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THE MUSIC OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA

by

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A thesis in fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the
University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa

Los Angeles, 1971

DECLARATION

This thesis is, apart from help with the translations (see Acknowledgements), my own unaided work.

No substance or part of this thesis has been/is being/ is to be submitted for a degree in any other university.

No information used in this thesis was obtained while I was employed by, or working under the aegis of, any person or organization other than the University.

Thomas F Johnston

Signed ..... Thomas F Johnston .....

Date ..... June 1, 1971 .....

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page No.
Figure 1.	State of Southern African ethnomusicological studies, 1968	xiv
Figure 2.	Function-derived musical characteristics	xxiii
Figure 3.	Map showing area inhabited by the Shangana-Tsonga	3
Figure 4.	Communal music of the Shangana-Tsonga: a calendar	7
Figure 5.	Ascending chain of Tsonga administrative authority	9
Figure 6.	Authority in Tsonga music	11
Figure 7.	Tsonga ndzumba drum	16
Figure 8.	Tsonga ncomane drum	17
Figure 9.	Venda ngoma drum, with Tsonga names of parts	18
Figure 10.	Tsonga xigubu drums	19
Figure 11.	A marhonge leg-rattle	19
Figure 12.	Tsonga timbila from Mozembique	21
Figure 13.	Four specimens of the Transvaal Tsonga timbila	22
Figure 14.	Fahlwana rattlestick	25
Figure 15.	Xizambi notched friction-bow	26
Figure 16.	Xitende braced gourd-bow	32
Figure 17.	The Tsonga mqangala bow	34
Figure 18.	The xipendana mouth-resonated braced bow	36
Figure 19.	Rectangle described in the air by the nhonga baton	271
Figure 20.	Johannes Mathye's playing: out-of-phase 'pathogenic' descents	341

Page No.

Figure 21. Different Stages of Tsonga Music 458

Figure 22. The Learning Process in Tsonga Music 461

Figure 23. Frequency of Use of the Different Musical Styles: Comparative Percentages Estimated Over One Tsonga Year 463

Figure 24. The Beer-drink Complex of Sub-styles (Beer-songs, Work-songs, and Muchongolo) as the Nucleus of Tsonga Vocal and Instrumental Music 465

Figure 25. Beer-drink Music as Tsonga 'Court' Music and Inter-'court' Music 467

Figure 26. Factors Influencing Tsonga Melodic Rise and Fall 469

Figure 27. Distribution of 'Harmonic Equivalents' Among the Parts 471

Figure 28. Tsonga Utilization of those Xizambi Characteristics which Coincide with Vocal Music Principles 481

Figure 29. Tsonga Dances and the Drums Used for Them 484

Figure 30. The Core Drum-pattern in Most Tsonga Music 486

Figure 31. Bimetric Patterns Found Within xiNdau Music, and Within Khomba Music 488

Figure 32. Social and Musical Acculturation in Northern and Southern 'Tsongaland' 491

Figure 33. Tentative Listing of Scale Usage in the Northern Transvaal and Environs . . . 492

LIST OF PLATES

Two women of Machekacheka playing *ndzumba* drums . . . . . Plate 1

Ndzumba drum and *ndzumbana* drum found being played at *khomba* (puberty school) . . Plate 2

N'anga Mabasa Chauke of Mawambe's location, and four *mancomane* drums . . . . Plate 3

N'anga Mahlavahlavani of Samarie, holding a *ncomane* drum . . . . . Plate 4

N'anga Fernando Novela of Moamba (Moz.) with two *mancomane* drums . . . . . Plate 5

Complete set of *mancomane* drums in Mozambique . . . . . Plate 6

Rear view of *ncomane* drum . . . . . Plate 7

Old Venda *ngoma* used by Tsonga at Bija . . . Plate 8

Venda *tingoma* built for Tsonga Headman Nhongani Chauke of Madonse . . . . Plate 9

Xigubu drumming school at Samarie . . . . . Plate 10

Xigubu drumming school at Machekacheka . . . Plate 11

Xigubu drumming school at Ribola . . . . . Plate 12

Seven *xigubu* drums . . . . . Plate 13

Marhonge leg-rattles at Bija . . . . . Plate 14

Three pairs of *marhonge* leg-rattles . . . . . Plate 15

Two *mhalamhala* antelope horns . . . . . Plate 16

Timbila-player at Langutani . . . . . Plate 17

23-key 3-manual Tsonga (Moz.) *timbila* . . . . Plate 18

Timbila-player in Mozambique . . . . . Plate 19

Six Transvaal Tsonga *timbilas* and one from Mozambique . . . . . Plate 20

River Platz xylophonist Klass Maluleke . . . Plate 21

Langutani xylophonist Headman William Maphophe . . . . . Plate 22

Tsonga-owned Chopi-built *mohambi* (oblong slats) . . . . . Plate 23

Tsonga-owned Ndau-built *mohambi* (oval slats) . . . . . Plate 24

Chief Chavani playing his xitiringo flute . . . . . Plate 25
Xitiringo flute and a home-made guitar . . . . . Plate 26
Xizambi-player Wilson Zulu of Samarie . . . . . Plate 27
Xizambi-player Joel Ntoveni of Chavani . . . . Plate 28
Xizambi-player Xafatuka Mabasa of Mawambe . . . . . Plate 29
Xizambi duettists Joel Mashava and Njaranjara of Mhinga's location . . . . . Plate 30
Xizambi-player at River Platz . . . . . Plate 31
Nine xizambis with their fahlwana rattlesticks . . . . . Plate 32
Xitende-player Johannes Hlungwani of Langutani . . . . . Plate 33
Xitende-player Joseph Mageza of Mahonisi . . . . . Plate 34
Student xitende-player at Machekacheka . . . . Plate 35
Ten xitende braced gourd-bows . . . . . Plate 36
Mqangala-player Risimati Maluleke of Madonse . . . . . Plate 37
Khomba novice playing mqangala at Langutani . . . . . Plate 38
Three mqangala mouth-resonated hollow cane-bows . . . . . Plate 39
Xipendana-player accompanies dancing at Samarie . . . . . Plate 40
Plucking the xipendana with both safety-pin and fore-finger . . . . . Plate 41
Girls of Samarie playing xipendana duets . . . . . Plate 42
Groom taking xipendana to bride's home . . . . Plate 43
Eight xipendana thick-handled musical bows . . . . . Plate 44
Two boys with their mafowa stick-rattles at Elim . . . . . Plate 45
Drumming at a beer-drink at Madonse . . . . . Plate 46
Women's xilala dance at Elim . . . . . Plate 47

In some areas ku thaga is done during xilala . . . . . Plate 48

Madeha bangles of woman dancer at Samarie . . . . . Plate 49

'Reading' the set of throwing-bones at Bija . . . . . Plate 50

Muchongolo dancer Fanyias Chavango of Moamba (Moz.) . . . . . Plate 51

Instruments used at a muchongolo dance in Mozambique . . . . . Plate 52

Makwaya dancing at Marievale Mine . . . . . Plate 53

'Protective' nanga whistle made from bird's leg-bone . . . . . Plate 54

Herdboy's 'identity-call' whistle . . . . . Plate 55

Children's whistles, flutes, and toys . . . . . Plate 56

Ximvegomvego, rare bow owned by Chief Mhinga . . . . . Plate 57

Ceremonial beer-ladle used as dance baton . . . . . Plate 58

Chopi xylophonists accompany Tsonga dancers . . . . . Plate 59

Chief Mahiyana (right) and his wife, of Moamba (Moz.) . . . . . Plate 60

Khomba assembly at Ribola, August 5, 1970 . . . . . Plate 61

Khomba assembly at River Platz, August 10, 1970 . . . . . Plate 62

Khomba assembly at Langutani, June 13, 1970; children watch their blue-uniformed sisters grouping . . . . . Plate 63

Blue-uniformed khomba at Langutani does ku khana ('joy-dancing') with two horns, oval drum, and song-leader . . . . . Plate 64

Red-headclothed supervisor does xhiringo dance within V-formation under blue flag of Langutani khomba . . . . . Plate 65

Samarie, June 14, 1970: Chief Mutsetweni and council confirm that, because of a nearby death, the special khomba hut cannot be used . . . . . Plate 66

Samarie grandmothers, mothers, aunts, and sisters watch the warm-up for the khomba nanayila dance . . . . . Plate 67

Cone-hatted dance-leader supervises varied-pitch tuning of the three drums . . . Plate 68

With the drums now tuned, the cone-hatted dance-leader regains her position . . . . . Plate 69

Whistles at the ready, dancers form counter-clockwise circle for nanayila under supervision of cone-hatted dance-leader . . Plate 70

Brown-headclothed, flag-waving junior 'rearguard' and senior 'vanguard' (note the many bangles of the latter) assume positions from which to signal various lunges . . . . . Plate 71

Left-footed inward lunge and right-handed hatchet-chop of the khomba nanayila dance . . . . . Plate 72

Right-footed outward lunge and right-handed hatchet-lift of the khomba nanayila dance . . . . . Plate 73

Marking time and awaiting whistle signal for the turn and the hop . . . . . Plate 74

Now turned, the dancers jangle their leg-rings with the 'feet-together' step . . Plate 75

Crowd closes in and an elder 'consecrates' ground for the khomba managa dance . . . . . Plate 76

'Swishing' of the xidundo grass skirts and 'ping-ponging' of the hatchet and scarf in the khomba managa dance . . . . . Plate 77

With two 'schoolmothers' behind the drum, and the supervisor blowing the horn, two khomba novices kneel to be xangula'd ('prepared') . . . . . Plate 78

With left shoulder now bared, novice is about to be relieved of her red-patterned over-salempore (note its uniformity with the other salempores) . . . . . Plate 79

Having relinquished red over-salempore, novice prepares to doff blue salempore as supervisor blows horn and other novice does khomba ku thaga ('crouch'-dance) . . . Plate 80

Wearing yellow beads, novice on right continues ku thaga as novice on left prepares to relinquish white-towelling waist-wrap . . . . . Plate 81

Having now relinquished yellow beads and white-towelling waist-wrap, the two novices fold arms, bow heads, and weep as the horn is blown . . . . . Plate 82

Smeared with red-ochre, a novice does ku losa ('self-humbling') upon a spread milala palmleaf mat . . . . . Plate 83

A novice is 'striped' -- draped with coloured waist-strands, beads, bangles, (the tape-recorder in the picture is the author's) . . . . . Plate 84

Two novices do ku rhwala tingoma ('carry the ceremonial drums'), dancing from squatting to upright position . . . . . Plate 85

The novices crawl in line abreast across the river-bed . . . . . Plate 86

Ku qaqa, a mime in quadrupedic position, wherein the neck and head are lobbed from side to side in simulation of a moving crocodile . . . . . Plate 87

A stooping movement, during which one novice lies on the mat in quasi-foetal position . . . . . Plate 88

A half-stooped position in which the novices, having returned from finding a stick, file along the river-bed . . . . . Plate 89

The third novice 'pounds' with her stick as though it were pestle in a mortar. Note left hand on hip and right hand across body . . . . . Plate 90

The file of half-stooped novices makes a left-turn across the river-bed . . . . . Plate 91

A slightly-stooped position, in which novices mount 'stage' and extend right arm and foot. Note bangle in left hand of girl in right foreground . . . . . Plate 92

The xijimo bangle-dance (novice transfers bangle to right hand and 'jangles' her leg-rings) . . . . . Plate 93

The upright position of xigonya, in which with hands on heads, novices revolve while dancing with feet together . . . . . Plate 94

A backward-leaning position, in which novices simulate escorted prisoners and sing of the importance of always carrying one's passbook . . . . . Plate 95

A tree-mounted position on the 'stage', in which a 'law-teaching' stick is wielded while a third novice does ku losa . . . . . Plate 96

A shoulder-mounted position, in which one novice is shoulder-hoisted then hand-held while she demonstrates 'elongation' measurements . . . . . Plate 97

Rite in which old women poke poles through a skin or stiff paper held taut across a canister of water by kneeling, singing novices . . . . . Plate 98

Arrival of the bone-throwing 'yellow-toothed' doctor and an assistant carrying gray clay models . . . . . Plate 99

With fresh clothing and bangle ready, four reed-sprouting clay squares are inserted between the legs of a blanketed novice about to graduate . . . . Plate 100

Note Concerning the Plates

The plates are assembled together at the end of this thesis, in order to facilitate current university practices in the Xeroxing of text matter.

Individuals or institutions desiring prints or transparencies of the photographs should apply direct to the writer, who has retained the original negatives.

CONTENTS

Page No.

LIST OF FIGURES iii

LIST OF PLATES v

INTRODUCTION xiv

Scope and format of the thesis; aims and methods of research; the musical transcriptions; terminology; acknowledgements; pronunciation guide to certain Tsonga sounds.

CHAPTER I. HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA 1

Historical background; the influence of seasonal change on music performance; social background of music performance; examples of music as an index of affluence and power balance/imba ance.

