:

#### Tsonga Music and Fertility

1. Nubile girls wearing fruitshell leg-rattles containing seeds believe that dancing round a man playing the friction-bow (which is rubbed with a fruitshell rattlestick containing the same type of seeds) increases receptivity to seed.
2. Pairs of xylophone slats are separated by a support bar, each pair being called a 'married couple' (one of each is larger than the other). Xylophone music is thought to stimulate the growth of the fruit supplying the spherical resonators under the slats.
3. Women are forbidden to peer within the hole at the foot of drums, for fear that they may become sterile. The pegs driven into drums are sometimes referred to as penes.
4. Girl-initiates are deflowered with a large twisted horn from a male kudu antelope. The same horn is snake-like in form; dreaming of snakes is taken to mean that sexual intercourse will occur.
5. Certain drum-rhythms in the girls' puberty school are said to elicit visions of snakes and the hearing of fertility-associated supernatural voices.
6. The bangle dance of the puberty school is said to aid in the protection of the initiate from sterility by witchcraft.
7. Numerous dances and mimes of the puberty school are oriented toward fertility; for instance, a mime in which initiates stretch a skin across a container of water while old women puncture it with poles is said to symbolize the flow of amniotic fluid at parturition, and initiates are

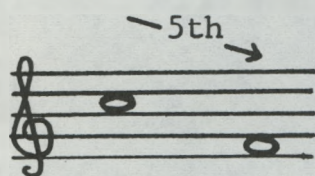


- made to climb a tree containing white sap ('mother's milk'; 'semen'), and later squat on an upturned drum. All such mimes possess special music.
8. Numerous references to virility occur within the context of the boys' circumcision school. Initiates are made to climb poles, and to sing obscene songs.
  9. A musical rite celebrates a child's weaning and hence the mother's potential for pregnancy (there is a taboo on sexual access during suckling).

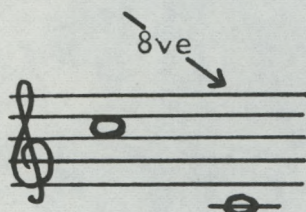
#### The Sound of Tsonga Music

A prime feature of Tsonga music is the overall melodic descent which occurs.

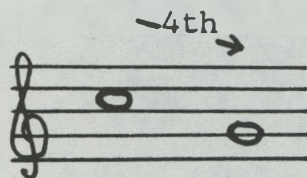
#### The Extent of Overall 'Pathogenic' Descent from Initial Peak to Cadential Nadir in Tsonga Songs



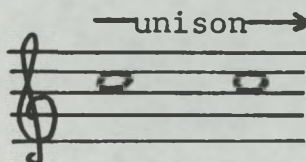
Overall 'pathogenic' descent of a 5th, from initial peak to cadential nadir ..... 24 %



Overall 'pathogenic' descent of an octave, from initial peak to cadential nadir ..... 20 %



Overall 'pathogenic' descent of a 4th, from initial peak to cadential nadir ..... 13 %



Overall 'pathogenic' descent of zero, from initial peak to cadential nadir ..... 8 %

	Subtotal	65 %
Intervals other than these four		35 %
	Total	100 %



Another notable feature is the utilization of a common descending melodic pattern GEDCAG, for which there are seven main reasons.

#### Reasons for Tsonga Preference for the Descending Melodic Pattern GEDCAG

1. Complies with natural voice-range requirements.
2. Its harmonic equivalent – CAAGDC or CAGGDC – provides for in-between voice-ranges.
3. Provides the preferred intervals of Tsonga overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak to a cadential nadir.
4. Caters for Tsonga preference for major 2nd/minor 3rd speech-generated singing-steps.
5. Favors exploitation of 4th/5th harmonic possibilities where two or more polyphonic lines are present.
6. Provides for occasional 4th/5th melodic leaps.
7. Provides for peak/median/nadiral placement of tonal centers such as the 4th (C) and the octave (G).

Another notable feature of Tsonga music is the preference for small intervals such as descending and ascending minor 3rds and major 2nds, for which there are six main reasons.

