

James, Hewi A.

The life of a South African tribe. Vol II

New York: University Books, 1962.

CHAPTER III

MUSIC.

Music in a more or less rudimentary form, plays a great part in the Life of the Bantu tribe. Some tribes are more gifted than others in this respect. In the Province of Mozambique the Ba-Chopi are certainly the best musicians, as we shall see. But Thongas are also great singers and players, and their dances are invariably accompanied by music. What is its character? The melodies and rhythms are very difficult to catch, and I do not pretend to give here a full and definite description of Thonga music; but the following specimens will convey a fair idea of it, and a study of their musical instruments will help us, in some measure, to understand their musical system.

A. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

1) WIND INSTRUMENTS.

The simplest is the *shiwaya*, an empty sala shell, or the shell of a Kafir orange (p. 19): it has two holes, one through which children sing, another which they alternately shut and open, the withdrawal of the hand allowing the sound to be emitted; the result is a monotonous wu-wu-wu, which is sufficient to amuse little boys.

Next in importance comes the *nanga*, (yi-tin) the goatherd's flute, made of the tibia of a goat, or of some other animal, on which the boys play two notes, generally in thirds. This is truly the infancy of art, but the tone of these little flutes is very sweet and wonderfully in keeping with the bush life, the bleating

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of the goats and the nudity of the artist! There are many kinds of goatherds' flutes. One is called *ndjwebe*; its sound resembles mbvrrr.... mbvrrr.... Natives are in the habit of putting a feather inside their bone flutes in order to keep them clean.

Another more elaborate flute is made of a reed, having a hole at one extremity for the mouth, and three others at the other extremity for the fingers. According to the number of holes stopped, the sound varies. It is called *shitiringo* (Dj.), or *shitloti* (Ro.), and Native artists are capable of producing pleasing tunes upon it. No. 39 in my collection of tunes is a *shitiringo* melody, heard on the banks of the Great Tabi.

But the true tinanga are the trumpets which compose the *bunanga*, the band already referred to (l. p. 431) as being one of the manifestations of Court Life. They are also called *timhahlamhala*, from the name of the *mhamhala* (*Hippotragus niger*), the large, dark antelope whose horns are employed for the manufacture of these trumpets, together with the horns of the *mhala* (*impala*) antelope. These instruments are tuned according to rule. Ten of them, each having a different sound, form a *simo*, a kind of orchestra, completed by the big and the small drum already described. They are used to accompany the special dances which take place in the little capital of the Ronga clans, and in which the players are themselves the dancers, marching behind each other, with peculiar contortions, narrowing and widening their circle according to the time beaten by the drum.

The *bunanga* players receive a regular training before going to the capital, to play before the chief. When they have prepared the numbers of their programme, they all go to the capital, each sub-chief leading his band, for a musical contest. The *tinduna* act as judges. Each *simo* plays in turn. The judges discuss their respective merits, and when they have come to a decision, they call a young man to proclaim the result of the competition. This proclamation is called *ku tjema shibangu*, to cut the contest, and is performed in a very curious way. The herald has an axe in his hand. With a loud voice, he pronounces the verdict: "So and so played badly; so and so better; the one who played best is so and so." — "Nkino hi nkhensa wa ka man." Then he

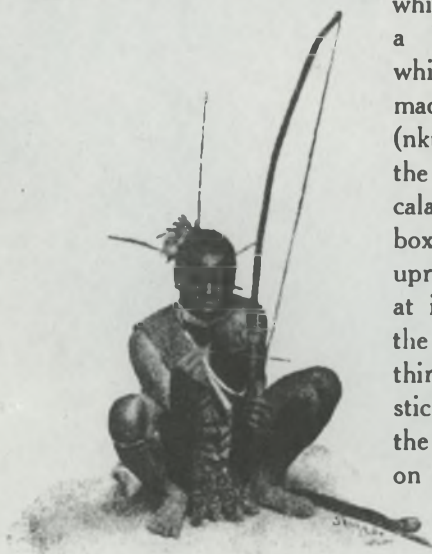
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beats the trunk of a tree with his axe, as if he wished to confirm the decision, and runs away. This is to avoid protests and insults from those who did not win!

No. 40 is a tune played by the bunanga. It is very monotonous and the music is evidently not so important as the dance, the rhythm, and the contortions. There are only four notes in this tune. However it is probable that the ten instruments of the simo form a whole octave, with two notes below it, the same as the ten keys of the timbila which will presently be described. Unfortunately I have not been able to ascertain if this is actually so, having only once witnessed the performance of the bunanga. I am afraid the bunanga orchestra of antelope horns has now entirely disappeared from Ronga territory.

2) STRINGED INSTRUMENTS.

As regards stringed instruments, they possess the unicord harp called gubu. There are two different forms of it ; the shitjendje,



A gubu player.

which consists of a bent rod, a bow, both extremities of which are united by a string made of milala palm fibres (nkuha), or a piece of wire. On the lower part of the bow a calabash is fixed as sounding box. The shitjendje is held upright ; one hand grasps it at its lower extremity, whilst the other beats on the lower third of the string with a little stick. The hand which grasps the instrument places its finger on this lower third of the string in different places, so as to vary the length and produce different sounds.

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In the *nkaku*, the sounding box is fixed in the middle of the bow. From it a wire starts and is tied to the middle of the string, thus dividing it into two equal parts. The instrument is grasped near the calabash, and the fingers are extended on either half of the string to differentiate the sounds. The other hand beats on either side with a stick.

The tune No. 12 was accompanied by a shitjendje.

3) THE TIMBILA OR BANTU XYLOPHONE.

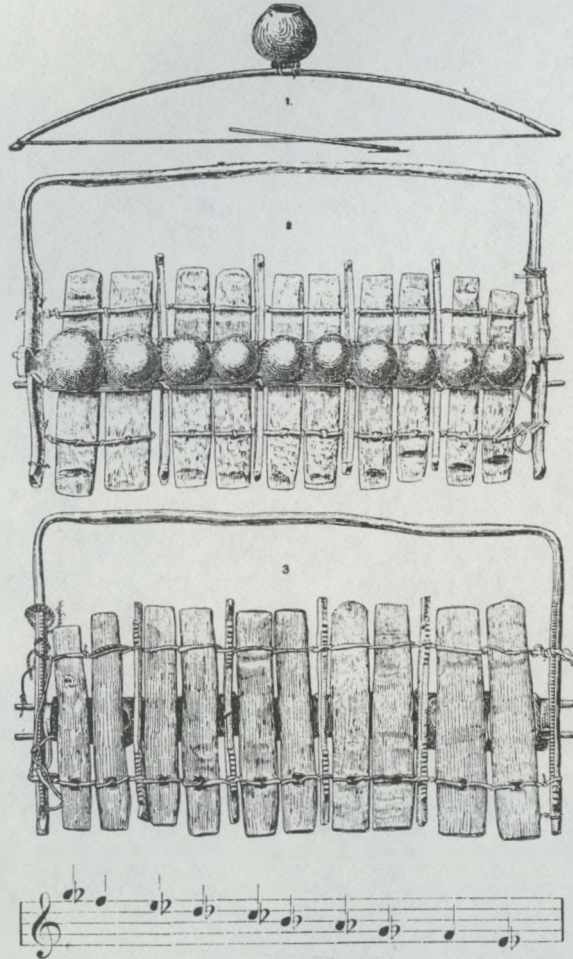
The most completely characteristic musical instrument of our tribe is the *timbila*, which may be seen on the accompanying plate showing both the upper and the under side of this very interesting Native piano. It is composed of ten keys, made of very hard wood, attached to each other by straps of leather on a wooden frame consisting of a curved branch. The keys rest on shells of sala, which act as sounding boxes, and in which two holes are pierced, one in the upper part to receive the sound, and one at the side, covered by a membrane, generally a piece of a bat's wing, in order to cause the sound to vibrate. This piano is easy to carry. The player places it in front of him and beats on the keys with one or two sticks, furnished at one extremity with an india-rubber or a leather ball. (See the cover of *Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Ronga*).