CHAPTER II. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA 16

Ndzumba drum; ncomane drum; ngoma drum; xigubu drum; leg-rattles (marhonge); side-blown antelope horn (mhalamhala); hand-piano (timbila); 10- and 12-slat xylophone (mohambi); 3-hole transverse flute (xitiringo); notched friction-bow (xizambi); braced gourd-bow (xitende); finger-plucked hollow cane-bow (mqongala); braced thick-handled musical bow (xipendana).

CHAPTER III. PRINCIPLES OF SHANGANA-TSONGA MUSIC 38

Some fundamental concepts; some Tsonga rhythmic principles; some Tsonga melodic principles (including a discussion of interval preference, speech-tone, musical forces limiting the effect of speech-tone and speech-rhythm, and programmatic musical settings); formal structure; the transmission of Tsonga musical principles.

Page No.

CHAPTER IV. CHILDREN'S SONGS (TINSIMU TO TLANGA TA SWIHLANGI) 78

Twenty musical transcriptions; the song-words and their meaning, together with a commentary; summary of the musical characteristics of children's songs.

CHAPTER V. GIRLS' PUBERTY SCHOOL (KHOMBA) MUSIC OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA 113

Khomba at Langutani, June 13, 1970, with four khomba songs; Khomba at Samarie, June 14, 1970, with thirty-four khomba songs; Tsonga girls' puberty school (ambutsa) in Mozambique; summary of the musical characteristics of puberty school songs; forty musical transcriptions.

CHAPTER VI. SONGS OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA BOYS' DRUMMING SCHOOL (XIGUBU), AND SONGS OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA BOYS' CIRCUMCISION SCHOOL (MURHUNDZU) 192

Manufacturing xigubu drums; drum instruction; eight didactic drumming formulae; four voice-and-drum conversations (ku vulavurisa xigubu); eight musical transcriptions of xigubu songs; summary of the musical characteristics of xigubu songs; songs of the boys' circumcision school (six transcriptions of tingoma songs and four of murhundzu songs); the Tsonga circumcision school in Mozambique; summary of the musical characteristics of songs of the boys' circumcision school.

CHAPTER VII. BEER-SONGS (TINSIMU NTA LE BYALWENI) OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA, INCLUDING RELATED MUSICS WORK-SONGS (TINSIMU TA DZAVA) AND MUCHONGOLO DANCING 233

Men's xichayachaya dance; women's xilala dance, with one musical transcription; men and women's rhambela phikezano competitive team-dance; nineteen musical transcriptions of beer-songs; summary of the musical characteristics of beer-songs; work-songs (tinsimu ta dzava); five musical transcriptions; summary of the musical characteristics of work-songs; men and women's muchongolo dance;

Page No.

four musical transcriptions of muchongolo songs used within a mancomane ('exorcism') context; six musical transcriptions of muchongolo songs used at beer-drinks and mine dances; summary of the musical characteristics of muchongolo songs.

CHAPTER VIII. 'EXORCISM' (MANCOMANE) MUSIC OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA 292

Thirteen musical transcriptions of mandhlozi songs; ten musical transcriptions of xidzimba songs; two musical transcriptions of xiNdau songs; social acculturation and the introduction of new musical forms; summary of the musical characteristics of 'exorcism' music.

CHAPTER IX. NOTCHED FRICTION-BOW (XIZAMBI) MUSIC OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA 333

The xizambi-playing of the following musicians, with musical transcriptions and summaries of musical characteristics: Johannes Mathye of Mangove; Wilson Zulu of Samarie; John Chauke of Sibasa; Elias Khosa of Machekacheka; Joel Mashava of Mhinga's location; Njaranjara of Mhinga's location; xizambi duets; summary of the chapter; the parallel 'harmony' of Tsonga communal vocal music and the parallel movement of partial tones in Tsonga bow music.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 435

Synopses of the various Tsonga musical styles; order and process within the styles; the learning process in Tsonga music; frequency of use of the different musical styles; the beer-drink complex of sub-styles as the nucleus of Tsonga vocal and instrumental music; beer-drink music as Tsonga 'court' and inter-'court' music; summary of the principles of Tsonga music (including harmony, melody, and rhythm); social and musical acculturation in Northern and Southern 'Tsongaland'; tentative identification of scale usage in the Northern Transvaal and environs; research suggestions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY 495

INTRODUCTION

Scope and Format of the Thesis

At the time of the writer's arrival in Southern Africa during November, 1968, the state of ethnomusicological studies stood as shown below.

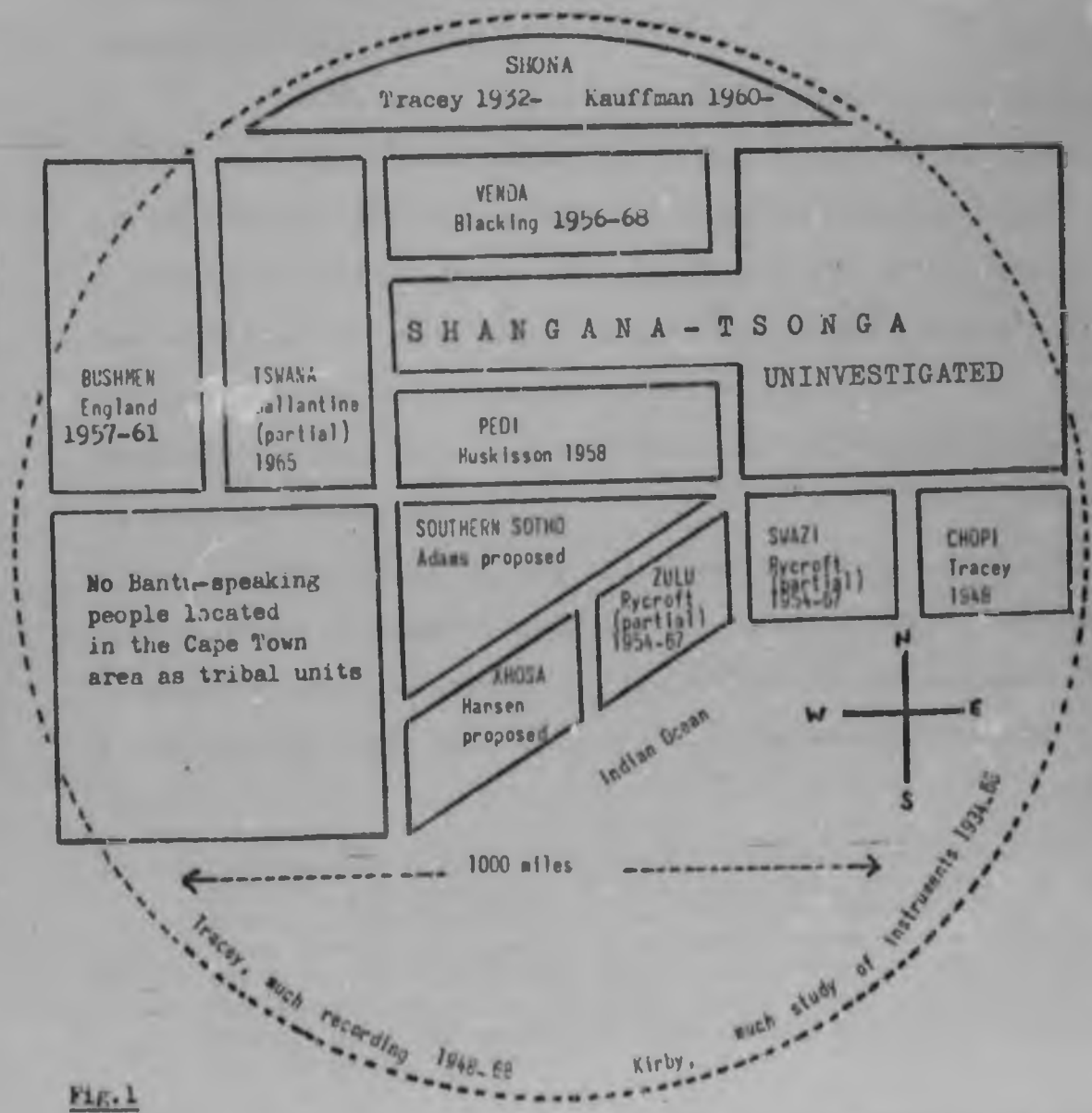

Fig. 1

State of Southern African ethnomusicological studies, 1968 (proportional representation not intended).

Of the various peoples mentioned in the above diagram, the musically uninvestigated Shangana-Tsonga[1] presented an obvious choice for research, and that their Venda neighbours had already been subjected to a thorough socio-musicological study allowed of the possibility of comparative reference (very little musical diffusion has occurred between the heptatonic Venda and the primarily pentatonic Shangana-Tsonga).

The present thesis describes an additional musical system, hitherto unexplained in detail either to Africans or to the Western world. It throws light on relationships within that system, shows how the variables of the system are modified for each social function, provides a musical analysis in terms of the system's own logic, and demonstrates how musical performance is related to other systems in Tsonga society.

For instance, the relationship between music and horticulture is demonstrated via an examination of the Tsonga seasonal musical calendar and the effect of the harvest upon music-making, that between music and the administrative

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1. The Shangana-Tsonga have been variously described in earlier publications as the Shangaan, the Tsonga, the Thonga, the Tonga, and the Shangana-Tsonga. The last term is now generally accepted as standard and it is used in the title and chapter-headings of this thesis. For convenience in the main body, however, the term Tsonga will be employed, this being the term by which the language is known.

structure is demonstrated by an examination of the ascending chain of Tsonga administrative authority and the control exercized over men, women, and children at each level through a traditional musical institution. That between music and language is demonstrated through a consideration of Tsonga speech-tone influence, and the use of foreign song-words during 'exorcism' of foreign 'spirits'. That between music and aspects of the belief system is demonstrated through a consideration of Tsonga ritual and the changes incurred in its music by acculturative factors such as the importation of puberty school songs and possession dances.

This method of approaching Tsonga music is clearly one to which the term of ethnomusicology may rightly be applied -- it illustrates why ethnomusicology is necessarily a separate discipline rather than just a branch of anthropology or musicology, and incidentally throws light on aspects of the creative process.

Aims and Methods of Research

The purpose of an ethnomusicological study is to analyse the music in terms of the social and cultural contexts in which it is performed, the different musical categories recognized within a cultural system, and the total system of music described as such by a given society.

Approaching African music with this precept ensures recognition of indigenous musical concepts rather than of imposed concepts -- by analyzing the music within its cultural context the real nature of the system can be unravelled, so that the system, and not only the sound-products of the system, may be compared with other musical systems.

For example, consider the seemingly comparable frequent appearance of prime musical intervals within disparate cultures, and the temptation to draw conclusions from such a comparison. For the Tsonga, the upper tone of the interval of a 5th is synonymous with the lower tone, being conceived as its 'harmonic equivalent' and capable of substitution for it should instrumental range or vocal register so dictate. This Tsonga concept of the particular qualities of the 5th is obviously somewhat different to European concepts of the qualities of the same interval, and, to a musicologist drawing conclusions from recordings only (or even from carefully-made transcriptions), the similar musical sound or even the similar musical use of these two intervals might tend to obscure their dissimilar cultural significance.

The use of recordings, by listeners not accustomed to performing situations, also tends to encourage the formation of judgements as to the relative 'aesthetic

value' of different African musics. African music, with its ensemble drumming, handclapping, special vocal timbre, ululating, and mass vocal ensemble is a social and cultural manifestation whose meaning is related to a specific time and place. Facile and inaccurate comparisons of, for instance, sub-Saharan African music and American jazz should be carefully avoided.

The present writer, apart from pursuing anthropological studies under Dr Michael Burton of the University of California, and receiving ethnomusicological guidance from Dr John Blacking, has played jazz for several years alongside celebrated black jazz musicians in recording studios and elsewhere. Provided all comparisons are carefully weighed, long-accustomed familiarity with the loose 'swing' and rhythmic 'feel' of American modern jazz is a useful asset when approaching sub-Saharan African music in the field for the first time.

Improvisation, juxtaposition of contrasting rhythms, bent tones, and peculiarly African vocal timbre are common to both sides of the Atlantic, and the working knowledge of them possessed by a professional musician long active in the Afro-American idioms proves useful when African musical performances must be melodically, rhythmically, and structurally analyzed, and eventually committed to paper.

The writer spent the period November 1968 to October 1970 in Southern Africa. Nine months were spent living continuously among the Tsonga of the Northern Transvaal, and three months among the Tsonga of Mozambique. Shorter stays totalled a further six months.

All photography, recording, transcription, and musical and social analysis has been carried out by the writer, who was partly assisted in his collection of information by interpreters. Translation of songs was done both in the field by interpreters in consultation with the actual performers, and in universities by qualified linguists (P.D.Beuchat of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and C.T.D.Marivate of the University of South Africa, Pretoria).

450 musical and linguistic items were incidentally recorded, and these were used in assessing the cultural role of Tsonga music, identifying discrete social functions within that role, and hopefully correlating the findings with existing data collected from the neighbouring Venda, Pedi, and Chopi, and the culturally related Zulu and Swazi.