#### The Reasons for Tsonga Preference for Minor 3rds and Major 2nds

1. Tsonga melody derives in part from the speech-tone of song-words, for which small, easily-sung intervals are the most suitable means of reproduction.
2. Tsonga singing is usually in two parts, the two lines in quasi-parallel motion. This type of harmonization encourages the use of small intervals. Staggered imitation, on the other hand, would be likely to encourage the use of large intervals, in order to enable the audience to distinguish echoed contours.
3. Tsonga melody is basically pentatonic. The constituent intervals of the most common form of pentatonic scale in use in world cultures are the minor 3rd and the major 2nd.
4. The interval most frequently found separating the two simultaneous and quasi-parallel lines of a Tsonga ensemble vocal performance is the 4th (i. e., the inverted 5th). The 'halfway' division of this relatively large interval would, in terms of the Tsonga musical system, yield one minor 3rd and one major 2nd. Thus the undivided interval serves as a line-separator, while the divided interval serves the purpose of small, step-by-step melodic changes.
5. There are certain intervals provided by the harmonic series – intervals yielded naturally by string-lengths and tube-lengths and within the



human cochlea – which sound subtly and persistently regardless of action due to human tonal organization. The Tsonga minor 3rd, when sounded against one of these (the natural major 3rd), sets up acute 'beats' of dissonance due to the close but differing wavelengths. The Tsonga find this an exciting musical effect. Tsonga friction-bow player Johannes Mathye, when playing traditional songs containing the major 3rd as part of their melody, deliberately changes all such major 3rds to minor in order to enjoy the effect created by the intrusion of minor 3rds in an instrumental performance in which the vibrating string yields natural major 3rds whenever the unstopped open string is sounded.

6. One ideal of Tsonga melody is that there should be a gradual descent from an initial melodic peak to a cadential melodic nadir. Tsonga music being always fast and never slow, descending minor 3rds interspersed with a few ascending major 2nds provide just the right amount of overall fall. A predominance of larger intervals would obscure it.

There are four main Tsonga tone-row patterns influencing musical composition, and from which melody is drawn.

#### The Institution-Specific Tone-Rows of Tsonga Vocal Music

(a)	(b)	
		children's music
		boys' drumming school songs
		boys' circumcision chants
		<i>(tingoma)</i>
		girls' puberty school songs
		beerdrink music
		worksongs
		<i>muchongolo</i> dance songs
		<i>mandlhosi</i> exorcism songs
(a)	(b)	
		boys' circumcision songs
		<i>(tinsimu ta murhundzu)</i>
		<i>xidzimba</i> exorcism music
		<i>xiNdau</i> exorcism music

#### Scale-Use among some Neighboring Peoples

Venda	heptatonic (pentatonic in some borrowed reedpipe music)
Shona	heptatonic
Ndau	hexatonic
Chopi	heptatonic (with a nearly equidistant 7-interval xylophone tuning)
Pedi	pentatonic
Tswana	pentatonic (with acculturated diatonicism and 3rds/6ths from missionizing activities)





a



c



d



b



e

- a) There are four Tsonga musical bows. This is the *xitende* gourd-bow, used by wandering minstrels to carry news and complaints from village to village. This boy is an apprentice bow-player. The function of the bow is determined by its physical properties: not requiring mouth resonance, it leaves the mouth free to sing and shout news
- b) Every herdboys possesses a bone flute or whistle with which he constantly sounds his personal identity call for the benefit of both the cattle and other herdboys. "Stealing" another boy's call can be punished by death, for it signifies the theft of one's very identity
- c) The boys' formal drumming school uses the double-membraned *xigubu* drums, small and made from discarded cans and pots. Here the tribal rhythms are learned to the singing of non-lexical syllables
- d) Headmen often play the xylophone, which is prestigious both because it signifies that the owner has travelled much and learned other musics such as that of the Chopi, and because one needs several wives to sing the melody above the xylophone part
- e) The player of the notched friction-bow (*xizambi*) is a court retainer who entertains visiting dignitaries for the chief





a) The friction-bow player also provides formal musical interludes at the chief's council meeting, where the elders gather