Comparing it with a European piano I have ascertained that the third key is a G flat, and that, if we strike the following ones, up to the last, we obtain a regular major scale, that of G flat, with its proper half tones between the third and fourth and the seventh and eighth intervals. The two lower keys are, the first E flat, the second F natural. The interval from E flat to G flat is a minor third, so that, should we start with the lower key and strike the seven following, we should obtain a minor scale of E flat corresponding to the major scale of G flat: but it would not entirely resemble our harmonic minor scale as there is no "sensible," viz., the seventh note of the scale is not raised. Only when descending from the eighth to the first we should have a perfect melodic minor scale. This minor scale, without the

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raised seventh, is well known in the history of music : it is called the Eolian scale.

So we find this interesting fact as the result of our examination:



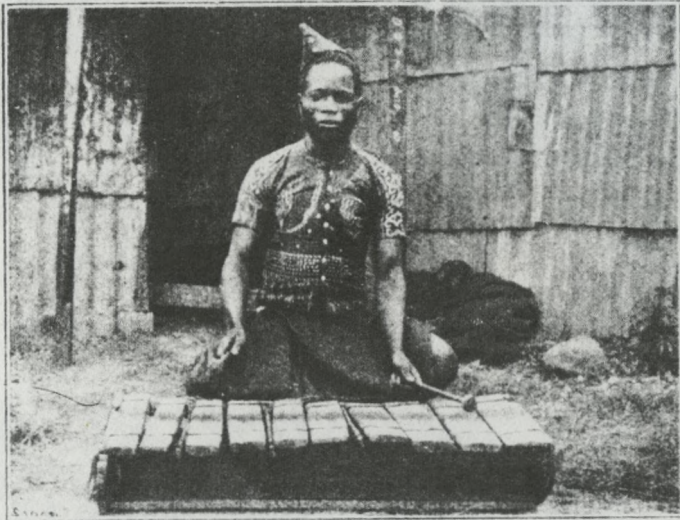
The timbila and its ten notes.

the timbila, in its ten notes, contains both the major and minor scales.

Is this accidental ? Or are all the timbila tuned according to

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this method? The second hypothesis is highly probable. Of course there may be slight differences between the instruments, which is not astonishing, as they are made with primitive implements by unskilled workmen ; but the proof that they are all made according to a fixed rule is that many timbila are often played together by musicians who form an orchestra. This is rarely the case amongst Thongas but frequently amongst the



A timbila player.

Ba-Chopi, who are the true "masters" of this instrument. It is said that, in this very musical tribe, Native pianists sit in a line along the street of the village (for their villages are built in a straight line) and play together, all the throng of men dancing in front of them. I witnessed a similar performance when the Crown Prince of Portugal visited Lourenço Marques in 1907. Great feasts were given in his honour ; 25,000 armed warriors defiled before him, and thirty timbila played the National Portuguese Anthem. The Administrators who taught these Native artists to play that difficult tune on their xylophones deserve every congratulation! It was wonderful. The melody

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was quite recognisable and played in perfect tune. If the timbila had not been tuned to the same pitch, this concert would have become a dreadful cacophony! In the Johannesburg Compounds the East Coast boys manufacture timbila themselves, of smaller and larger sizes, some with enormous keys made of common pitch-pine boards, and emitting deep low tones, the sounding boxes being empty oil cans. They succeed in tuning them more or less perfectly. So every citizen of Johannesburg can hear their concerts, and witness their dances, in the Compounds of the Ferreira Mine and elsewhere on Sundays, and, though these ugly pitch pine timbila seem a parody on the beautiful instruments played at home, still the performance is worth a visit! (1)

The existence of the timbila is a proof that these tribes possess a real musical system. The Ba-Chopi are the "masters," and

(1) I have lately received some additional information on the timbila from my son, the Rev. H. Ph. Junod, who is living in Manjakaze, not far from the Chopi border. The keys are cut from a very hard tree, the mwendja, which is first put into a big fire in order to make all the sap run out. Large stems of that tree were used by the Ba-Chopi to build their strongholds when they fought against Gungunyana forty years ago. They have been exposed long enough to the rays of the sun to have dried perfectly, and the instrument makers employ them to furnish their keys. The artist begins with the lowest. His father was himself a timbila player and he tunes his keys in accordance with those of the paternal instrument, slightly diminishing the thickness of the little board till it gives exactly the same sound. This explains how all the instruments are tuned to the same pitch. It is not an easy job to find sala shells of all the required sizes. The vibrating membrane is made of the diaphragm of a small rodent called khweva. All the xylophones seen by my informant in Chopiland start from D (or E flat?). Some have 10, some 12, some 14 keys. Some have only four, but they are enormous and emit deep sounds like drums; they are employed to accompany the others. It is rare nowadays to hear orchestras of timbila, as most of the men are constantly away from their villages, working for the Whites; but individual players are still frequently met with, some of them possessing great dexterity.

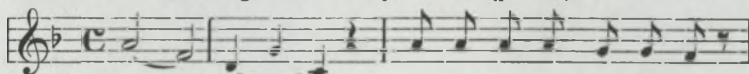
The xylophone is widely distributed all over the African Continent, Thongaland being the most southern point where this instrument is found. I saw a magnificent example in Vendaland, in the village of a counsellor named Chikhobokhobo. It had no less than 23 keys forming three complete octaves with two supplementary notes at the top. The owner of this piano was very proud of it and kept it in a special hut. I believe it to be the same which was greatly admired at Wembley where it was exhibited in 1925 by Mr C. T. Harries, the Native Commissioner. In Barotseland the xylophone is called *sirimba*, *narimba* amongst many other tribes of Central Africa, *budimba* or *imbila* amongst the Ba-Ila, and *ba'a* in the French Soudan. Mr Ch. Joyeux, who published an interesting paper on "Quelques manifestations musicales observées en Haute Guinée française" (*Revue d'Ethnographie et des traditions populaires*, Paris, 1924, p. 161-212) has analysed the xylophone of that country and found exactly the same succession of sounds as in the Thonga timbila. The prototype of this instrument is said to be found in the Dutch East Indies and in the Malay Peninsula.