The performances of Tsonga music which form the basis of the writer's musical analysis were recorded and carefully documented, as far as possible, within the context of their appropriate social situations in order to minimise the distortive effects of 'European hearing' and in order to conform with sound methodological

principles advocated and laid down in the ethnomusicological literature.

The thesis begins with a presentation of socio-historical background material, which is followed by a description of all Tsonga musical instruments and a discussion of the main principles of Tsonga music. This prepares the way for Chapters IV to IX, in which the reader is taken step-by-step from that music which is learned early in Tsonga life (children's songs, and didactic formulae of the two initiation schools and of the drumming school) to the fuller, more developed forms (beer-songs, work-songs, muchongolo dancing, 'exorcism' music, bow music).

Broad coverage of all available Tsonga music was intended, but, of the various institutions featuring communal vocal music, the socially significant khomba (girls' puberty school) receives special attention both because of Tsonga women's role as guardian of the cultural heritage and because the author was fortunate in gaining admittance to part of the secret rites.

Of the musical instruments, the xizambi notched friction-bow (the Tsonga instrument par excellence[2]) receives special attention both because of its 'court'

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2. Johnston, Thomas, "Xizambi Friction-bow Music of the Shangana-Tsonga", African Music, Vol. IV, No. 4, 1970, pp. 81-95.

use ('chiefs' are a new institution in Tsonga life, and their 'court' has been borrowed from the Venda), and because an objective contribution can thereby be made to the much-debated subjects of (a) the relationship between bow music and vocal music, and (b) the suggested (by Kirby) influence of bow music on the formation of scales from which vocal music is derived.

The Musical Transcriptions

Chapters IV to VIII include 150 vocal music transcriptions; Chapter IX includes 60 xizambi music transcriptions, thus:

		No. of items given here	No of items transcribed[3]
elementary forms of Tsonga vocal music	children's songs	20	40
	puberty school songs	40	80
	drumming school items	20	24
	circumcision school songs	10	20
developed forms of Tsonga vocal music	beer-songs	20	60
	work-songs	5	15
	muchongolo songs	10	30
	'exorcism' songs	25	75
	sub-total	150	344
xizambi musical bow items		60	106
	total	210	450

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3. "No. of items transcribed" refers to the total number of different songs (in a given category) recorded and transcribed by the writer, and used in the interval-counts and other musical analyses given in Chapter III. "No. of items given here" refers to those songs which were heard and recorded by the writer most frequently. To ascertain how field work was allocated, allow one day per item.

Each musical transcription represents an actual performance rather than a composite, and includes only one complete cycle of the song rather than numerous repetitions (where significant changes occurred, two cycles have been included). Transposition has been effected so as to incur a minimum of accidentals, and notation has been effected so that a metrically-significant (to the Tsonga) number of units occupies each line -- Tsonga formal structure is seen at a glance by comparing successive lines, vertically.

Although, in most Tsonga music, the 3rd and 7th are somewhat flexible, the 5th in bow, flute, and horn music is produced by use of the natural series. This fact, together with the common pentatonic structure of most Tsonga vocal music, makes staff notation provisionally satisfactory. It should be noted that, in the descending pentatonic pattern GEDCA, D is always slightly sharp.

In the musical analysis of each song, the following characteristics were given careful consideration:

(i) overall pathogenic[4] descent, from first tone to last;

(ii) discrete melodic patterns within that descent;

(iii) the predominance of certain descending and ascending intervals;

(iv) 'transposition' of certain high/low melodic phrases to keep them within vocal range;

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4. Term coined by Curt Sachs and explained in his book The Wellsprings of Music, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1962, p. 68.

(v) rhythmic pattern of the singing;

(vi) rhythmic pattern of the clap and/or drum accompaniment;

(vii) use of 'harmony';

(viii) overall metrical length of one cycle;[5]

(ix) call-and-response divisions (hence internal structure);

(x) use of 'circular' form;[6]

(xi) type of language employed for the song-words;

(xii) use or non-use of melismatic syllables.

The following diagram helps to convey some of the interrelationships of these characteristics.

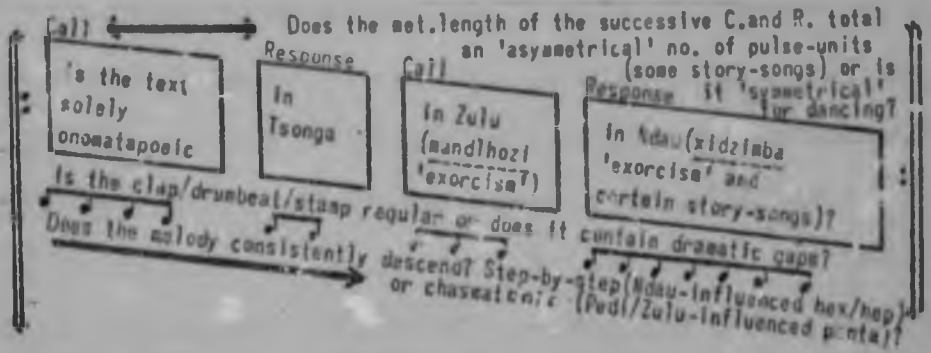

Fig.2 Function-derived musical characteristics

Terminology

The term 'novice' is herein employed to describe entrants of either girls' or boys' initiation schools, and it accurately depicts their condition -- i.e., newly arrived at the rites of passage (the term 'initiate' would infer passage through rites).

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5. The term 'cycle' in this context is used by David Rycroft throughout his article "Tribal Style and Free Expression", African Music, Vol. I, No. 1, 1954, pp. 16-27.
6. The term 'circular' form is used by David Rycroft in his article "Nguni Vocal Polyphony", Journal of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. XIX, 1967, p. 103.

In order to clearly distinguish between the two schools, the former will be referred to as the puberty school and the latter as the circumcision school. It will be later stressed that girls often attend after puberty, up to the time of marriage.

Because the term 'witchdoctor' is derogatory and at best refers to only one function of traditional practitioners, the terms 'herbalist', or 'doctor', or their vernacular equivalents will be used instead.

The term hand-piano, while somewhat outmoded, is used here in preference to the now generally accepted (by Europeans) mbira, both because the latter term is unknown to the Tsonga (thus offering no vernacular advantage), and in order to avoid pairing two African terms for the same Tsonga instrument (the Tsonga recognise only the term timbila, which unfortunately resists Anglicization because among most other Southern African groups it refers to a type of xylophone which the Tsonga call mohambi).

Tsonga words used within the text of the chapters are underlined, but Tsonga song-words which are set in and grouped as a body, are not. In order to avoid confusion, Portuguese and Latin words occurring near underlined Tsonga terms are not underlined.

Acknowledgements

For translations and orthographical advice, the writer is indebted to Mr C.T.D. Marivate of the University of South Africa; Mr J. Maphophe of the Tsonga Cultural Academy: the Reverend R. Cuénod, author of The Tsonga-English Dictionary; Mr P. Cuénod, wildlife authority; and the late Miss P.D. Beuchat of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Expressions of gratitude are due the following: for guidance during formal music studies in London, composer Alec Rowley and clarinettist Frederick Thurston; for similar guidance in the United States, composer Dr Frederick Fox and musicologist Dr Glenn Glasow; for advice and the loan of private tapes during preliminary studies in African music, the Reverend Dr A.M. Jones and Dr Anthony King in London, Gilbert Rouget in Paris, and Abdoulaye Diop in Dakar.

Particular thanks are due to Dr Nicolas England for checking the musical transcriptions; to Dr Hugh Tracey and Andrew Tracey for advice and the use of the facilities of the International Library of African Music, Roodepoort; to my thesis supervisor, Dr John Blacking; and to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (N.Y.) and the University of the Witwatersrand for grants which made this study possible.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

(given only for sounds where the reader might be in doubt)

c	as 'ch' in church
g	as 'g' in get
h	always as an independent aspirate, never as in the English combinations 'th' or 'sh'
q	rather like 'k' but with a click
sw	as 'sw' but slightly whistled
x	as 'sh' in shut
y	as 'y' in yes

Stress generally falls on the penultimate syllable.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA

Historical Background

The Tsonga are a Bantu-speaking Southern African people of whom about 1,200,000 live in Mozambique, and a further 500,000 live in the Republic of South Africa. They appear to be linguistically and culturally distinct from the Tonga of Rhodesia, Zambia, and the Inhambane area, but more will be said about this in the Conclusion of the thesis. An early possible mention occurs in a book first published at Lisbon in 1609: "In some of these lands other tongues are spoken, especially the botonga, and it is the reason why they call these lands Botonga and their inhabitants Botongas."[1]

Commencing in 1815, invading Zulu under the warlords Zwagendaba, Shaka, and Soshangane (it is from the latter that the term Shangana or Shangaan derives) caused the westerly-situated Nhlanganu clan to flee from Mozambique into "the hitherto-unpopulated Low Veld ... in the present Pilgrimsrest district, in which they are mainly congregated

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1. Dos Santos, J., Ethiopia Oriental, Reprint, Biblioteca dos Classicos Portuguezes, Lisboa, 1891, pp. 199-200.

today",[2] and the ranks of these first Tsonga immigrants were soon swelled by a steady influx from other areas. The immigrant Tsonga, being located inland and to the north of most Southern African tribes, were one of the last to come under European influence. The first substantial contact with them was established by emigrant white farmers under Potgieter, who had trekked northwards between the Vet and Vaal Rivers, crossing the latter where Potchefstroom now stands. The Transvaal trekkers, after first scattering the Ndebele under Mzilikazi, encountered several splintered Tswana tribes in the Western Transvaal. Proceeding to Ohrigstad and Lydenburg in 1845 they met the Pedi there, and eventually the Tsonga and the Venda in the north, the Swazi in the east, the Zulu in the south-east, and the Mapoch Ndebele in the central Transvaal.

In 1853 a Volksraad Resolution instructed the Commandants of the Republic of the Transvaal to grant lands to the Bantu 'conditional on good behaviour', ignoring the fact that the Bantu, of course, already occupied these lands. In 1881 a Native Location Commission appointed by the Pretoria Convention proposed the assignment of 'equitable locations, with due regard to actual occupation', but in 1899 the Anglo-Boer War commenced.

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2. Van Warmelo, N.J., Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1935, p. 91.



Fig.3 Map showing area inhabited by the Shangana-Tsonga

Another Native Location Commission was appointed in 1905, three years after the war's end, and their report (submitted in 1907) dealt conclusively with all Transvaal locations except those at Lichtenburg, Rustenburg, and

Marico, all of which had been prescribed by the previous Commission.

Today the Transvaal Tsonga occupy a 780,000-morgen homeland (annexed in part from Vendaland) largely concentrated in two major blocks bordering on the Kruger National Park, and the eastern Tsonga occupy practically all of Mozambique south of the Rio Save.

Since the overlordship of Soshangane came to an end, the Tsonga have not constituted a permanent and powerful political unit, but have been loosely sub-divided into those same clans that existed prior to the Nguni upheaval. These westward-migrating clans settled in latitudes of the Transvaal corresponding to those of their former homeland, and, today, a south-to-north traveller on either side of the border would encounter a 'spectrum' of Tsonga clans, each related to a similar clan residing across the border. Thus while the Transvaal Tsonga represent distinct groups within one linguistic and cultural unit, they do not themselves constitute a distinct branch of it. N.J. Van Warmelo considers that "... the Tsonga in the Transvaal are, with some exceptions, not organized into tribes at all, but represent a large formless population, the make-up of which almost defies analysis. Apart from the few Tsonga chiefs, the bulk of them live under headmen of no real rank or standing ...".[3]

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3. Van Warmelo, N.J., op. cit., p. 90.

Most of the large Tsonga areas in the Transvaal are in fact each ruled today by a Chief whose predecessors were Pretoria-appointed, and this Chief is usually "succeeded by his brothers in turn, only when the last brother has died does the succession revert to the sons of the eldest" (Schapera,[4] quoting Junod). Each Chief presides over a council of local headmen, and periodically meets with neighbouring Chiefs to discuss administration problems, boundary disputes, and other matters. Recent political developments (1969) have been the establishment of a Matshangana Territorial Authority at Giyani, the formation of a six-man Executive Committee functioning as a cabinet, and the creation of a separate Matshangana Government Service as an interim step towards the Transkei-type of internal self-rule based on a Legislative Assembly.

In spite of the century-old dispersal of various Tsonga clans, and their subsequent rehabilitation within a new ecological and ethnological environment, many of the various styles of Tsonga music in the Transvaal today are identical to that of the Tsonga of Mozambique in melody, rhythm, repertoire, and social function, but enriched by Pedi, Venda, and other new influences.

