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[14:35pt 04-29-93]

Afrika und \_Ubersee. -- Berlin, D. Reimer.  
-- 57, NÖ.3, PP.186-92, 1974

JOHNSTON, THOMAS F. "HAND-PIANOS, XYLOPHONES AND FLUTES OF THE ...."

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- MuIm the list gives 'very old woman'; in Im the last two vowels are (erroneously) marked; for 'very old woman' *kīheti* Ki is also given, cf. the Kamba form]
- work: *wīra/mawīra* KiEmChMwMu(GiTh), *wīa/mawīa* Ka, *ngūgi* EmMbMwIm [Barlow adds *mwako* Ki, *waki* Im 'building bee']
- yam: *gīkwa/ikwa* KiMbMwTh(NdGiEmChMu), *kīkwa/ikwa* KaIm [an alternative *nkwa* is given in Im for 'growing yams']
- year: *mwaka* Ch [and identical forms unlisted in KiKaIm and other dialects]
- yes: *ī* KiNdGiEmKaChMwThIm(Mu)
- yesterday: *ira* KiNd, *igoro* GiEmChMwIm, *egoro* ChMw, *īoo* Ka [note also the following for 'day before yesterday':] *iyo* Ki, *īso* Ka, *matatū* Mw [The Mw item is probably incorrect; cf. Im *īco* unlisted]
- youth: (*mūndū*) *mwanake/(andū)aanake* KiEmKa(Gi), *nthaka* EmChMwMuIm(Th), *nḍaka* MuMw, *mūdaka/adaka* Mw, *mūthaka/nthaka* Im [all forms mean 'beautiful person'. The *mūndū* included with the Southern forms is not commonly used, even in Ki where Barlow cites it. Barlow also gives a form *mūthaka/athaka* as a variant for Mw.]

## Hand-Pianos, Xylophones, and Flutes of the Shangana-Tsonga

By Thomas F. Johnston

The Tsonga leg-rattle, antelope horn, and drum is generally a communally owned item brought out on special social occasions. In this paper I am concerned primarily with those privately owned instruments which can be played by anyone at any time, the hand-piano, the xylophone, and the flute (musical bows will be the subject of another paper). The Tsonga names of the instruments are as follows:

- (1) *timbila*, a 17-key (26-key in Portuguese East Africa) hand-piano made by youths and played by them from above with the two thumbs;
- (2) *mohambi*, a calabash-resonated xylophone obtained from the Chopi and the Ndau of Portuguese East Africa, and played by men;



- (3) *xitiringo*, a transverse three-hole flute made from scrap pipe or a length of reed, and played by men;  
 (4) *nanga*, a whistle made from bone or cane and used by all for dance-signalling.

This latter — the *nanga* — is a form of flute, but distinguished in shape and size from the transverse flute by its shortness and taper; it is also of much higher pitch and fulfills a different social function. First I shall describe the hand-piano, often called *sanza*, *sansa*, or *mbira*; while the Tsonga do not use any of these names, many other tribes do, and they are the names found in the early explorers' accounts. The hand-piano is a truly African instrument, being found nowhere else in the world.

### The *Timbila* Hand-piano

The Tsonga of Portuguese East Africa play a 26-key *timbila* which they say came from the Ndau. It utilizes a hollow cowbell-shaped soundboard made of wood, and possesses three banks of keys. The keys of a specimen purchased from Daniel Mupahlo of Maboti (P.E.A.) in March, 1970, were manufactured from hammered-out umbrella spokes, and arranged in the following tuning-layout:

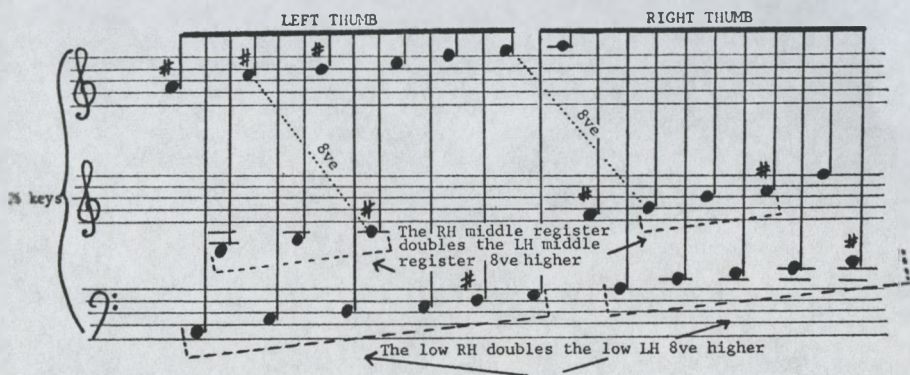


Fig. 1. Tsonga *timbila* from P. E. A. — Daniel Mupahlo, Maboti (P. E. A.)  
 Transpos.: nil.