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this is generally admitted ; the Thongas, however, are not far behind them, some of them having learnt to manufacture the instrument, and a great many playing upon it quite artistically. In order to define this musical system more precisely, let me now give the 41 following tunes as examples, some of which I owe to Mrs Audéoud, whilst the majority have been noted down by myself.

B. A COLLECTION OF THONGA TUNES.

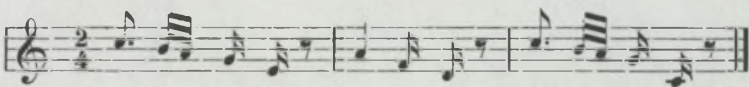
Tune 1. The song of the Manyisa bard (p. 185).



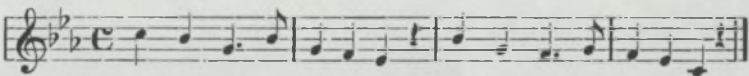
A - o a - a - o U ya kwi-hi, ma-ma-ne?
Mo-ther, say where do you go?

Tunes 2. 3. 4. 5. 6., heard far away through the bush in the village of Muzila, sub-chief of Rikatla, in the years 1890-1893. In N^o 4 the singers were beating the ground with their feet to mark the time. In 5 and 6 boys answered to men and girls to women in the usual anti-phonic fashion.

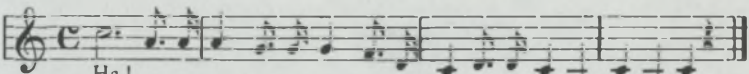
Tune 2.



Tune 3.



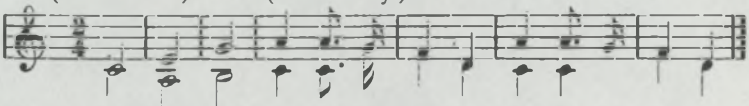
Tune 4.



Ha!
Foot Foot Foot Foot Foot Foot

Tune 5.

(Voices of men) (Voices of boys)



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Tune 6.

(Women) (Girls) (Women) (Girls)

Tune 7. The Complaint of the childless woman (p. 188).

A ba bo - le - ki nwa-na? Ba bo - le - ka tshu - ri ni nkamba!
They won't lend me a ba-by! They lend me but a mortar...

. Ngi ndji ma-nga tlu, Ngi ndji shi - mu-ngwe. Ngi n'ta ku u - tla.
Were I an ea-gle! Were I a bird of prey! Quick would I carry it away!

Tune 8. Complaint of the boys going to Johannesburg (p. 189).

Stones are ve - ry hard to break, Far from home in

fo - reign land. Far from home, in fo - reign

land, Stones are ve - ry hard to break.

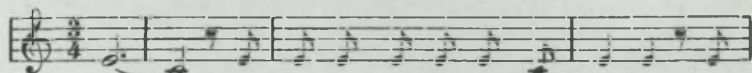
Tune 9. Complaint of the Nkuna boy (p. 189).

Ba hi sha - ni sa! Ba ku hi hlu-pha!
They treat us bad-ly! E - he! They are hard on us! E - he!

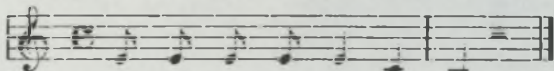
Ba nwa ma-kho-fi! Ba nga hi nyi-ki!
They drink their cof-fee! E-he! And they give us none! E - he!

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Tune 10. The song of the Crab (p. 190).

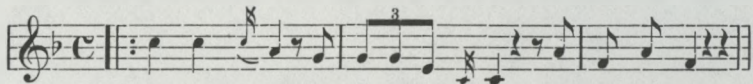


Yo! Lo - mo tju - ke - ni ku na ma - ni? Ha -
A - las! Here on the shore is there no one? The

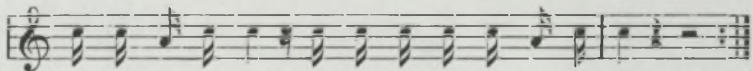


la yi kho - mi li - ti ho!
crab has caught me by the hand!

Tune 11. The lament over the departed chief Nwamantibyane (See I. App. XI.).

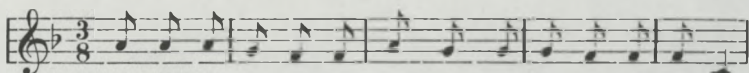


Hi nwa - na - o! Hi nwa - na ba dle - le, Nwa - ma - nti - byane!
It is the child! The child whom they have killed, Nwa - ma - nti - by - a ne!

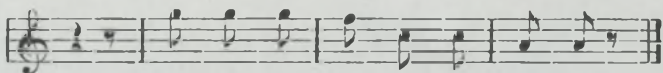


Ndu - ma - ku - zu - lu! A tju - tju - ma a ya Kho - sen...
He is the glorious... He had to fly up to Kho - sen...

Tune 12. The same lament as sung thirteen years later, with accompaniment of the shitjendje.

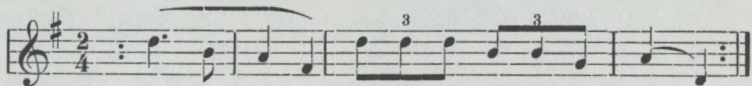


Hle Ndu - ma - ne, nwa - na! Hlo - ngo - la Nwa - ma - nti - bya - na
Have pi - ty on the child, They chased him, Nwa - ma - nti - bya - na



Hi nwa - na ba dle - le, mbo - si!
'Tis the child they have killed, a - las!

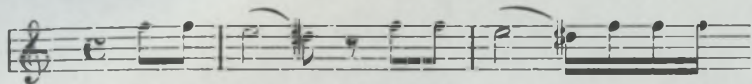
Tune 13. The song of the bridesmaids : (p. 200) "Do not go with him". (Mrs. Audéoud, Makulane). (Comp. p. 197).



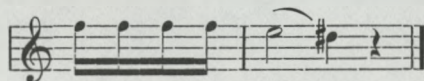
Au so ku so ma na ye!
Ye ! Don't con - sent to go with him!

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Tune 14. Mourning song heard after the death of Hamunde's wife who was drowned in the lake of Rikatla (1893) (p. 191).

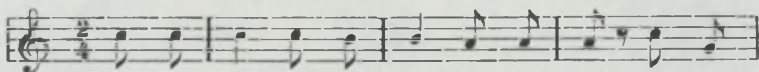


Ma - ma - nee! Ma - ma - nee! U ndji si-
O my mo - ther! O my mo - ther! You have left

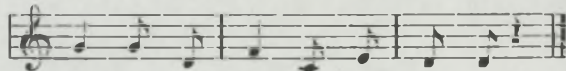


yi - le u yi kwi - ni!
me, where did you go?

Tune 15. Old Nkuna mourning song (p. 192).

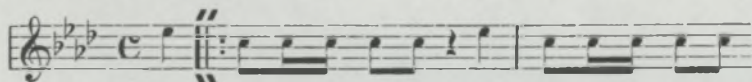


Hi ba - na ba Nhu - mba ya nti - ma Hi ba -
We are sons of the house, the black house.