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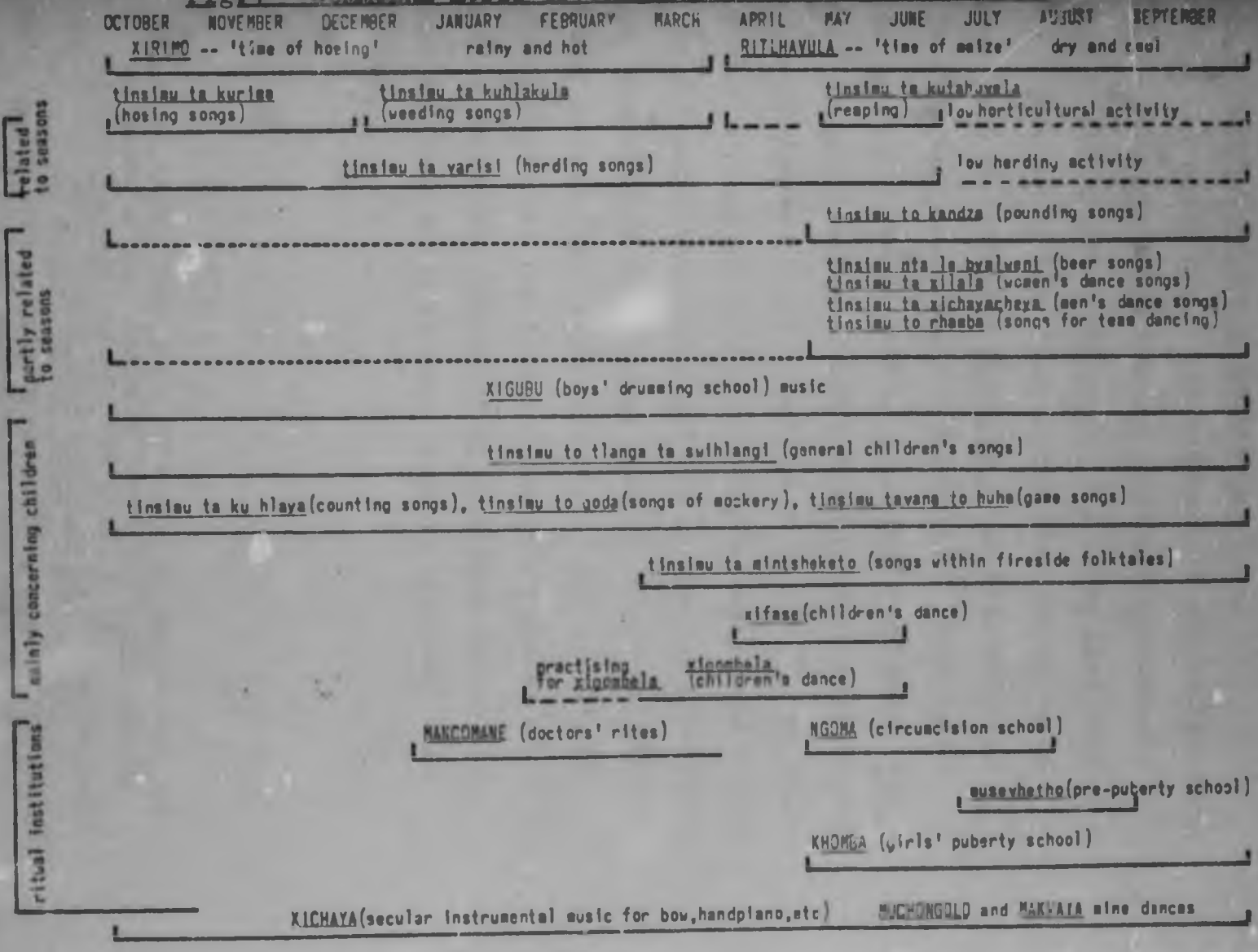
4. Schapera, I., The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa, Maskew Miller, Ltd., Cape Town, 1966, p. 175, quoting Junod.

The Influence of Seasonal Change on Music Performance

The seasons of the year (kana hikwahu a lembeni) are a limiting facto in the performance of Tsonga vocal music, for periods of maximum horticultural activity lend themselves naturally to periods of minimun musical activity. Certain musical taboos depend upon the social implications of the seasons. For instance, immediately after the harvest no communal vocal music or drum-playing may take place within earshot of the beer-brewing preparations, because "the beer would turn sour". We give below the Tsonga month-names and their literal translations, followed by a calendar.

Nhlangulu (October): 'arrival of the rains';
Hukuri (November): 'month of the baby chickens', Summer begins;
N'wedzamhala (December): 'month of the baby antelopes';
Sunguti (January): 'the beginning' (European-influenced nomenclature);
Nyenyenyani (February): 'month of the small birds';
Nyanyankulu (March): 'month of the big birds', Autumn begins and brings the first green maize cobs;
Dzivamusoko (April): 'the rainbow at the end of the rain', roof-repairing gets under way;
Mudyaxihi (May): 'the reaping of many varieties of fresh food', the harvest includes maize, pumpkin, squash, ground-nuts, sugar-cane;
Khotavuxika (June): 'the clinging of winter';
Mawuwani (July): 'the wind goes ma-wu, ma-wa!', reaping has finished, and livestock graze unrestrictedly on the harvested fields;
Mharwuri (August): 'the wind goes mha-rwu, mha-rwu!';
Ndzhati (September): 'the line across the path', Spring begins.

Fig.4 COMMUNAL MUSIC OF THE BHAVGANA-TSONGA: A CALENDAR.



Social Background Of Music Performance

Comparing the loosely-subdivided and rather formless structure of Tsonga society since its century-old split, to that of the neighbouring Venda, one finds that with the latter "there is an important social division in Venda society between commoners (vhasiwana) and the children of chiefs and their descendants (vhakololo)"[5] which is reflected in many Venda musical practices, and that "domba (girls' initiation school) and tshikona (the national reed-pipe dance) represent the interests of rulers."[6] No such sharp distinctions exist within Tsonga society, and thus it is, for instance, that Transvaal Tsonga musical expeditions do not "consolidate the lineage ties of rulers and their families ....and their right to rule",[7] but extend and reinforce disparate but parallel ascending chains of administrative authority, unrelated by blood ties (ascending, because a Tsonga ruler is more 'council chairman' than dictator).

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5. Blacking, John, "The Role of Music in the Culture of the Venda of the Northern Transvaal", Studies in Ethnomusicology, No. 2, New York, p. 21.
6. Blacking, John, Venda Children's Songs, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1967, p. 21.
7. Note that Blacking is here describing one of the effects of Venda musical expeditions (see page 35 of his article mentioned in footnote 5).

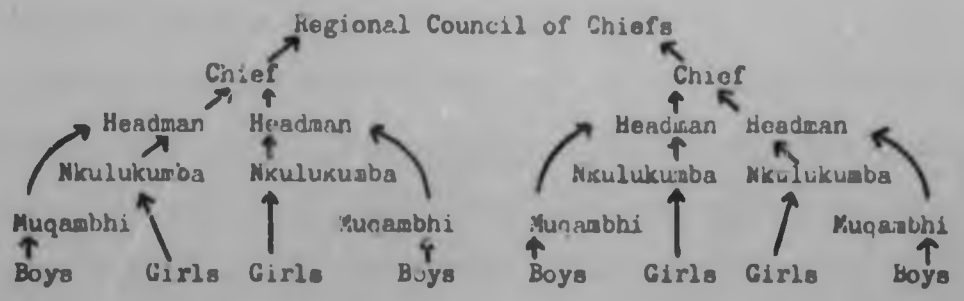


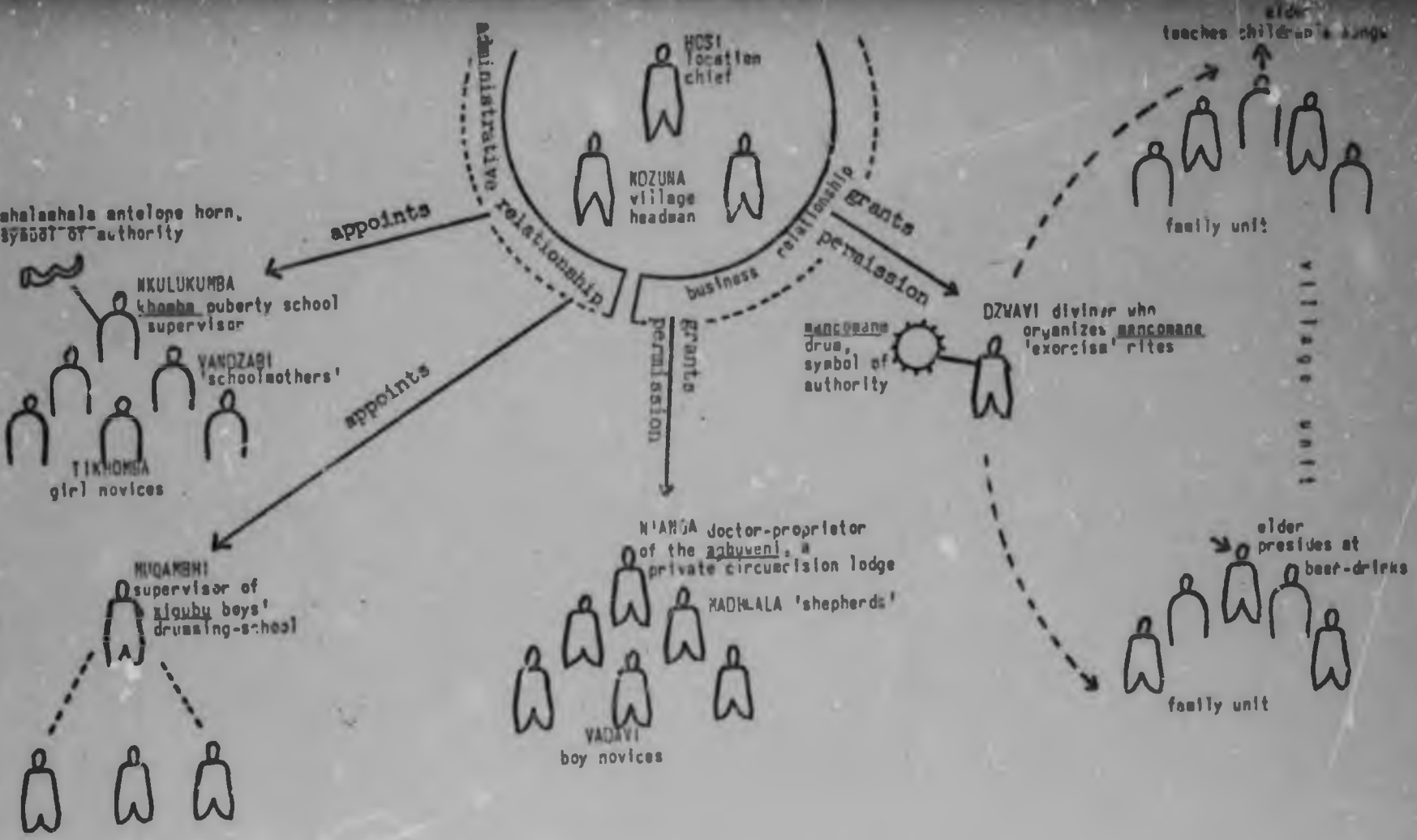
Fig.5 Ascending chain of Tsonga administrative authority (nkulukumba is the puberty school supervisor, muqambhi is the drumming school supervisor)

The puberty school supervisor (often the wife of the Chief or the Headman -- nkulukumba means 'the big one') is a respected village elder appointed annually by the rulers. She possesses an antelope horn (mhalamhala) which constitutes her symbol of authority and which is used to summon the beer-bringing novices. The drumming school supervisor (muqambhi means 'the song-maker') is a local musician selected from among the Chief's aides, and he, too, is appointed annually. These two school appointees are integral links in the ascending chain of Tsonga administrative authority, and as such wield a certain amount of administrative power.

Two further musical officials must be taken into account -- the doctor-proprietor (n'anga) of a circumcision lodge and the diviner-organizer (dzwavi) of an 'exorcism' rite. These are often outsiders 'licensed' by the Chief in return for beer, cattle or cash payment, and the extent of

their musical influence lies somewhere between that of the puberty school supervisor and that of the drumming school supervisor. Seeing that the n'anga organizes his private circumcision school once every four or five years, and that the dzwavi organizes his 'exorcism' rites nightly for a considerable part of the year, one is inclined to rank the latter above the former, musically. Circumcision songs are secret and no drums may be used, but 'exorcism' songs are widely-known and play a great part in 'exorcism' rites -- the dzwavi possessing a set of four mancomane (tambourine-shaped drums) which constitute his symbol of authority and which are used by trainee-diviners to produce the appropriate 'exorcism' rhythms.

Our diagram conveys the social relationships of these musical officials (Fig. 5).