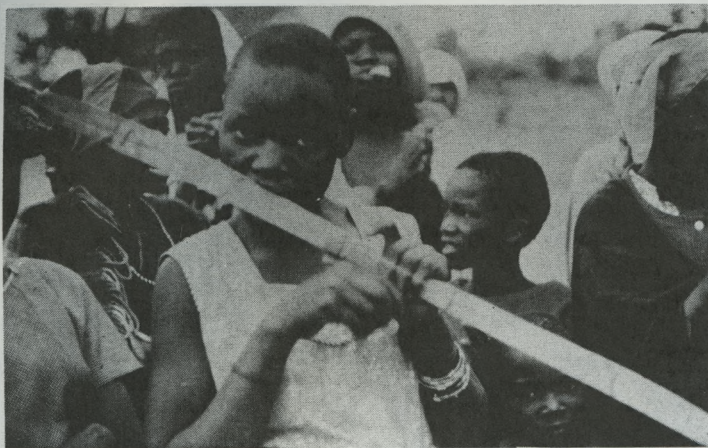


b) The large carved wooden *ngoma* drums come in sets of three from the neighboring Venda, who still make them. They are the personal property of chiefs, who use them in prestigious beer-drinks



c) Although the Tsonga have a boys' drumming school, all adult drumming is carried out by middle-aged women. Here women drummers accompany the Tsonga national dance, *muchongolo*, which involves much stamping with the feet and gesticulating with a knobbed baton. Notice that the drum is copied from British military models, and that the rear woman is using maraca-like rattles





- a) The girls' bow is a thin, lath-like instrument bearing a thick handle in the center, where the string is caught in to provide two distinct lengths. It is played with a safety-pin and is mouth-resonated



- b) The phallic-shaped (when inverted) *ndzumba* drum is used in the girls' initiation rite. When the drum is beaten and the horn sounded, initiates must sit humbling themselves with arms folded and head down (*ku losa*)



- c) The aged bone-thrower chants her findings and prophecies from the lay of the bones upon the ceremonial mat. Note the fruitshell leg-rattle used for occasional musical effect



While some of these 'foreign' scales have been borrowed and incorporated into the Tsonga musical system, the pentatonic scale remains the Tsonga norm. There are three possible origins for this Tsonga scale; possibly, a combination of the suggested origins is responsible.

#### Possible Origin of the Tsonga Semitone-less Pentatonic Scale

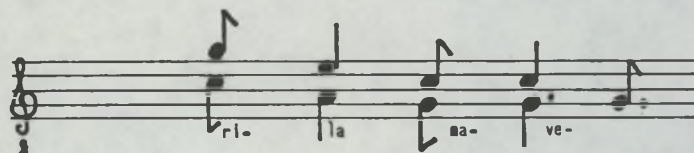
1. From progression by 5ths: the tones BEADGCF are each one 5th apart, and any consecutive five of them yield a semitone-less pentatonic scale.
2. By demarcating a 'halfway' point in the 4th, which is rather a large interval. Two disjunct 4ths, each divided into a minor 3rd plus a major 2nd, yield a semitone-less pentatonic scale.
3. By reiterating, higher or lower, a melody consisting of two tones, a semitone-less pentatonic scale can be arrived at.

Tsonga harmony is derived from a tonal equivalence system, in which two parallel pentatonic descents provide note-pairings and alternate melodic pathways at higher/lower levels.

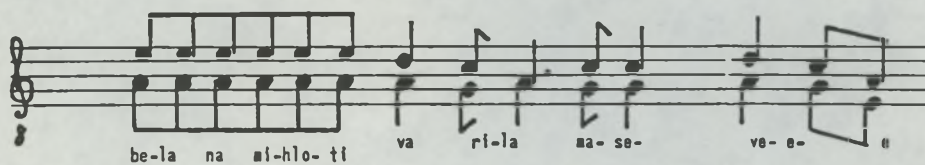
#### Harmonic Equivalence Derived from the Span Process

(The quasi-parallel use, by a second part, of a higher or lower segment of the same descending pentatonic scale)

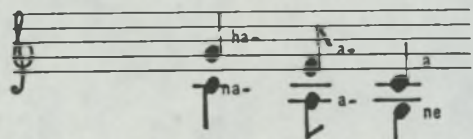
Example from the *muchongolo* (Tsonga national dance) song *Tinyandhayé Ya Tindlopfu Tile Ku Chauke*