The Tsonga of the Northern Transvaal play a 17-key *timbila* which they say came from the Pedi and the Lovedu. Huskisson photographically reproduces a 17-key Lovedu instrument which in appear-

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 COPYRIGHT LAW (TITLE 17, U.S. CODE)

ance exactly resembles the Tsonga instrument<sup>1</sup>). The Tsonga 17-key *timbila* is said to have been passed on to the Venda, where it is called *mbila tshipai*. The present writer purchased five Tsonga *timbila* in various areas of the Northern Transvaal, 1968—70, and the tuning-layout in four of them shows a consistency sufficient to warrant naming it a 'standard' Tsonga *timbila* tuning-layout, as shown below.

### The *Mohambi* Xylophone

*Mohambi* is the name applied by the Tsonga to Chopi and Ndau calabash-resonated xylophones. It may derive from the Chopi musical term *hombe*, meaning 'tone-centre'<sup>2</sup>), but on the other hand the Wahenga of Nyasaland have a conical singlemembrane drum called *mohambu*<sup>3</sup>). While not manufactured by the Tsonga, the *mohambi* has long been played by them, for Junod reported its widespread use in 1897<sup>4</sup>). In the Northern Transvaal Samuel Mudanisi and Klass Maluleke of River Platz play 10-slat Chopi xylophones in duet, and in July of 1969 Headman Joseph Maphophe of Langutani gave an excellent performance at the annual Shingwidzi Fair, using a 10-slat Ndau instrument (the Tsonga also use 12-slat Ndau models).

In the smaller instrument, five wooden separators (*swiwawani*) divide adjacent pairs of slats, causing the Tsonga to regard them as *swa tirhisana* — 'little male and female'. The *mohambi* is optionally supported off the ground by, or braced against the abdomen by a curved wooden frame known as *xipula*, and the slats are lightly struck with two mallets (*timhandze*) padded with beeswax (*mhula*). The name of the resonators varies according to the type of calabash used, but the most common name is *masala*, this being Tsonga for the monkey-orange fruit (*Strychnos spinosa* Lam.). Chopi xylophone tunings have been the subject of a thorough study by Hugh Tracey<sup>5</sup>).

<sup>1</sup>) Huskisson, Yvonne, THE SOCIAL AND CEREMONIAL MUSIC OF THE PEDI (A Ph. D. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg), November, 1958, Plate 23.

<sup>2</sup>) Tracey, Hugh, CHOPi MUSICIANS, Oxford University Press, London, 1948, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>) Kubik, Gerhard, "The Phenomenon of Inherent Rhythms", AFRICAN MUSIC, Vol. III, No. 1, 1962, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup>) Junod, Henri, LES CHANTS ET LES CONTES DES BA-RONGA, Bridel & Cie., Lausanne, 1897, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>) Tracey, Hugh, op. cit., pp. 118—129.



The figure consists of four musical staves, each representing a different specimen of the Transvaal Tsonga timbila. Each staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and includes specific performance annotations:

- Line 1 (17 keys):** Shows a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. Annotations include 'LEFT THUMB' and 'RIGHT THUMB' with dashed boxes under the respective lines, '8ve' with a diagonal line indicating an octave shift, and '4ths/5ths' with a dotted line indicating intervals.
- Line 2 (17 keys):** Similar to Line 1, with 'LEFT THUMB', 'RIGHT THUMB', '8ve', and '4ths/5ths' annotations.
- Line 3 (17 keys):** Similar to Line 1, with 'LEFT THUMB', 'RIGHT THUMB', '8ve', and '4ths/5ths' annotations.
- Line 4 (16 keys):** Similar to Line 1, with 'LEFT THUMB', 'RIGHT THUMB', '8ve', and '4ths/5ths' annotations.

Fig. 2. Four specimens of the Transvaal Tsonga timbila.