HOSI
location
chief
NDZUNA
village
headman
administrative relationship
business relationship
appoints
grants
permission
shalashala antelope horn,
symbol of authority
NKULUKUMBA
khomba puberty school
supervisor
YANDZABI
'schoolmothers'
TIKHOMBA
girl novices
MUQAMBHI
supervisor of
xigubu boys'
drumming-school
N'ANGA doctor-proprietor
of the ngbuveni, a
private circumcision lodge
MADHLALA 'shepherds'
VADZAVI
boy novices
DZWAVI diviner who
organizes nangomane
'exorcism' rites
nangomane
drum,
symbol of
authority
elder
teaches children & sings
family unit
village unit
elder
presides at
beer-drinks
family unit

11

Examples of Music As An Index
Of Affluence And Power Balance/Imbalance

As with the neighbouring Venda, where "music is an audible and visible sign of social and political groupings".[8] Tsonga music is a significant index of affluence and power balance/imbalance. For instance, whether a community hears songs from (and boys learn the xitende bow from) a competent xilombe (professional wandering minstrel) depends on whether Chief X is sufficiently affluent to offer food, accommodation, and other hospitality to such a person. Chiefly generosity may also depend upon whether the xilombe offers a supply of politically-interesting musically-rendered news, such as that 'there is always muchongolo dancing at Chief Y's location'. Whether this news is a fact depends upon Chief Y's supply of that economically- and nutritionally-important product, beer. Chief Y's supply of beer is in turn dependent upon the extent of his indirect control over puberty school, circumcision school, drumming school, and 'exorcism' activities, and may or may not surpass Chief X's supply of beer. In either case, music is one index of affluence and power balance/imbalance.

The local standing of a muqambhi (drumming

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8. Blacking, John, Venda Children's Songs, Witwatersrand University Press, 1967, p. 23.

school supervisor) may depend on the musical enthusiasm and regular attendance of his student-drummers, and the question of whether a drumming school can equip its team for competitive xifase dancing 'away' and can well afford to entertain a visiting team 'at home', may become a matter of considerable import to the Chief himself. Similarly, the outcome of the adults' competitive team-dance (rhambela phikezano) frequently bears implications beyond that of the food and drink involved.

The author became curious as to why the Northern Transvaal village of Madonse was renowned as a popular rendezvous for beer dancing and 'exorcism' dancing, and why its Headman -- Nhongani Chauke -- was a man possessed of considerable regional prestige. The reason became clear during a visit timed to coincide with the actual dancing, when a full complement of drums was in evidence. The drums were large hand-carved Venda-type drums and much admired, having been especially commissioned from a Venda drum-maker at a cost of R15, R25, and R35 respectively (one S.A. Rand = 70 U.S. cents), and paid for through a form of local taxation. Nhongani Chauke's regional status coincided with the status of his villagers' musical activities, an outcome which had not been overlooked during the original negotiations for the drums.

At the annual Shingwidzi Fair in the Northern Transvaal, Tsonga villagers compete both in the display of dancing and in the display and sale of pottery, carving, and beadwork. Of considerable importance to this annual event is the skilled xylophone-playing of Headman Maphophe, a proportion of whose subjects obtain government transportation (via specially provided trucks) to Shingwidzi mainly on account of their ruler's musicianship. These facts (the xylophone-playing and the special attention) enhance the all-round prestige of Maphophe's village, which prestige has had such far-reaching repercussions as to attract brides for the young men, to engender the widening of an access road, the boring of an additional water-hole, and other visible signs of affluence and power.

Tsonga music, regarded in the light of its seasonal applications and discrete social functions, comprises a variety of musical styles that mirror the occupational roles, rivalries, and social allegiances of its performers. Regarded as a whole, however, it exhibits several characteristics[9] which distinguish it from the music of neighbouring

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9. These characteristics are listed in the Conclusion to this thesis, and here it will suffice to mention that Tsonga music frequently utilizes a relatively complex formal structure beyond that of single-call/single-response, and its song-themes frequently center around 'humanized' legendary bird/animal characters of which the famed Tsonga folktale heritage is the wellspring.

peoples and which, like the famed Tsonga genealogy-recitations,[10] fulfill the chauvinistic function of re-affirming for congregating immigrant participants the linguistic and cultural unity of a dispersed and widely-separated people.

Frequently, large bodies of ancient, elaborate Tsonga story-songs and game-songs can be found surviving intact amidst an alien polyglot (with versions differing only slightly throughout the Northern Transvaal, Eastern Transvaal, Natal and Mozambique). Perhaps this is as it should be for, like eventual fulfillment of Tsonga aspirations for genuine political independence and adequate, watered homelands, they belong to the children of tomorrow.

Social and musical acculturation in Northern and Southern 'Tsongaland', and the configuration of musical scale usage in the Northern Transvaal and environs, are given in Figures 32 and 33 of the Summary and Conclusions.

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10. "The Tsonga ... have a remarkable knowledge of their family genealogies." (Blacking, John, Venda Children's Songs, Witwatersrand University Press, 1967, p. 31.)

CHAPTER II

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA

The Tsonga musical instruments have been previously described by Kirby,[1] and this chapter is confined mainly to supplementary information.

Ndzumba Drum (see Plates 1 and 2)

The Tsonga ndzumba drum is a fairly large goblet-shaped drum used primarily in the girls' puberty school, and it is often paired with a smaller drum called ndzumbana.

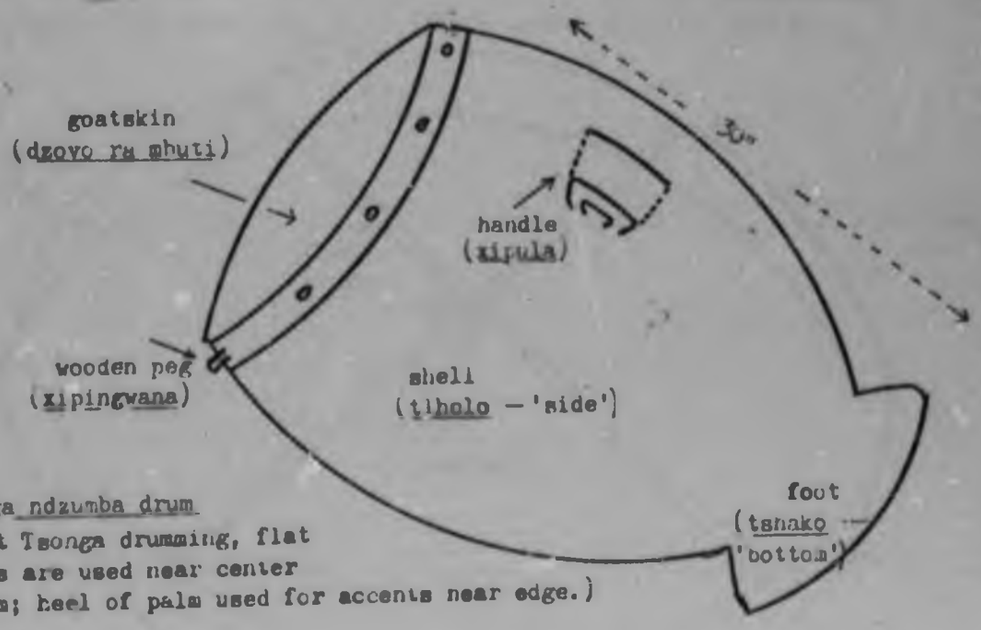

Fig.7 Tsonga ndzumba drum
(In most Tsonga drumming, flat fingers are used near center of drum; heel of palm used for accents near edge.)

1. Kirby, Percival, The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa, Witwatersrand University Press, 1965 (reprint from 1934).

Drum-making is a dying art among the Tsonga -- existing ndzumba drums are treasured relics of former times and are usually communal property. They are subject to many taboos, one of which is that women are forbidden to peer within the round hole in the foot of the drum.

Ncomane Drum (see Plates 3 to 7)

The Tsonga ncomane drum is a hand-held stick-played tambourine used exclusively in the 'exorcism' dance to which it gave its name -- mancomane. It is usually the private property of a doctor-diviner (dzwavi) for whom it constitutes a symbol of authority. Four drums of equal size but disparate tuning are used together at one time, in conjunction with a large hemispherical drum (ngoma) which provides the bass.

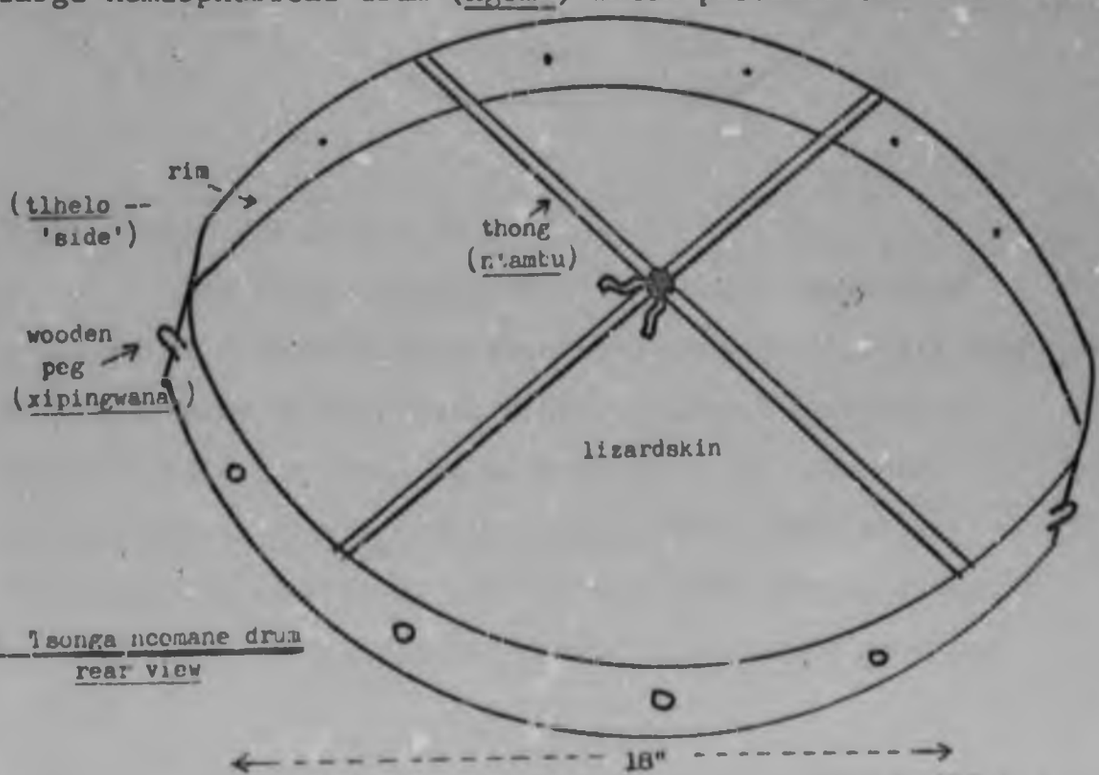

Fig.8 Tsonga ncomane drum rear view

Ngoma Drum (see Plates 8 and 9)

The ngoma used by the Tsonga is obtained by purchase or barter from the neighbouring Venda, who still boast craftsmen who manufacture it. Possessing art stically-carved handles which frame the shell, these drums come in a 'family' of large, medium, and small (xingomana). When available, the three sizes are used simultaneously to provide rhythmic accompaniment at beer-drink dances.

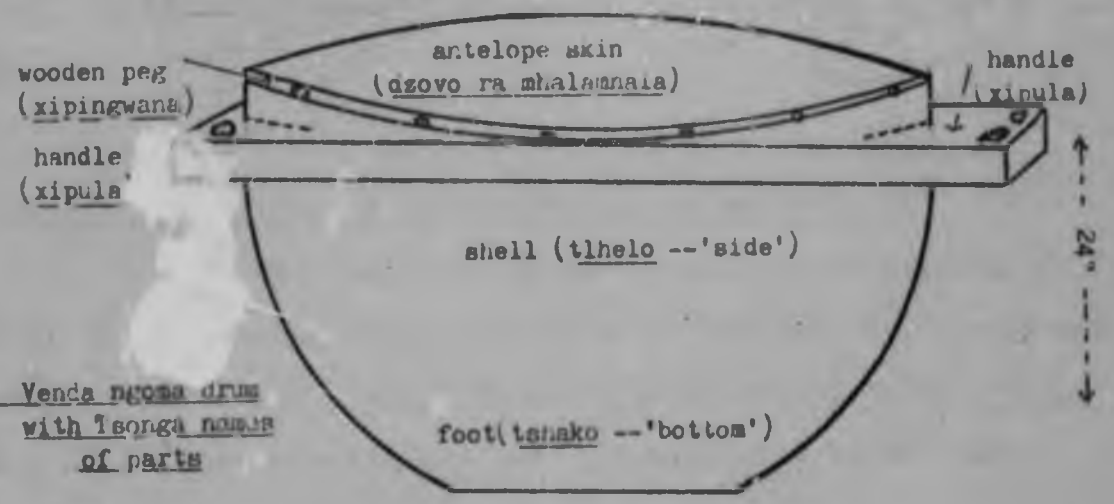

Fig.9 Venda ngoma drum with Tsonga names of parts

Xigubu Drum (see Plates 10 to 13)

The Tsonga xigubu drum is a double-membraned cylindrical drum made from discarded canisters of all sizes, and it is used in the boys' drumming school (xigubu) to which it gave its name, at beer-drink dances and mine dances, and at khomba and mancomane dances when other drums are not available. All Tsonga drums may be either hand-played or stick-played, depending upon the song and

upon the function. Tsonga drum usage is analyzed in Figure 29 of the Summary and Conclusions at the end of this thesis.