Example from a different version of the same *muchongolo* song

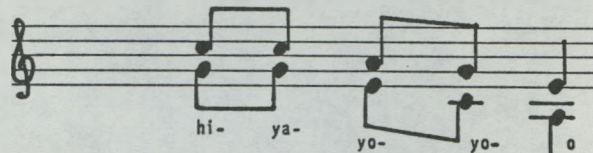


Example from the *muchongolo* song *I Nhlampfi Baku Mabomu*

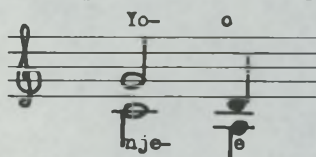




Example from the *muchongolo* song *Hinavela Mpfula Mawaku*



Example from the beersong *Ximanjemanje*



### Musical Acculturation

Music study among the Tsonga indicates that there are changing repertoires, that musical borrowing is selective (the Tsonga have not sought to borrow rhythms from, for instance, the Dutch settlers!), that musical traits may cross racial boundaries (both the Tsonga and the Bushmen use the notched friction-bow), that culture-contact with neighboring Bantu-speaking groups has caused an increase in the number of musical instruments utilized by the Tsonga, and that ancient musical traits are more widespread among neighboring groups than more recent musical traits. We explain this in greater detail below.

#### Factors to Be Considered (or Disregarded) in any Estimation of Tsonga Musical Change

##### 1. Changing repertoires

Examination of the repertoires of both the Venda and the Tsonga reveals the common use of certain initiation songs:

Venda and Tsonga share same words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  <i>Namuntlha wa xaxa</i> (Today they are dancing)</li> <li>  <i>Rila, rila, khomba!</i> (Cry, cry, novice!)</li> <li>  <i>Mavala!</i> (Color)!</li> <li>  <i>Doba, doba!</i> (Pick up, pick up!)</li> <li>  <i>Lunyo, lunya!</i> (Insolence, insolence!)</li> <li>  <i>Vamisanda va ta vuya</i> (The chief is coming back)</li> </ul>
Venda and Tsonga share same words and same music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  <i>Fela madambi</i> (Snuff that has been bewitched)</li> <li>  <i>Xangula!</i> (Prepare her!)</li> </ul>

The Tsonga and the Venda live to a large degree among one another. At Samarie, for instance, one side of a broad hill has a Venda school surrounded by Venda huts; the other side has a Tsonga school surrounded by Tsonga huts. The use of the common songs supports the theory that most cases of changing repertoires are due to culture contact.



## 2. The degree of musical sophistication

Tsonga use of relatively complex polyrhythms is no evidence of increasing musical sophistication, nor of musical superiority over neighboring groups. Possession of polyrhythmic music does not imply progress from an earlier non-polyrhythmic state (Afro-American jazz is less polyrhythmic than African music), and the musical ranking of groups is dependent upon which characteristic is being measured. For instance, the Dutch settlers lack polyrhythm but possess long song-form.

## 3. The racial origins of musical style

Physical racial similarity is no evidence of a former common musical heritage, any more than the dissimilarity of the Tsonga and Bushman is reason for assuming the dissimilarity of their musical styles. Tsonga music, in its semitone-less pentatonicism, tuning, and other features, is closer to several European musics than to, say, the music of the Melanesians, who are physically similar to many Tsonga types observed by the writer.

## 4. The use of new musical artifacts

Comparison of the instruments used by the Tsonga before the 19th-century migration out of Mozambique with those employed today reveals that culture contact with the Venda, Pedi, and Lovedu has increased the number of instrument types utilized.

## 5. Widely-distributed musical traits

The Tsonga, Venda, Zulu, Swazi all use the gourd-bow, the braced thick-handled bow, and the hollow cane-bow. These types of musical bows were described by early explorers in southern Africa; this tends to confirm the theory that the more widely distributed a trait, the older it is.



In addition to Tsonga rural music, it is necessary to consider Tsonga urban music. Here there has been differential change, certain rural traits surviving while others are discarded or modified.

#### The Dynamics of Musical Syncretism in Tsonga Town Music

##### Its rhythm

Multiple rhythms prevail, particularly 12-unit vocalizations against 8-unit instrumental 'grids'. Reiterated rhythms within a fixed repeated metrical cycle exert a hypnotic influence. These features derive from rural music.