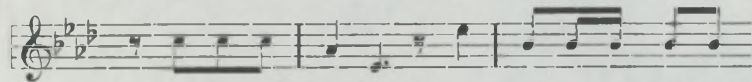


na ba Ma - la - la ni ngo - be.

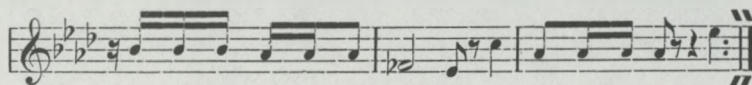
Tune 16. Mourning song at the death of Chief Tshutsha (Maputju. Mrs Audéoud) (p. 192).



Ha - mban mu - tha - ka - ti, Ha - mban niu - tha - ka - ti,
Good bye, you, wi - zard, Good bye, you, wi - zard!



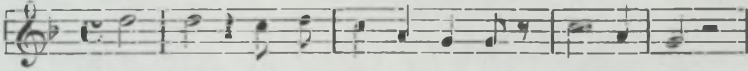
bu - le - la ba - ntu, Ha - mban mu - tha - ka - ti,
you kil - ler of men! Good bye, you, wi - zard.



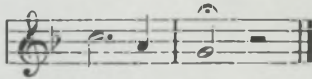
U ta ku bu - le - la ba - ntu U te - ka b'si - kwin.
Why do you come and kill our folk, You come in the night.

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Tune 17. Song of the women carrying "makanye" to Muzila (I. p. 402. II. p. 208).

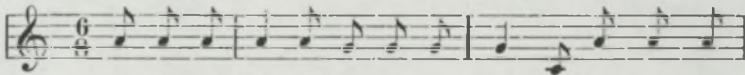


Chwe! Chwe! Na-mbya-na u te - le! U te - le!
 Hi la - ba shi-mun-gu Le - shi ka
 Shi-mhu-ngu hi ma-ni? Hi Mzi - la!

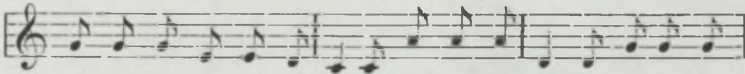


U te - le!
 Le ti - lwen!
 Hi Mzi - la!

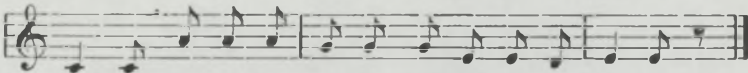
Tune 18. Sailors' song on the Nkomati River (1904) (p. 208).



A hi si - lo - yi, A hi nda - nda - le. Ku ni ndla-
 A hi si - lo - yi, A hi nda - nda - le. They are starv-

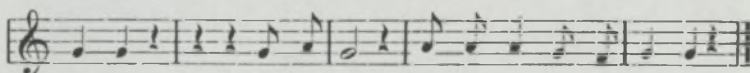
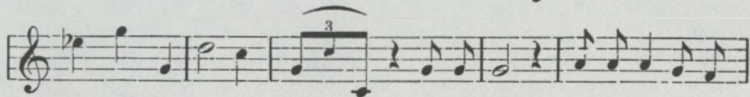
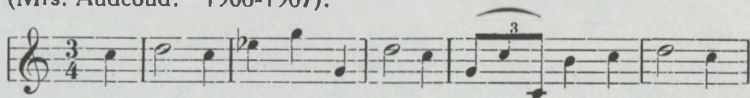


la ka Nti-ma-na, si - lo - yi. A hi si - lo - yi, A hi nda-
 ing at Nti-ma-na, si - lo - yi. A hi si - lo - yi, A hi nda-



nda - le. Ku ni ndla - la ka Nti-ma-na, si - lo - yi.
 nda - le. They are starv - ing at Nti-ma-na, si - lo - yi.

Tunes 19, 20, 21, 22. Sailors' songs on the Maputju River. (Mrs. Audéoud. 1906-1907).



Music

Tune 20.

13 kol

U fe - li ma - li, hm!... U fe - li ma - li, hm!... hm!

Tune 21.

A u na ti - nga - na fa - mba b'si - kwin ?
A - re you not a - shamed to go at night ?

yo yo yo yo yo

A u na ti - nga - na fa - mba bsi - kwin ?
A - re you not a - shamed to go at night ?

yo yo yo yo yo yo yo

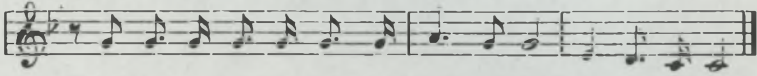
Tune 22.

Tune 23. Carriers song.

Tune 24. War song sung at the coronation of the Mpfumo chiefs (I. p. 373).

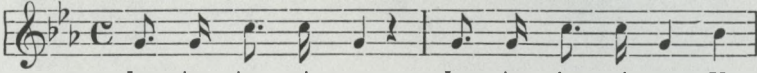
Sa - be - la, Sa - - be - la, nko - si! Ji! Ji!
O - bey, O - - bey the chief! Ji! Ji!

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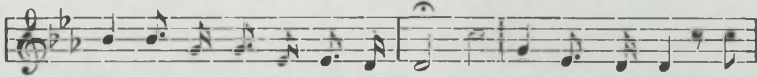


Si ya ku we - la mu - la - mbu mku-lu wa ka nko-si.
Let us go, let us cross the great ri-ver, that of the chief.

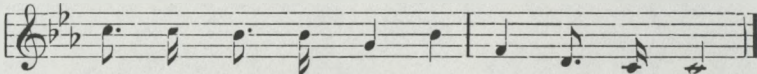
Tune 25. The great war song of Maputju (p. 194).



Lo - ko ku ti qa, Lo - ko ku ti qa, U
At the dawn of the day, At the dawn of day, Who

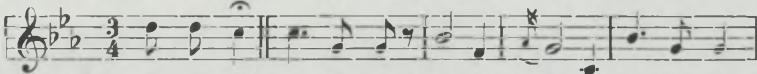


be-kwe ngu-ba - ne Mu-wa - yi? Mwai ka Ma - bu-du, Mwa-
is he that crowned thee, Muwayi? Mwai of Ma - pu-tju, Mwa-

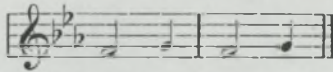


yi, ka Ma - bu - du, U be - kwe ngu - ban!
yi of Ma - pu - tju, Who has crown - ed thee!

Tune 26. Marching song of the army (I. p. 469).

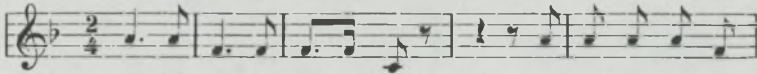


A - ba - fol Na-ngu-ya, E - e! E - e! E - ne - na!
The en'my! Here they are, E - e! E - e! Here they are!

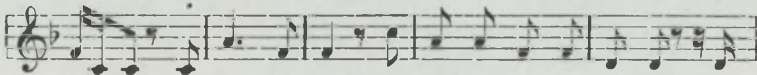


Ha - a! Ha - a!
Ha - a! Ha - a!

