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Kirby, Percival R.  
The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa.  
Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1965.

#### XYLOPHONES AND 'SANSAS'

Moreover, their frequent habit of tuning by adjusting adjacent notes without comparing the focal points by testing intervals, makes accurate tuning impossible. Nevertheless, in ensemble work, the various imperfections, which are not constant, tend to disappear under the mass of sound, and the result to the ear is of a clearly defined performance in a distinct mode, the musical average of all the instruments.

The beaters belonging to these four instruments are, with one exception, made from balls of crude rubber mounted upon sticks. The exception consists of a pair of sticks round the ends of which rubber, drawn from the tree in the form of long thin threads, has been wound, as the interior of a golf ball is sometimes wound from similar material. This specimen is of particular interest, since it shows the retention of the ancient method, as described by dos Santos, while using a new material. In the time of the old Portuguese priest, rubber was probably not available, and the heads of the beaters were made from sinew.

As many Tshopi are recruited as workers on the Rand mines, one finds hundreds of them in most of the large compounds, where for years past it has been customary for them to make *timbila* from materials obtained on the spot, and to organize *mbila* dances. At one time, competitions between the various compounds were instituted, but as it was found that they frequently resulted in serious fighting, they were abandoned. Nevertheless, these dances are kept up regularly, and the team from one compound or from several will visit another, and give alternate performances before crowds of delighted natives and many interested Europeans.

The instruments, as made on the mines, do not differ from their prototypes except in the materials from which they are constructed. The slabs are of ordinary pine or deal about seven-eighths of an inch in thickness, bored and laced in position on frames made from similar wood. Since hard pliable wood is not obtainable, the carrying bars are usually made in three pieces joined at the angles by leather or rubber strips nailed to the wood. The resonators are made, in the case of the two smaller types, of tins of various sizes, from a two-pound golden syrup tin to the smallest size in which 'Brasso' is sold. The collars for the vibrators are made from pieces of old rubber hose-pipe, and the vibrators themselves from ox intestine obtained from the *abattoirs*. The



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framing of the largest instruments is made from pieces of scantling bolted together, the slabs from flooring-boards or other available planks, and the resonators from empty carbide drums. Frequently these are painted in bright colours. The beaters are all of wood with heads of rubber from discarded crusher-buffers. A typical *tshilandzana* as used on the mines is shown on Plate 20A and B.

As a rule one man is put in charge of all the instruments in a compound, and it is his duty to keep them in repair and in tune. A band consists of a large number of these 'pianos', twenty or more being common. The tuning of the instruments is by no means accurate, although, as I have said, in performance the individual differences tend to be lost in the aggregate result. As for the instruments of the largest size, there seems to be no agreement between them at all. I have carefully examined many, and have not found two alike.

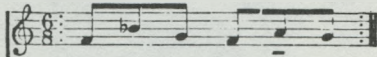
To illustrate the nature of the music played upon the *mbila* by the Tshopi, I give two simple tunes, which were played upon a *tshilandzana*. The form of the music is extremely simple; consisting only of two measures which are repeated *ad libitum*:

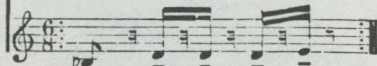
*Marcia.*

Right Hand. 

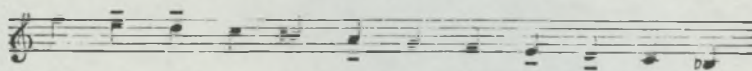
1. Left Hand. 

*Marcia.*

Right Hand. 

2. Left Hand. 

The tuning of this instrument was approximately:



It will be noticed that the lowest note of this instrument is B flat, and this note is the foundation note, or 'tonic' of its scale. In other