##### Its instrumentation

Drumming predominates. Lead instruments are selected for their ability to reproduce vocal slides and slurs (alto saxophone, for instance). These features derive from rural music.

##### Its musical form

Alternating musical exchanges prevail, either between voice and instrument or between two instruments such as the guitar and the drums. This feature derives from the call-and-response of rural music.

##### Its harmony

Harmonization is rudimentary and often consists of the alternation of two simple chords. Second parts generally exhibit parallel motion with first parts. Parallelism in harmony is a rural musical characteristic.

##### Its melody

Melodies are chromatic and modulatory rather than pentatonic and of one tonality. The range utilized is wide, and the direction is as much ascending as it is descending. These features derive from European music.

##### Its function

It is invariably associated with the dance, rather than being merely listened to. This is a feature of rural music.

##### Its lyrics

Songs subject-matter is topical, with fixed, known stanzas being adapted by the insertion of names of individuals in the audience or of local celebrities. This type of improvisation is a rural musical characteristic.



In both the rural and the urban environment, Tsonga intellectuals dispute the worth of musical performance in the face of today's technological challenges and social inequalities. Some of these disputes are reflected in letters to Tsonga magazines.

#### Tsonga Intellectuals Debate the Value of Ancient Dances

(from letters in an article entitled *Swigubu na muchongolo* 'Drums and *muchongolo* dances') appearing in the May, 1969 issue of *Nhluvuko* (Progress), Pretoria

For traditional dances:

1. The Zulu and Pedi have customs; we must retain ours.
2. Don't blame your ancestors that you are not Europeans.
3. Civilization is not intended to destroy our traditions.
4. We passed first-class even while exhibiting dancing.
5. *Muchongolo* must not be eaten by the 'white ants'.

Against traditional dances:

1. Education is worthier than ancient dances.
2. Bad characters linger at dances.
3. Our struggle is great, and dancing does not win the diploma.

Thus there are forces working for the continuance of Tsonga musical tradition, and forces working against it.

#### The Sociocultural Forces Affecting Traditional Musical Practices

Those tending to inhibit its performance

1. Labor migration and the acquisition of new values.
2. Government schools and the teaching of European music.
3. Broadcasts from urban radio stations.
4. The use of imported phonograph records.
5. The disapproval of European-manned Christian missions.
6. The disapproval of (some) African Christian churches.
7. The popularity of high-life music.
8. The close presence of the (prestigious) European.
9. The introduction of new (heptatonic) instruments such as the guitar, harmonica, penny-whistle, and concertina.

Those tending to encourage its performance

1. The linguistic base of much traditional song.
2. Its strong identification with traditional social activities.
3. The great utility of much traditional music (as worksongs, etc).
4. Inculcation of children via folktale-telling (tales contain songs).



5. Inculcation of traditional values via initiation schools.
6. The still strong authority of traditional chief (who use music).
7. The still strong kinship ties, hence hierarchy of styles and roles.
8. The strong traditionalism of women, who are the culture guardians.
9. Pride in tribal origin.
10. Broadcasts of traditional music by Radio Bantu.
11. Deliberate native preservationism, by African intellectuals.
12. Deliberate ethnomusicological efforts by European scholars.
13. The collection and dissemination of music by 'new' missionaries.
14. The dynamic, renewal process by intertribal musical diffusion.

One thing is indisputable, and that is that Tsonga music is still a living and vital force in Tsonga society, that it is an integral element in the social structure and belief system, and that it imparts a deep sense of 'belonging' to the singers, performers, dancers, and musicians who keep it alive. Tsonga music has survived prolonged White contact and can look forward to progressively broader use within new contexts such as the school.

### Summary

This paper describes how the Tsonga classify their communal vocal music into six sex- and age-specific classes, and their musical instruments into two main groups. Musical instruments are furthermore restricted in their use, to certain sex-age groups and to certain individuals (e. g., the *kudu* horn is blown by the girls' initiation supervisor). For the vocal music, distinctions and tonal differences between musical styles are given. A concluding section deals with social change and musical acculturation. The paper endeavors to analyse Tsonga music in terms of both its musical and its social characteristics, showing how the two are strongly interdependent.

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