Tune 27. The song of the spear (Nkuna) (I. p. 461).

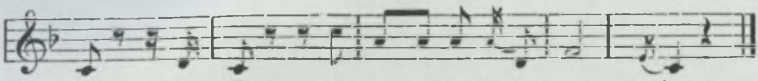


Hi yi-kwa ka ma-kho-si, Si phu-ma ka ma-
War comes from the chiefs. It is or dered by the



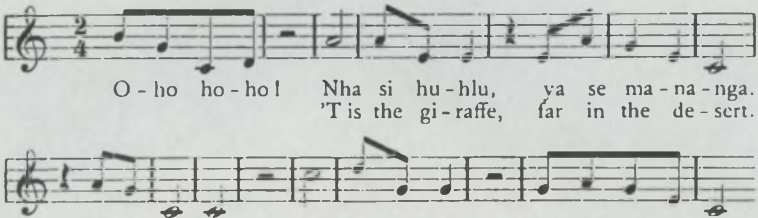
kho - si, si ga - mbu - za! U-mkhonto se sa-ndhle-ni E-
chiefs. We go and kill! The spear is in our hands. E-

THE LIFE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN TRIBE



ji! E - ji! U - mkho-nto u sao go - bee...
 ji! E - ji! The spear kills and bends in the wound.

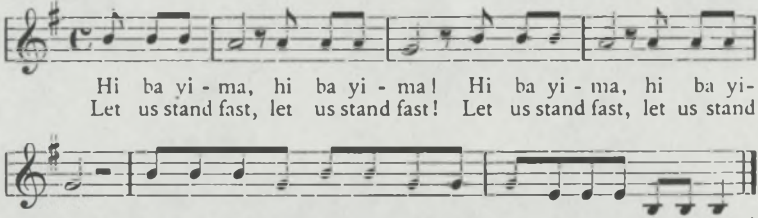
Tune 28. The Giraffe of the desert (Nkuna, Nondwane). I. p. 461.



O - ho ho - ho! Nha si hu - hlu, ya se ma - na - nga.
 'T is the gi - raffe, far in the de - sert.

E - ho ho - ho! Nha si hu - hlu ya se ma - na - nga.
 'T is the gi - raffe, far in the de - sert.

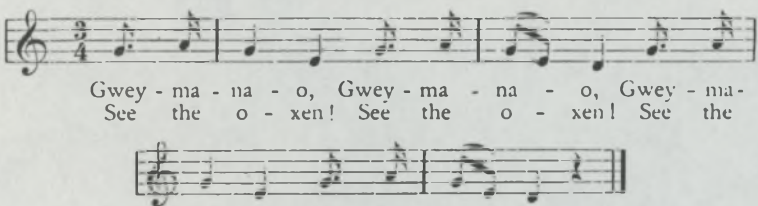
Tune 29. Oldest Nkuna war song (I. p. 461).



Hi ba yi - ma, hi ba yi - ma! Hi ba yi - ma, hi ba yi -
 Let us stand fast, let us stand fast! Let us stand fast, let us stand

ma! Mi te - ka bu - re - na mi nyi - ka ti - nu - ba ta ba - nibe!
 fast! Do not let your strength go, it would help the en'my to conquer!

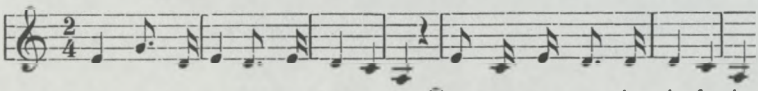
Tune 30. Childrens' song welcoming the trek oxen (p. 209).



Gwey - ma - na - o, Gwey - ma - na - o, Gwey - ma -
 See the o - xen! See the o - xen! See the

na - o, Gwey - ma - na - o!
 o - xen, See the o - xen!

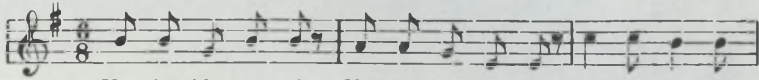
Tune 31. Childrens' song to the owl (p. 209).



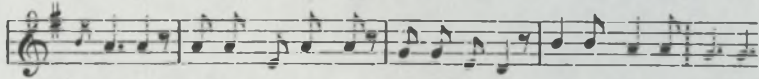
Shi - ko - ta - na gau - le - la fo - lc, Nwa - mbengen gau - le - la fo - le.

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Tune 32. Incantation to the spirit during exorcism (p. 209) (Part VI).

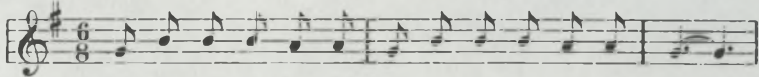


Vu - ka Mu-ngo - ni, Vu - ka, ku - si - le, I - nyo - ni ya
A - wake, o Zu - lu, The day has come, Now the bird is

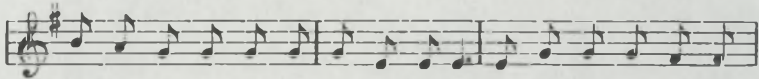


dhla - la. Dhla - la Mu-ngo - ni, Dhla - la va - len, I nyo - ni ya dhla - la.
sing - ing. Play al - so, Zu - lu, Play in the bush, Now the bird is singing.

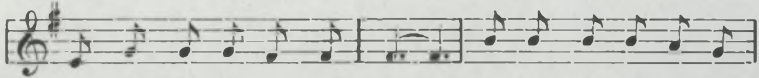
Tune 33. Song of the tale of the ogre Nyandzumulandengela (Timbila song). (p. 210).



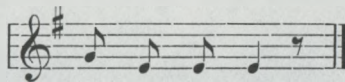
Nya - ndzu - mu - la - nde - nge - la, Ndzu - mu - la - nde - nge - la!



Ndji hwe ti - ho - mu ta nga ndji mu - ka! Nya ndzu - mu - la - nde - nge -
Give me my o - xen, please, that I may go!

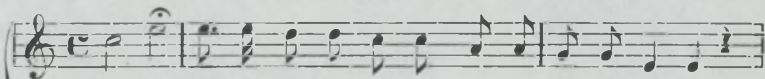


la, Ndzu - mu - la - nde - nge - la! U - te - ki - le mi mhu -
You have ta - ken me and

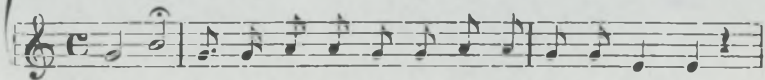


nu u mi - ta!
you swal - lowed me!

Tune 34. Song in two parts, in the tale of Zili (p. 259).



Zi - li! A - ma - se - se - ndi - ni, a - ma - sen - di { ba - ba!
old Man.



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Si - lo - yi - le , se - se - ndi - ni, I nya - ma mu - ne, ya ku
You bad wi - zard } — What's that kind of meat, ve - ry

nha - ti { se - se - ndin, I ka - la nki - la ka li - ho - ndjo,
strange meat { — It has got no tail, it has no horn.