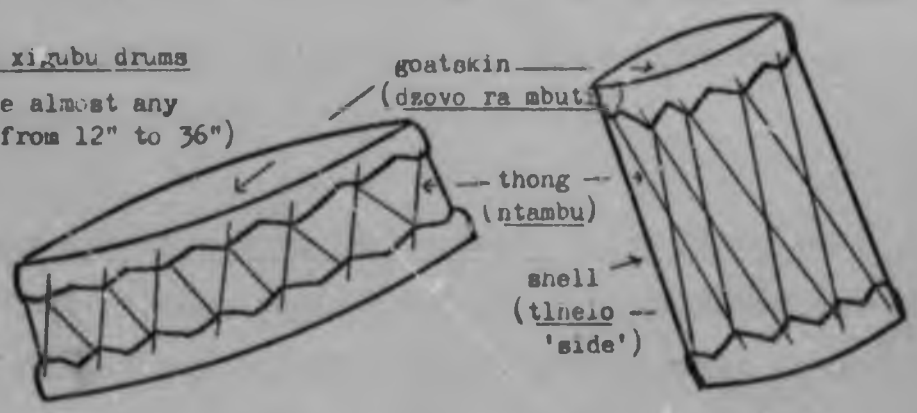

Fig.10 Tsonga xigubu drums (may be almost any size from 12" to 36")

Leg-rattles (Marhonge -- see Plates 14 and 15)

Tsonga women- and girl-dancers attach rattles to their calves, especially in dances of the puberty school and of the 'exorcism' rites. These rattles are called marhonge and their characteristic sound (chaka-chaka) serves for step-emphasis during intricate movements.

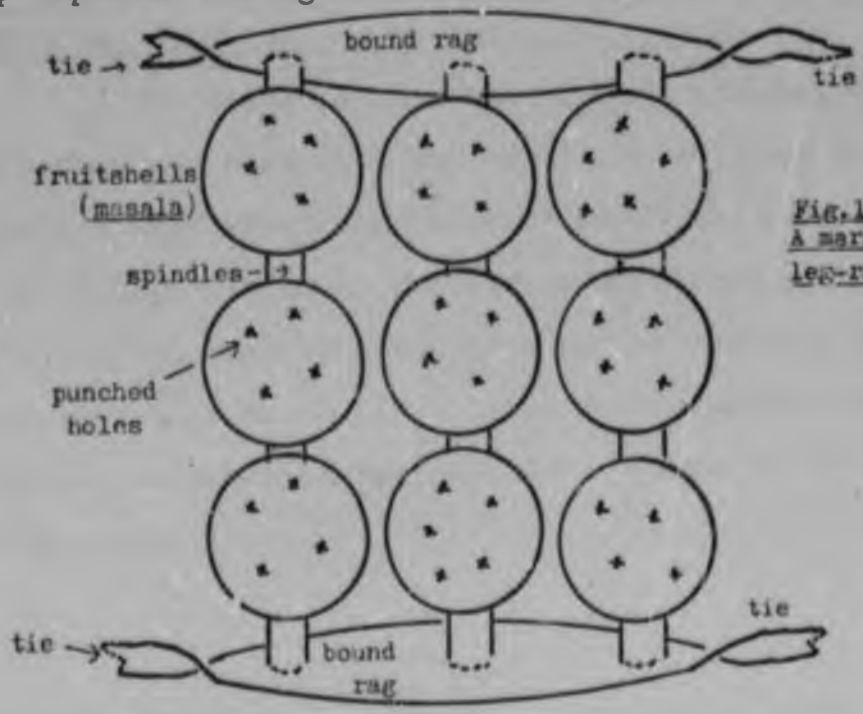

Fig.11
A marhonge
leg-rattle

Twelve or sixteen small fruitshells (masala) containing seeds are threaded in rows on to a square framework (rihlanga) to which tying cords are attacned. The rattles are rarely sold, discarded, or replaced, beirg considered repositories of 'ancestor-spirits'.

Side-blown Antelope Horn (Mhalamhala -- see Plate 16)

The Tsonga mhalamhala is a long hollowed antelope horn in which a square embouchure has been bored in the narrow (closed) end. It yields the 2nd and 3rd partials (8ve and 5th) with ease and the 4th partial (2nd 8ve) with some difficulty. Used exclusively in the girls' puberty school, the antelope horn is communal property in the custody of a school's supervisor (usually the Chief's wife -- nkulukumba), for it constitutes a symbol of authority.

Hand-piano (Timbila -- see Plates 17 to 20)

The Tsonga of Mozambique 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 played by the thumbs and forefingers. The keys of a specimen obtained from Daniel Muphahlo of Maboti (Mozambique) in March, 1970, were manufactured from hammered-out umbrella spokes, and arranged in the following tuning-layout:

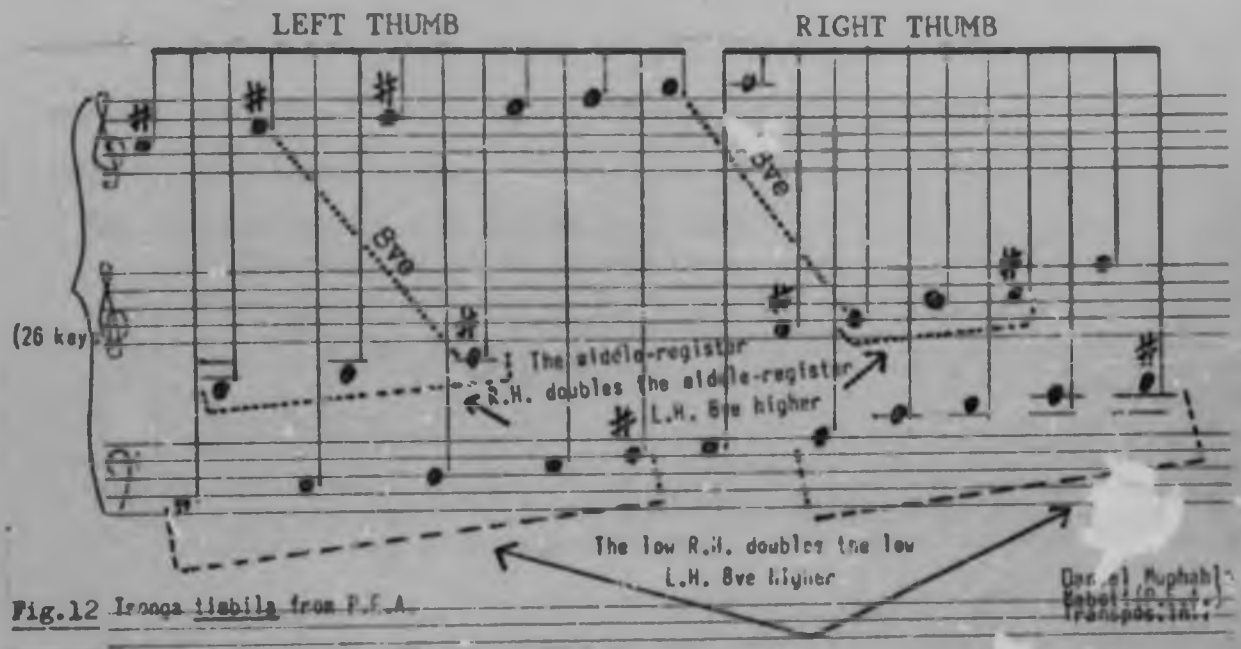

Fig.12 Isonga timbila from P.F.A.

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 appearance exactly resembles the Tsonga instrument.[2] The Tsonga 17-key timbila is said by the Tsonga to have been passed on to the Venda, where it is called mbila tshipai. The present writer obtained many Tsonga timbila in various areas of the Northern Transvaal,

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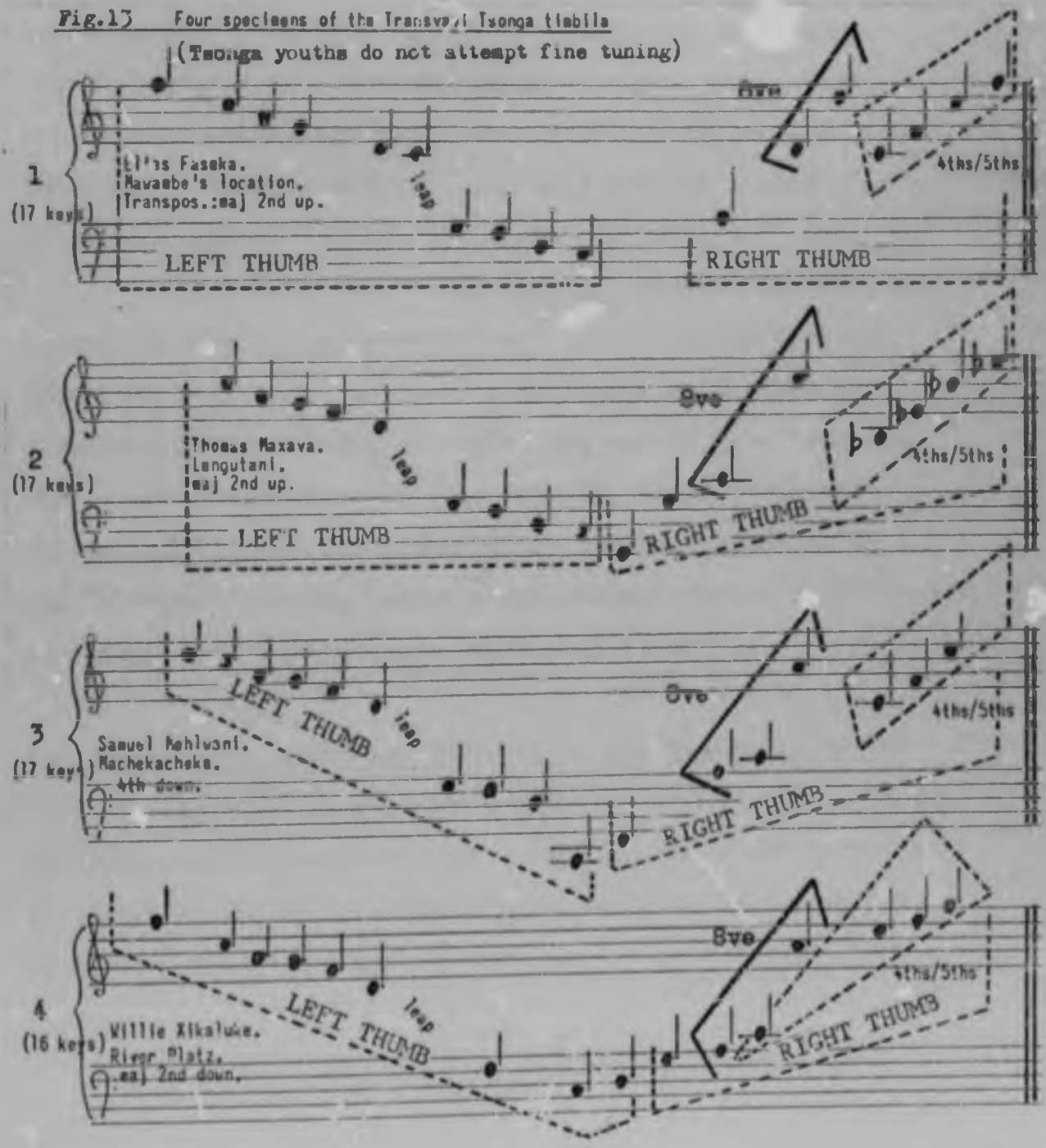
2. Huskisson, Yvonne, "The Social and Ceremonial Music of the Pedi" (A Ph.D. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg), November, 1958, Plate 23. The present writer is preparing a paper on Tsonga timbila music and its relationship to the hand-piano music of neighbouring groups.

1968-70, and the tuning-layout (carefully verified by the owner) in most of them shows a consistency sufficient to warrant naming it a 'standard' Tsonga <u>timbila</u> tuning-layout, as shown below.

Fig.13 Four specimens of the Transvaal Tsonga timbila



In all four of the above timbila tunings, the 9 or 10 left-hand keys form a gradually-descending pentatonic scale terminating on low DC (in No. 4 these two tones are reversed). After this descent the pitch of the keys rises again in the right hand, a factor which gives the Tsonga key-arrangement its characteristic V-shape. Note, however, that the ascent in the right hand is not a gradual one, but consists first of sharply-rising adjacent (or almost adjacent) octaves followed by a group of 4ths and 5ths.

Music for the Tsonga timbila (heard, recorded, and transcribed by the present writer) is frequently polyrhythmic, each thumb independently following a separate rhythmic pattern. The player's sung melody is a composite whose constituent tones emerge from the whole. Although Tsonga timbila melodic patterns are governed somewhat by the 'standard' tuning-layout shown above, players occasionally rearrange individual keys to suit desired tunes.