- Line 1: Elias Faseka, Mawambe's location. Transpos.: maj 2nd up.
- Line 2: Thomas Maxava, Langutani. Transpos.: maj 2nd up.
- Line 3: Samuel Mehlwani, Machekacheka, Transpos.: 4th down.
- Line 4: Willie Xikaluke, River Platz. Transpos.: maj 2nd down.

### The *Xitiringo* Transverse Flute

The *xitiringo* is generally made from scrap metal pipe or a length of river-reed, and the position of its three holes (*machayele*) is determined solely by the maker's placing his first three right-hand fingers across the pipe at a comfortable angle. Either the lower or upper end is plugged by a mealie-cob, and in the case of the former the player additionally opens and closes the upper end with his cupped left palm<sup>6</sup>), humming<sup>7</sup>) and grunting<sup>8</sup>) loudly (*ku xipfumisa*). Chief Chavani of Chavani's location (near Mount Ribola in the Northern Transvaal) is an excellent *xitiringo* player, and his spirited playing and humming induces the council of elders to dance, laugh, and clap. *Xitiringo* tunings have been the subject of a thorough study by Kirby, himself a flautist<sup>9</sup>).

### The *Nanga* Whistle

This small instrument is made from a piece of bone or a short length of cane, bound with decorative twine and equipped with a rudimentary fipple. It emits powerful high-pitched whistling tones which are used to call dogs, goats, sheep, cattle, or to signal one's special identity-call to a companion. Among the neighbouring Venda, "boys know the different sounds of their friend's pipes and can respond accordingly"<sup>10</sup>). Among the Lango of Uganda, using another's call "will certainly cause a violent quarrel and may even lead to bloodshed"<sup>11</sup>).

A musical use of the *nanga* occurs at dances, where it is used to create rhythms that cross the prevailing beat, or to indicate steps.

<sup>6</sup>) This is also a feature of Babembe flute-playing (see Söderberg, Bertil, "Musical Instruments used by the Babembe", THE AFRICAN MUSIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER, Vol. I, No. 6, September 1953, p. 55).

<sup>7</sup>) This is also a feature of Nande flute-playing (see Tracey, Hugh, "The Osborne Awards", THE AFRICAN MUSIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER, Vol. I, No. 6, September 1953, p. 66).

<sup>8</sup>) This is also a feature of Lobi flute-playing (see Mensah, Atta, "The Polyphony of Gyl-Gu, Kudzo, and Awutu Sakumo", JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC COUNCIL, Vol. XIX, 1967, p. 76).

<sup>9</sup>) Kirby, op. cit., pp. 88—134.

<sup>10</sup>) Blacking, John, VENDA CHILDREN'S SONGS, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1967, p. 74.

<sup>11</sup>) Driberg, THE LANGO, London, quoted by Curt Sachs in THE WELLSPRINGS OF MUSIC, Nijhoff, The Hague, 1961, p. 140.



Among the Venda, one reed-pipe dance commenced "after a warning of three blasts on a small whistle (*tshinanga*) had been given three times"<sup>12</sup>). A special version of the *nanga* is the *nanga wa n'anga* (whistle of the herbalist), made from the leg-bone of a *ximhungu* bird (Bateleur eagle). The flight of this bird follows a zig-zag pattern through the sky, so it is associated with lightning and much feared. The *nanga wa n'anga* is credited with protective and rain-making powers, protective because 'it is part of heaven', and rain-making because 'it brings the lightning'.

#### The Role of *Xichaya* (Instrumental Music) in Tsonga Society

*Xichaya* has firm and extensive social roots within the Tsonga community, manifesting links with Tsonga tribal government, economy, and education. Certain instrumentalists are attached to a chief's court, and are summoned before the chief's hut on special occasions to entertain distinguished visitors. Others perform on the *luvo* (village square) for economic reward in the form of beer or food, the grouping of singers around such a performer indicating personal or occupational alignments within a given social situation — women mealie-pounders may cease work and only resume when the player moves on.

Young people often learn instruments as an expected social grace, and the present writer, once encountering three ceremoniously-dressed men along the roadside carrying musical bows, discovered that they were about to entertain the bride-to-be of one of them — a common protocol among the Tsonga.

The songs of a travelling minstrel (*xilombe*) may be a boy's first introduction to unfamiliar regional versions of Tsonga traditional songs, and in the last century the acquisition of metal for making hand-piano keys often constituted a youth's first introduction to inter-tribal trade — the Tsonga had few indigenous blacksmiths and were dependent to some extent upon the neighbouring Venda.