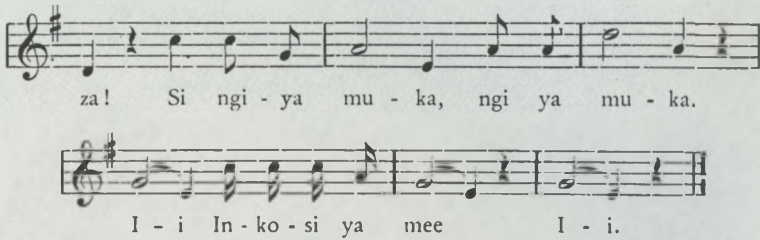
se - se - ndin. Zi - li! A - ma - se - se - ndi - ni, A - ma -

se - ndi } ba - ba! Si - lo - yi - le } se - se - ndin!
} old man, You bad wi - zard }

Tune 35. Song of the mother whose child has been carried off by the Baboon (p. 263).

Mfe - ne sa - ndhle - ni, Mfe - ne sa - ndhle - ni, A
u ngi dhla - yi - se - le mu - nta - na - me, si ya ndo - ndo

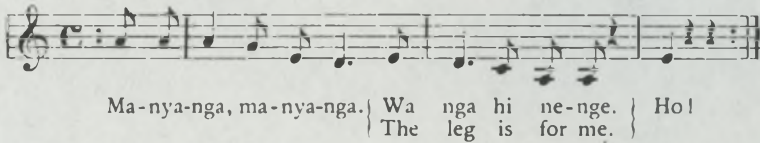
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za! Si ngi - ya mu - ka, ngi ya mu - ka.

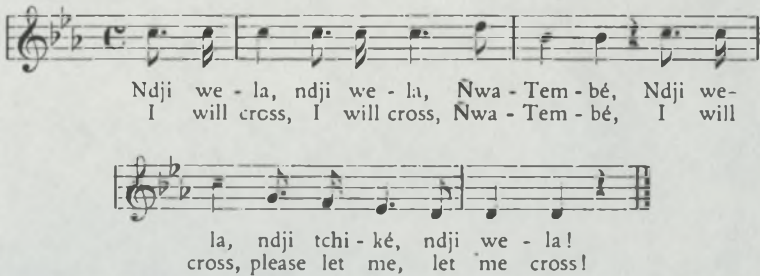
I - i In - ko - si ya mee I - i.

Tune 36. Incantation by which hyena-men are transformed into hyenas, in an ogre-tale (p. 210).



Ma-nya-nga, ma-nya-nga. } Wa nga hi ne-nge. } Ho!
The leg is for me. }

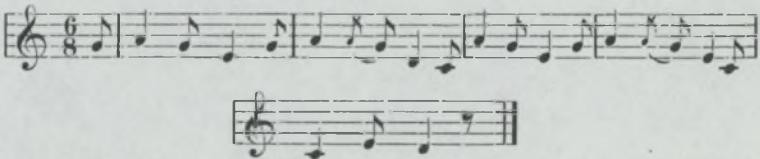
Tune 37. One of the Ronge songs (p. 203).



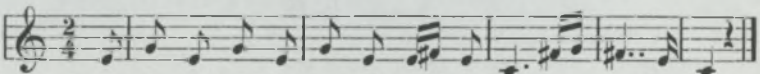
Ndji we - la, ndji we - la, Nwa - Tem - bé, Ndji we -
I will cross, I will cross, Nwa - Tem - bé, I will

la, ndji tchi - ké, ndji we - la!
cross, please let me, let me cross!

Tune 38. A tune played on the shitiringo flute on the banks of the Great Tabi (p. 277).

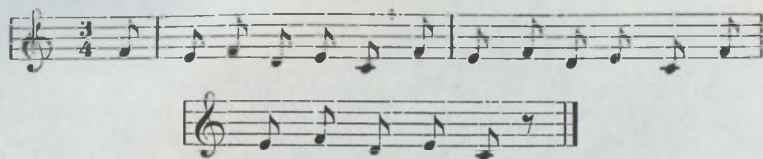


Tune 39. A shitiringo tune from Shiluvane.

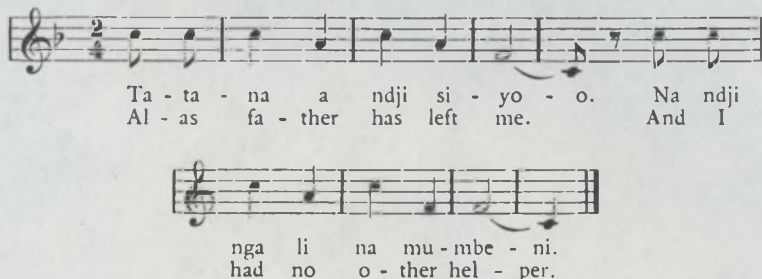


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Tune 40. A bunanga tune (I. p. 431, II. p. 277).



Tune 41 (p. 189).



Ta - ta - na a ndji si - yo - o. Na ndji
Al - as fa - ther has left me. And I
nga li na mu - mbe - ni.
had no o - ther hel - per.

C. THE MUSICAL SYSTEM OF THE THONGAS.

Having now studied the instruments used by our tribe, and a certain number of tunes, we can try to come to some conclusions as regards its musical system. Let it be said, first of all, that such conclusions are only provisional, and I do not pretend that they are final. Noting down Native tunes is a very delicate task, as nothing is more plastic than sound, and however accurate we have tried to be, we may have introduced something of our own into this transcript. Nothing but phonograph records would be scientifically beyond suspicion! However between all these tunes there is enough similarity, enough family likeness, to convince students of primitive music that they are genuine, and that we are entitled to draw some deductions from this material.

As regards *rhythm*, it is generally very well marked, being emphasised by the accompanying instruments, and the movements of dancers: arms lowered in cadence, weapons brandished, feet stamping the ground at regular intervals, etc. However I

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did not always find it easy to catch, and there are certainly sudden changes in the time which put the hearer out of his reckoning. I have heard people assert that in primitive music rhythm is by far the most interesting element. Anybody having witnessed a war-dance, or the performance of the East Coast boys in the Johannesburg Compounds, will be able to certify that there is a wonderful sense of time in these productions. The binary combinations, 2/4 and 4/4 time, are met with more frequently than the ternary modes, 3/4 and 6/8.

The melodic system is evidently based on the scale of seven intervals, just the same as our own-music. The presence of the scale underlying all this music is proved by the preceding tunes, but more specially, as we noticed, by the *timbila*. Most of the tunes could be played on this primitive piano, which is evidently constructed according to the rules of the ordinary scale. I came to the same conclusion when teaching the sol-fa notation to raw Natives, and I remember having a class of boys, just from the bush, in Lourenço Marques, who, at the first lesson, after a quarter of an hour, were singing our scale without difficulty; what seemed to be unknown was the name of the seven notes do, re, mi, etc., but the sounds themselves, in their regular succession, were quite familiar to their ears. One hears sometimes of a scale which has but three or four notes. Does it exist? Is not this succession of sounds "given" to the human ear, as also the succession of colours in the rainbow to the human eye? As we shall see, Natives do not distinguish all the colours. They use the same word, *libungu*, for yellow, and red; black and dark blue are also both *ntima*. Their eye has not yet been fully trained. Their ear seems to me to be more developed, and to have attained a distinct perception of the elementary sounds.