10- and 12-slat Xylophone (Mohambi -- see Plates 21 to 24)

Mohambi is the name applied by the Tsonga to Chopi and Ndau calabash-resonated xylophones. While not manufactured by the Tsonga, the mohambi has long been played by them, for Junod reported its widespread use in 1897.[3] In

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3. Junod, Henri, Les Chants et les Contes Des Ba-Ronga, Bridel & Cie., Lausanne, 1897, p. 24.

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 'spouses', i.e., little 'husband and wife'. The mohambi is supported off the ground (or braced against the abdomen) by a curved wooden frame known as xipula, and the slats are lightly struck with two mallets (timhandze). 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.).

3-hole Transverse Flute (Xitiringo -- see Plates 25 and 26)

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, humming and grunting 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 old men to dance, laugh, and clap. Xitiringo tunings have been the subject of a thorough study by Kirby, himself a flautist.[4]

Notched Friction-bow (Xizambi -- see Plates 27 to 32)

Little has been written of the notched, mouth-resonated friction-bow, yet it is the bow at which the Tsonga, of all the Bantu peoples, excel the most. The Tsonga xizambi is a 14"-to-19" bow activated not by plucking or striking but by rubbing its notched arch (mphonwani -- cut from the mphata tree, Brachylaena discolor DC.) with a 14" rattlestick (fahlwana). The latter is of particularly interesting construction, as shown in the diagram.

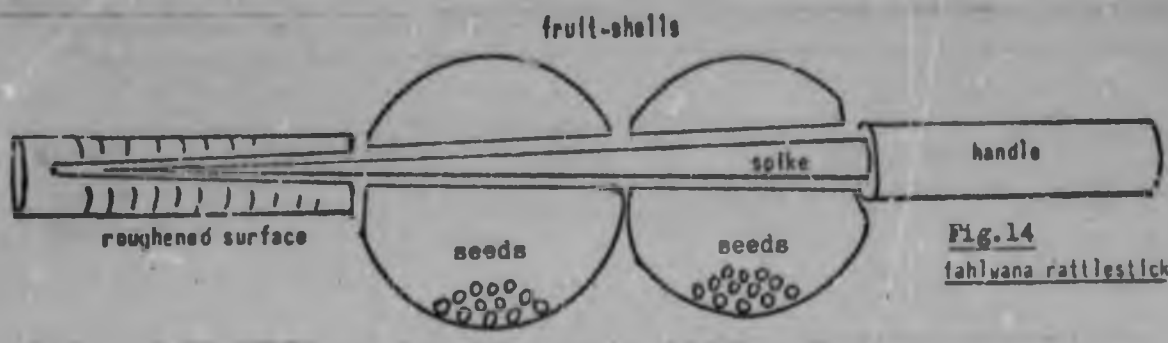


Fig.14
fahlwana rattlestick

4. Kirby, Percival, The Musical Instruments of the Native tive Races of South Africa, Witwatersrand University Press ress, 1965 (reprint from 1934), pp. 88-134.

The 'string of the xizambi bow is a strip of palm leaf (nala, Typha capensis), and in addition to its open tone it may be stopped one to four times by the fingers.

The vibrating nala emits the fundamental. This fundamental sounds continually below the resonated tones during playing. The buccal cavity, although it cannot affect the continually sounding fundamental, adds penetrating 3rd, 4th, 6th, or 7th harmonics (the 2nd is generally too low for buccal resonation, and the 5th is discarded in favour of fingering) above and simultaneously with it, divisions in the accompanying diagram indicating by approximately how many cents finger-stopping can increase the frequency-level of a given harmonic.

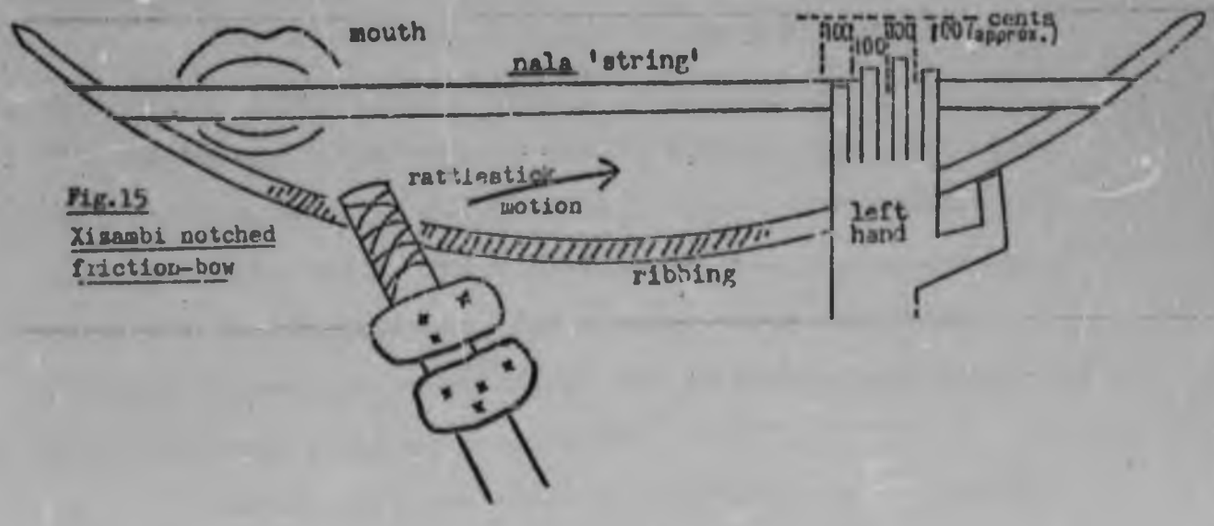
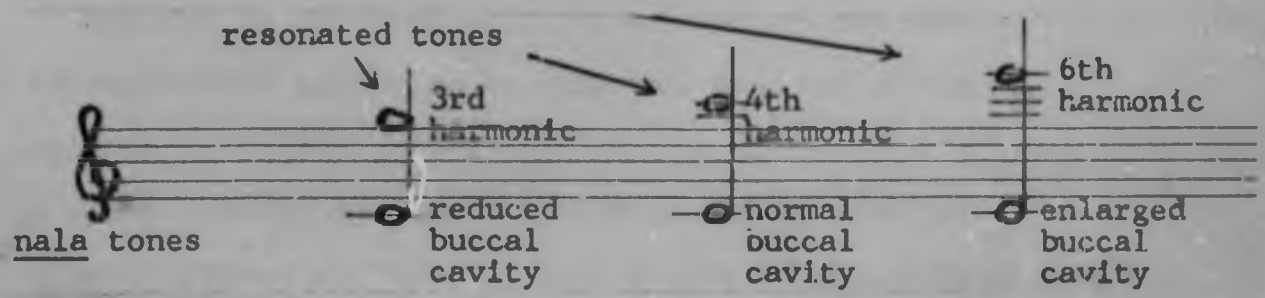
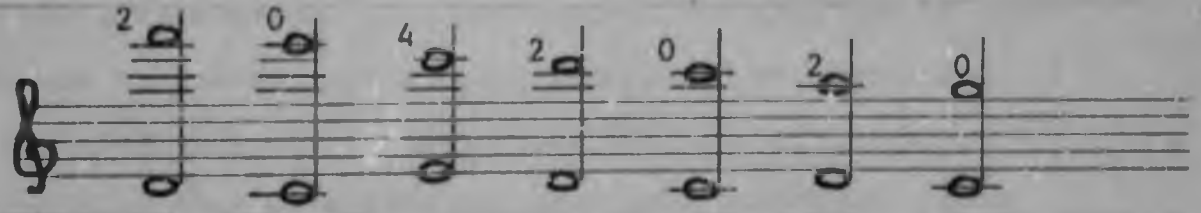


Fig.15
Xizambi notched friction-bow

The commonly-used harmonic combinations are given here. Only the 'open' position (non-fingered) is shown, and it should be realized that by the use of fingering each combination can be raised from two to five semitones.



Appropriate fingering can produce the commonly-used tone-row given here, and it will also be seen that by a lateral hand-shift the ED fingering 4-2 can produce F and E♭.



Bow tension is dictated by two factors: if the nala is too taut it will snap; if too slack its harmonics will be false. Thus various limitations -- nala fragility, finger-reach, etc. -- all combine to quasi-standardize xizambi pitch, and a correctly-adjusted instrument generally emits the fourth harmonic (two octaves above the faint fundamental and one octave above the unused second harmonic) at a frequency-level of between 800 and 1100.

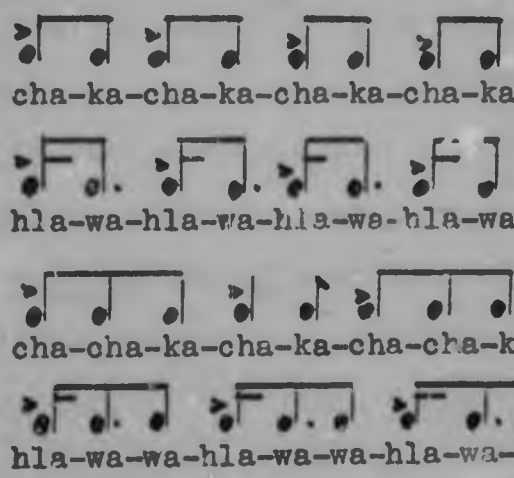
Certain players re-adjust the bow tension slightly

for particular tunes, and others change to a smaller or larger xizambi. This does not constitute mere register selection, for the altered string-length/buccal cavity ratio favours some intervals at the expense of others -- to achieve an interval of a 3rd at the top, one may intentionally sacrifice an interval of a 4th at the bottom.

Asked to demonstrate a sustained tone, the xizambi player will oblige with a tone of any desired length, for there is no breath required. This sustained tone will emerge as a series of rhythmic pulses corresponding to the motion of the rattlestick. These rhythmic pulses contribute to the effectiveness of a performance for they may be equidistant or uneven, dynamically punctuated or unaccented, of restricted sweep or following the full arc of the bow, grouped in twos or threes and combining any of the aforegoing.

Xizambi players often sing solo to their own accompaniment, but, because mouth-resonation must cease, this accompaniment consists solely of the rasp, the rattle, and the continuously-sounding second harmonic of the 'open 'string'. The player resumes resonation upon completion of the song, and thus the performance consists of alternating instrumental and vocal versions. In other types of performances, the player accompanies group singing or plays in duet with another xizambi player.

Xizambi players do not necessarily learn the instrument from their fathers or serve an apprenticeship. Promising aspirants are generally taught (ku yimbisa, to teach a musical instrument) to construct and play the xizambi by another player, during the period between when they have ceased to tend goats and not yet commenced to look after cattle. They learn by the use of rhythmic nonsense syllables such as hlawa-hlawa, from which the rattlestick (fahlwana) derives its name. Typical learning-rhythms are shown.



A xizambi player is often the musician/composer connected with a chief's 'inner circle', and he provides music to entertain distinguished visitors. On the other hand, but less frequently, he may be a wandering minstrel (xilombe) who makes his way from village to village, dancing, singing, and playing in return for food, drink, and shelter. Less frequently still, he may be a recluse

(nwarimatsi). Literally, this term means 'child-of-the-left-handed-one', but it may refer to social attitudes toward left- and right-hand functions. There is a Tsonga saying which runs thus:

Ku senga homu hi rimatsi
To milk a cow on the left side (wrongly)

Braced Gourd-bow (Xitende -- see Plates 33 to 36)

The xitende braced gourd-bow is the earliest-mentioned stringed instrument of the Tsonga, having been described in 1897 by Junod.[5] A 'kaffir' braced gourd-bow was described by a Jesuit priest in 1723,[6] -- this may have belonged to the Tsonga rather than to the Zulu, Swazi, or any other Southern African coastal tribe, for Rycroft states that the umakhweyana braced gourd-bow of the Zulu and Swazi "was reputedly borrowed from the Tsonga of Mozambique in the nineteenth century."[7] The Venda dende, the Pedi sekgapa, and the Chopi tshitendole have been described by Kirby[8] and, going north from Southern Africa, we note that the Zambian Tonga call it kalumbu,[9] the Kenyan Mtembe call it

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5. Junod, Henri, Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Ronga, Bridel & Cie, Lausanne, 1897, p. 22.
6. Bonanni, F., Gabinetto armonico, Rome, 1723, p. 175.
7. Rycroft, David, "Nguni Polyphony", Journal of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. XIX, 1967, p. 96.
8. Kirby, Percival, op. cit., p. 205.
9. Rycroft, David, "Tribal Style and Free Expression", African Music, Vol. I, No. 1, 1954, p. 16.

ntono,[10] and that it appears in the Congo under the names of dumba, gedo, wangoloko, and andobu.[11]

The Tsonga xitende is cut from the maloha tree, and its copper wire (ritsaninga, 'string') is divided by a movable wire-loop to which is attached a calabash (xiphaphani). The string sections are tuned a minor 3rd apart and struck with a maize stalk (rihlangi), the player additionally opening and closing the calabash against his preferably-bare chest. The tuning is accomplished by twisting the knotted ends of the wire-loop within the interior of the calabash, and by sliding the wire loop and calabash up or down the bow as required, these two actions being known as ku gwimba.