Like that of Tsonga communal vocal music, the performance of Tsonga *xichaya* music is dependent upon the changing seasons of the agricultural year, but not to the same extent. During *Nyenyenyani* ('month of the small birds' — February) and *Nyanyankulu* ('month of the big birds' — March), women and children spend much time

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<sup>12</sup>) Blacking, John, "Musical Expeditions of the Venda", *AFRICAN MUSIC*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1962, p. 77.

in the planted fields chasing birds from crops, so this is a time for learning and playing instruments.

In May and June, men are busy repairing the thatched roofs of their huts and thus are less likely to play instruments at that time. In July, August, and September, boys are not required to lead the cattle far from home, for there is grazing on nearby harvested mealie-patches — thus herding-whistles will be used mainly for dance-signalling until October. In October the rains start, making outdoor dancing difficult, and dance-accompanying instrumentalists (including the whistle-blowers) engage in other activities.

Tsonga *xichaya* music is a gauge of changing ecological factors such as the dwindling supply of game for hide drumheads and timber for drumshells. It is a gauge of changing ethnological factors such as westward migration, the influx of mine-labour from other African countries, and European influence. Tsonga use of the Chopi or Ndauxylophone, the Pedi or Lovedu hand-piano, the Ndauxizambi bow, the Zulu or Swazi *mqangala* bow, the Venda square-handled drum, and the double-membraned *xigubu* drum copied from European military models, all serve to illustrate these changes.

Unlike European musicians, Tsonga musicians attach no great economic value to their musical instruments, for the latter are in the main simply-constructed from natural substances taken from everyday surroundings, and are easily renewable. According to Tsonga cultural concepts, the personal accumulation of inanimate material possessions contributes little to the collective well-being of the group. Not only can such possessions provoke envy or theft, but in former days they proved an encumbrance during migration or flight to safety.

The Tsonga calabash-bow player waiting for his calabash to ripen identifies himself with nature and nature with the spirit-world. The natural substance of his instrument becomes endowed with special powers by virtue of his having played upon it — the fruitshell of his bow rattlestick 'seduces' the fruitshell of the girls' leg-rattle; his drumshell interior 'punishes' the female who peers within; the antelope horn 'transforms' human calls into utterances of the gods; the paired slats of his xylophone are 'married'; and the interment with its owner of a metal hand-piano key would 'slow the after-death journey' because it does not perish with the relics.



## Gungawa Wrestling as an Ethnic Boundary Marker<sup>1)</sup>

(Yauri Division, North-Western State, Nigeria)

By Frank A. Salamone

### Introduction

#### Statement of Theory

An interesting problem emerging from recent studies in complex societies is that of ethnic identity and interethnic relationships. To a large extent the complex ethnic situation in Africa has inspired the continuing search for dynamic models of change to replace the increasingly unsatisfactory static equilibrium model, a major assumption of which is that change results mainly from culture contact situations. As investigators came to realize the dynamic nature of ethnic groups they were compelled to develop models which better explained their data. In particular, they became interested in the manner in which ethnic categorization functions to separate groups while articulating particular activities, even though "objectively" there might be little cultural difference between groups so separated.

At this point, I wish to state clearly the meaning of terms I shall use in this paper. Thus, ethnic groups are groups organized by their members to achieve particular goals. They are distinguished from other organized groups in a number of ways. Chief among these is their method of recruitment, which is by ascription. In other words, they encompass all people who identify themselves as members as a result of birth. In actuality, ethnic groups sometimes receive as members people who are not "born members". Ethnic boundaries are permeable, and people, sometimes singly and sometimes in groups, cross them. The fact that ethnic groups do change personnel emphasizes their dynamic nature. They are not isolates, existing unchanging through time, nor are their boundaries necessarily coterminous with their culture and/or society. An ethnic group can share a culture with one or more similar ethnic groups, and frequently it is part of a

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<sup>1)</sup> This paper is based on field work conducted in 1972 and financed by a SUNY Faculty Grant-in-aid. I wish to thank Yakubu Hanci, the Chief Wrestler (*Sarkin Kokawa*) of the village of Mnuh for valuable aid in my research. Similarly, Bori, a traditional priest, supplied me with insights that proved valuable. I also wish to thank Barbara Caiazza for her aid in conducting the research.