Let it be remarked, however, that there are differences amongst them. Some sing more in tune than others. Often they are a third or a quarter of a tone flat or sharp. I would say that they do not precisely sing out of tune, but they are not yet true on the note. But this will come with due training. I very rarely met with Natives with no idea of tune. This occurrence is, I think, more frequent amongst the Whites than amongst the Blacks. As

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regards accidentals, I have seen some boys master the chromatic scale without much difficulty. But sharps and flats, viz., sounds which do not bear the ordinary, regular relation to those preceding or following them, are generally very difficult to catch, sometimes altogether beyond their reach. The use of European instruments will raise them to that higher level in the course of time.

But let us confine ourselves to their primitive state. They not only know our major scale, but frequently sing in the minor one. On the timbila, as we saw, they can play in the eolian method, viz., in a minor scale in which there is no raised seventh. In fact, even in the distinctly minor tunes, this raised seventh is never met with. We often notice the passage from the major to the minor, or vice versa, and our collection affords two striking examples of this musical procedure : in tune No. 33, the melody after 6 bars recommences a third lower : this is a characteristic timbila tune ; the melody, started on the third key, is played again starting on the first, passing from the major to the minor. In No. 25, at the end of the second bar, the reverse phenomenon takes place. The melody was first minor ; it is raised a third higher and becomes major for a while, returning later on to the minor.

The character of most of the Bantu melodies is rather sad, and this is generally explained by the assertion that they are in the minor key. I do not think this is true. Most of my tunes, 25, are undoubtedly major, 10 are minor, and 5 are mixed or doubtful. This impression comes rather from the fact that the melody almost invariably begins on a high note and descends to low notes, often ending on the lowest. The song starts brilliantly, triumphantly, and goes down, down, till it dies away on the lowest note. Hence the melancholy impression these tunes convey. The melody is very short, as a rule ; sometimes quite rudimentary ; its constant repetitions also produce a monotonous effect which enhances the sadness of the music. A professional musician, after having perused these tunes, once said to me : "Well, they are not 'jolly good fellows' your black people! Not a single dancing tune! Nothing merry about this music!"

The rules of *Native harmony* are very difficult to detect. They certainly exist. When you hear a chorus of beautiful voices

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singing in two or three parts, you at once perceive great differences between their system of harmony and ours. These choruses are by no means disagreeable, but are very strange to our European ear. It would be most interesting to seize them and note them down, but it would be a long job! I have succeeded at least in fixing the two parts of the song of Zili, which may be considered typical; I owe it to two girls of Lourenço Marques, who had clear voices and lent themselves willingly and with great patience to the long investigation. A curious succession of fourths and sixths will be noticed, quite unusual in our music. The professional to whom I submitted this song told me it reminded him of similar chords found in the works of mediaeval composers like Bianchois, and Adam de la Halle. The fourth seems to be more acceptable to the Bantu ear than the third or the fifth. A collection of timbila music would be of great assistance in coming to a conclusion on the subject, as the artists invariably play with two hands, and a score of phonographic records taken in Johannesburg of a good player would be very valuable. Not having had the opportunity of making such an investigation, I must be satisfied to commend it to those who have time to devote themselves to it.

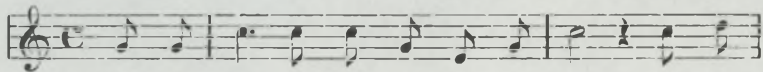
To sum up the result of this inquiry, I may say that Thonga music has certainly reached a certain stage of development, being based upon the seven intervals scale, recognizing the major and minor keys, and following a certain system of harmony; but the melodies are still short and rudimentary and, although they may attain real grandeur when performed by hundreds of warriors, they are generally monotonous and sad. Notwithstanding this, the black race is essentially musical; its gifts in this domain are real, and if properly developed they will certainly in time produce remarkable results.

We can guess to some extent what contribution the Blacks will make to the musical treasures of humanity when we hear the Negro artists who travel round Europe singing the striking plantation songs which they learned from their fathers. As far as I know, South African Bantus have not yet published many musical compositions comparable to those of their American brethren; yet educated Natives, even school children, already invent songs for their own pleasure which

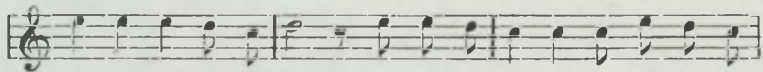
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are more elaborate than the old ones, but which retain the true Bantu character. I will quote three which I managed to seize in the neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques.

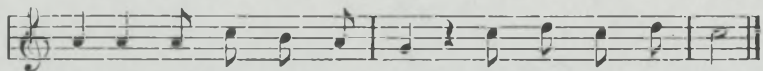
The first may be called *the song of the children who no longer wished to attend evening prayer*. I heard them singing it unnoticed on the Lourenço Marques hill. It must be said that on every Mission Station all the converts assemble every evening to attend a short service, bringing their children with them. It seems that, on one occasion, the missionary went away for a furlough and evening prayer was stopped for a while; it was however resumed when he came back home... much to the disappointment of the children, and they composed this song, whose words are perhaps not very edifying, though they ought not to be taken too seriously. The tune, at any rate, is charming :



A - shi - kho - ngo - to sha bu - si - ku! Le - psi
Eve - ning prayer of the mis - sio - na - ry! As he
Eve - ning prayer of the old Fu - ra - ngu! (1) As he



ku ttha - si - ki ye - ne, A ta hi psa - u - la hi ku ba
has now come home a - gain, The bell will ring, ring, ring, and it will
has now come home a - gain, It will say nwe - nwe - nwe, and it will



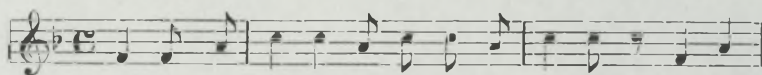
a - nsi - nibi Ni bu - si - ku: Hi nga ye - tle - li!
vex our ears, Du - ring the night: No sleep a - ny more!
vex our ears Du - ring the night: No sleep a - ny more!

The second was composed *by a blind girl of the Maptju country* at the time of the Murimi Movement of which I shall speak later on (App. V). The prophet of this new god, Murimi, was travelling all over Thongaland to destroy witchcraft and to inaugurate a new

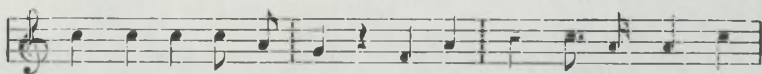
(1) "Old Furangu" is the church elder Frank whose name was transformed according to Thonga phonetics. In the following verses there are a number of descriptive adverbs imitating the ringing of the bell. It will say: go-go-go—rwa-rwa-rwa—nge-nge-nge...

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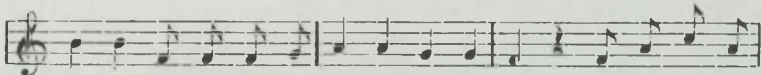
era of prosperity and the chiefs called all their subjects, men and women, to take a snuff of a certain magical tobacco which would rid the country of all the killers by night. The young poetess imagines a woman, a witch, preparing to go to the meeting ordered by the chiefs in order to take the snuff. But she does not at all intend to renounce her criminal ways. She has in her power "psipoko" (see Part. VI, Witchcraft, and App. V), i. e. little folk no bigger than real babies, who are really dead people whom she has bewitched and whom she employs as slaves to till her gardens. During the day she hides them in the bush and during the night she makes them work. Now she takes leave of them before attending the meeting where she is determined to lie, pretending that she has nothing to do with witchcraft, whilst she is secretly determined to go on practising it. The song of the Christian girl reveals her duplicity and concludes by asserting that converts do not believe in this mass of absurdities.



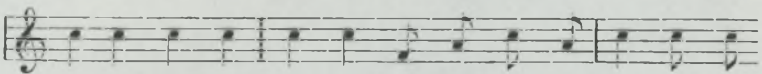
Ka hla - yi ma - ma a ku tjha - ma nho ben, Lo - ko
Their mo - ther told them: Keep quiet in the fo - rest, When I
But we. Chris - tians, we ob - ject, we don't ac - cept. What hea -



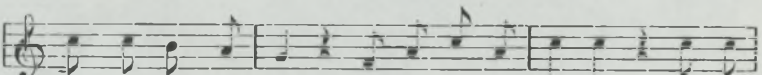
ndji da - hi - le fo - le, Ndji ta bu - ya ndji ta ku
have gone to take the snuff, I shall come back and I shall
thens want us to be - lieve, And we an - swer by clo - sing



te - ka, Ndji ya ku pha - me - la psa - ku - da. Lo - ko psi ku
take you, And I shall give you some - thing to eat. They cry, they say:
our ears When we hear from them all this non - sense.

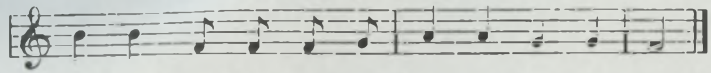


u - we, u - we, u - we, Lo - ko psi ku u - we, Psi
U - we, u - we, u - we! They cry, they say: U - we, As



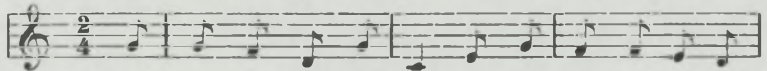
dji - le - la ku mam' Lo - ku psi ku: U - we! Bu - ya
they call for their mother. They cry, they say: U - we! Come back

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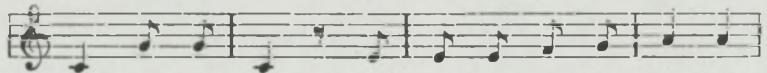


ka - ya!—Ndji ta ku pha - me - la psa - ku - da.
quick - ly!—Yes! I will give you some-thing to eat.

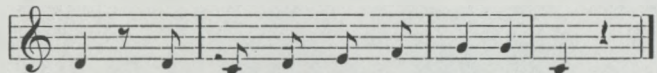
The third song is a sort of hymn whose author is a young evangelist belonging to the Chopi tribe, a tribe particularly gifted for music. This boy, named Onesime, was lame and lay for many years on his bed of suffering ; there he composed quite a number of melodies which he taught his pupils. Here is the *Song of the Star*, which he himself wrote for me in Sol-Fa Notation, and in which he expresses the feelings of his pious heart :



Bo - na nye - le - ti le - yi yi ba - ni - nga-
Look to that star a - bove, which has come and is shin-
Let us be - lieve e'en now and we shall find hap - pi-



ka mi - sa - ba. Yi bo - na - ka - la he-
ing on the world. It has ap - peared in high hea-
ness, here and now. If we look to hea - ven a -



nhla Hi ti - mpsa - lu ta Shi - kwe - mbu.
ven, By the grace of the Lo - ving God.
bove, We shall gain life and peace.

See at the end of this volume the Practical Conclusion of Part. V :
The Problem of Native Education.

I have discovered that this melody is used in the congregations of the French Basutoland Mission and is not originally Bantu. But it has been curiously transformed by Thonga children, a fact which is of common occurrence. The study of such alterations would greatly help in the understanding of the Bantu musical genius.

SIXTH PART

RELIGIOUS LIFE AND SUPERSTITIONS.

The mystery of the Psychic life! There is a mystery in any form of life, be it vegetable, animal, or intellectual. But how much deeper and more difficult it is to fathom, when we are dealing with those higher manifestations of the mental life, which seem peculiar to mankind : Religion, Morality and also, besides these, Magic of all kinds, Divination, Spirit-Possession, Witchcraft, all of which we include under the term Superstition. Amongst savage peoples Religion and Magic, Morality and Taboo, are not yet clearly differentiated. I believe them to proceed from different sources ; but they are more or less confounded in the rites, and this makes them all the more difficult to understand. I do not now claim to throw a perfect light on the dim, confused notions of the Bantu soul. The race is so little philosophical that it can accept conflicting ideas to an extent which would be impossible in more rational, more intellectually developed minds. My aim is, as ever, to be as impartial as possible. I have no preconceived idea as to what primitive man was, or ought to have been. I believe the evolutionist theory to be supported by a great number of probabilities and to be the best solution of many problems. Yet I think it to be merely a hypothesis, and that it would be unscientific to regard it as a dogma to the strengthening of which Science must devote all its labours. I may endeavour to reach some conclusions at the end of this VIth Part ; but my intention is to treat this subject by giving a faithful record of my own observations : professional anthropologists, or historians of Religion can do what they like with this material ; my only ambition is that it should be entirely reliable.

POST SCRIPTUM.

Before laying down my pen, I have one more duty, a very agreeable duty, to perform. I would express my thankfulness to all those who kindly helped me in this work, to my colleagues, some of whom have given me valuable information, to the Council of the Swiss Romande Mission, which has always encouraged me in my study of Native life, and to the English friends who have kindly revised my manuscript. In this connection, I wish particularly to mention Miss G. Quin, co-editor of the *Student World*, who has taken great trouble to make it more adequate to the requirements of the English language. If the second edition shows any improvement over the first in this respect, it is entirely due to her. I wish also to thank Mr Clement Heaton, who designed the Thonga warrior on the cover, and Mr. P. Wavre, who drew the plans. I must not forget Professors H. Borle, J. Lecoultre and G. Attinger, who kindly translated the Latin notes.

I am grateful also to the professional anthropologists who have shown a kind appreciation of the first edition, and hope that the new material added in the second will prove equally useful to the cause of Science. But my greatest wish is that many South African citizens, by a perusal of these pages, may acquire a more exact knowledge of the Natives, that some prejudices may thus be destroyed, and some interest and sympathy aroused, and that in this way my book may ultimately help to create a better understanding between Whites and Blacks.

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