Whereas the Tsonga, Venda, and the Zambian Tonga generally employ a minor 3rd tuning between the string-sections, the Pedi use a major 2nd, and the Mtende use a 4th. The two open tones of the braced gourd-bow are everywhere supplemented by an additional fingered tone, but whereas some Southern African groups finger the longer string-section, thus filling-in the open tones, the Tsonga and certain other groups finger the shorter string-section, thus placing the additional tone outside and above the open tones.

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10. Hyslop, Graham, "More Kenya Musical Instruments", African Music, Vol. II, No. 2, 1959, p. 24.
11. Laurenty, J.S., Les Chordophones du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, Tervuren, 1960, p. 14.

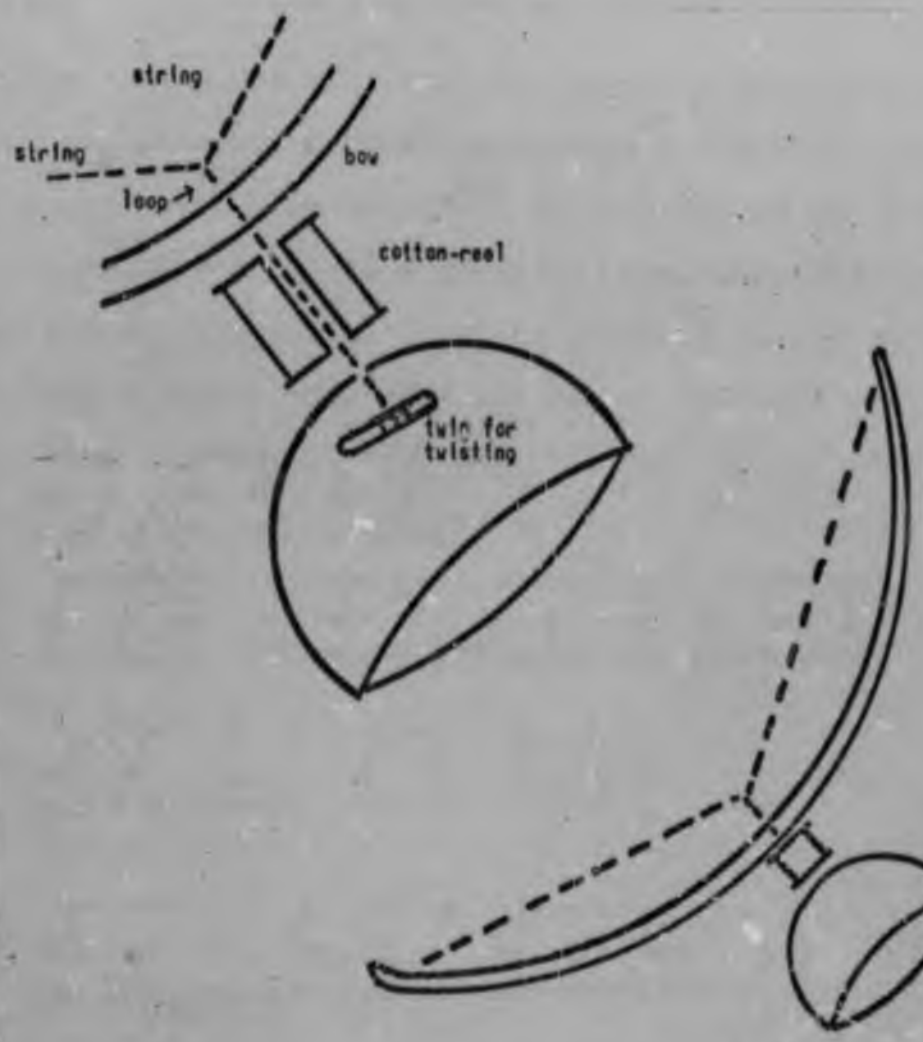
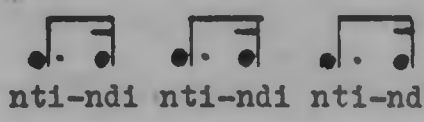
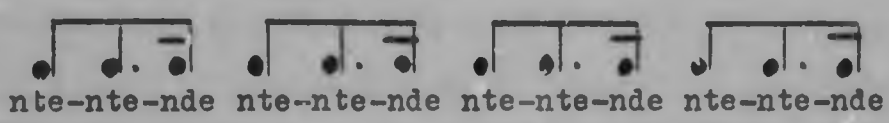


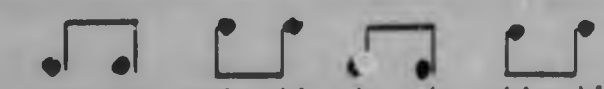
Fig.16 Xitende Braced Gourd bow of the Shangana-Tsonga

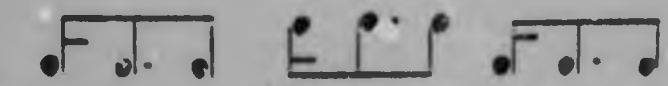
The xitende does not require mouth-resonation, and the player is therefore free to sing to his own accompaniment. The physical manipulation of the instrument is simple, and this leaves the player free to dance -- Tsonga xitende players are often wandering minstrels who dance and sing. They are usually extrovert types, and in this connection it has been commented that 'the dancing-

singing shaman probably owes his position as much to his forceful, possibly para-psychological personality traits as to his musical talents."[12] The arrival of the minstrel in the village attracts a group of boys, some of whom come carrying a xitende with which to practice the xitende learning rhythms, some of which are given below.


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

Finger-plucked Hollow Cane-bow (Mqangala -- see Plates 37 to 39)

The Tsonga mqangala is a mouth-resonated, finger-plucked bow made from hollow river-reed and strung with discarded fishing-cord. The name itself is a 'click' word, and the instrument may have been obtained from the neighbouring Zulu or Swazi, both of whom use 'clicks', use a

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12. Brandel, Rose, The Music of Central Africa, Nijhoff, The Hague, 1961, p. 37.

similar instrument, and use the name mqangala for that instrument. Among the Tsonga it is generally played by old men who alternately sing and play during performance. Among the Venda it is called lugube and is played mainly by girls and young married women. The Pondo and the Xhosa call it inkinge, and the Sotho call it lekope.[13] The fingering (machayele, from the Zulu verb -chaya, to play an instrument), extends to three positions in which the cord is depressed against the side of the bow, the mqangala being the only Tsonga bow whose lateral plane serves as a 'fingerboard'. The three positions -- sasekambana, mapokonyole, and matiringisi -- are named after the first, second, and third fingers respectively.



Fig.17 The Tsonga mqangala bow

13. Kirby, Percival, op. cit., p. 220.

Braced Thick-handled Musical Bow (Xipendana -- Plates 40-44)

The Tsonga name for the mouth-resonated, braced, thick-handled bow is xipendana (same as the Karanga name for it), and not sekgapa, as stated by Kirby.[14] This latter name is used by the Pedi for their braced gourd-bow (an entirely different instrument) but not at all by the Tsonga. While the Tsonga xipendana is played mainly by girls (often in tuned pairs), the Venda equivalent, which is called tshihwana, is played mainly by men and boys. The Pedi call it lekope (a term applied by the Sotho to their finger-plucked bow made from hollow river-reed) and play it in bands of up to six men,[15] the Chopi call it penda, the Swazi isitontolo, the Zulu isigomgomana, the Kwebo kedondolo, the Luvedu kashane, and the Sotho of Lesotho setolotolo.[16] Note that the Tsonga name, xipendana, is similar to that of their neighbours the Chopi of Mozambique, penda, and that the latter is similar to that used by the Rhodesian Karanga, with whom the Chopi are suspected of being related by virtue of their xylophone playing.

The Tsonga-constructed xipendana is flat-cut

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14. Kirby, op. cit., p. 228.
15. Huskisson, Yvonne, "The Social and Ceremonial Music of the Pedi" (A Ph.D. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg), November, 1958, Plate 22.
16. Kirby, op. cit., p. 228 .

except for a thick centre-portion (xipula) forming the handle. It is cut from the muluwa tree (Acacia ataxacantha), a thorn tree whose wood splits easily into thin strips. Muluwa is also used for making Tsonga winnowing baskets and, in heavier thicknesses, for Tsonga axe-handles. The 'string' is a length of thin copper wire, pulled in near its centre by a loop of thread. The latter is never tied to the bow-centre, but is held fast by the left-hand thumb and adjusted when re-tuning becomes necessary.

Plucking is achieved by the use of a safety-pin held in the right hand, the left hand supporting the bow. The longer string-length is uppermost and toward the player's left (facing the audience), an intermediate tone being produced from this half by the left-hand index finger.

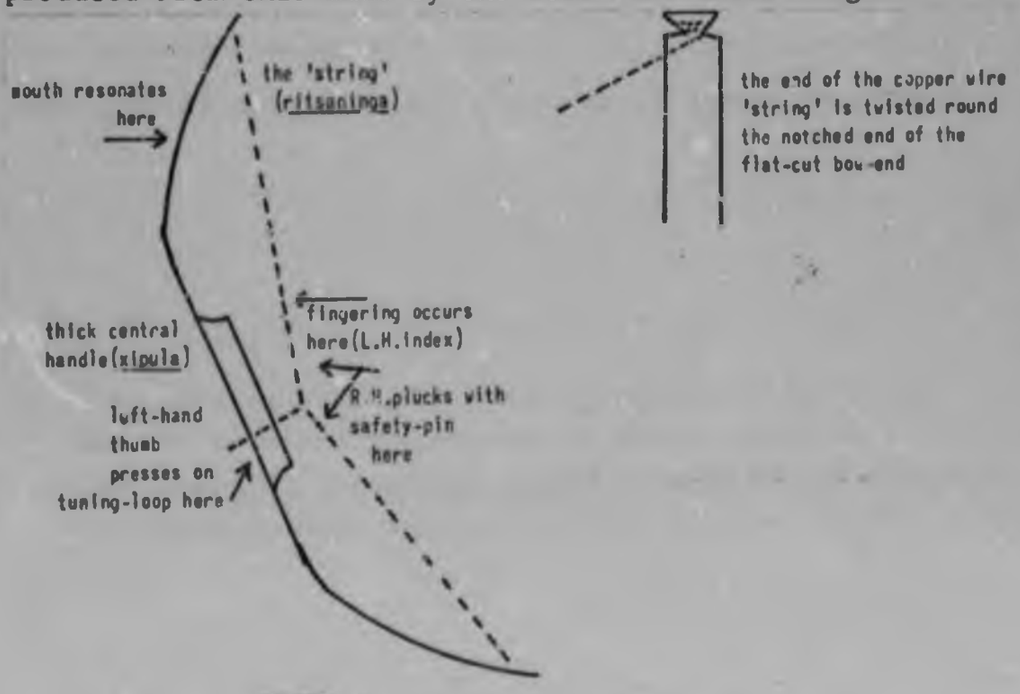

Fig.18 The xipendana mouth-resonated braced bow

Of the four types of Tsonga musical bow, the xizambi notched friction-bow is the only one for which a considerable repertoire of solo music exists, i.e., music that is not primarily intended as an accompaniment to song. It is also the bow possessing the greatest range[17] (over an octave), and the most distinctive tone-colour (rasp plus rattle plus resonation). The music of the xizambi notched friction-bow, as performed by seven Tsonga players, is described at length in Chapter IX, and the same chapter concludes with a discussion of possible relationships between communal vocal music and the natural harmonics of stretched strings as found in the musical bow. In Figure 28 of the Summary and Conclusions it will be demonstrated that Tsonga xizambi-players probably select those melodic possibilities and 'harmonic' characteristics of their instrument which most closely coincide with the norms of Tsonga vocal music.

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17. The occasional use, by Shona chimazambi-players, of the 7th harmonic is reported by Robert Kauffman in Multi-part Relationships in the Shona Music of Rhodesia, Ph.D thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970.

CHAPTER III

PRINCIPLES OF SHANGANA-TSONGA MUSIC

The Importance Of Tsonga Music

Music, particularly communal vocal music, is of considerable importance to the Tsonga. Its main orientation is toward the functional, and, because most of the various Tsonga social activities include singing and dancing, there is nearly always some form of musical performance taking place within a given village. Tsonga music is intimately related to oral literature, and, like the latter, aids in the integration of Tsonga society.

Origin Of Tsonga Music

Concerning the original source of their music, the Tsonga hold no belief in a supernatural genesis. Communal vocal music is composed, disseminated (with the exception of certain spontaneous 'possession' songs which remain the property of the 'possessed' patient), then handed down. Isolated instances of borrowing occur in Tsonga music, and they will be identified during the course of this thesis. Instrumental music is occasionally original, but in the main consists of adaptations of communal vocal music, primarily

of beer songs.

A Tsonga Definition of Music

When questioned as to what is music, most Tsonga answer in a manner which seems to imply that rhythmic organization by humans furnishes one of the distinctions between what constitutes music (vuyimbeleri) and what constitutes other sounds or noise (mpfumawulo). For instance, strung bottle-caps hung to scare birds from crops make 'noise' when the wind blows, but the same bottle-caps attached to a hand-piano make 'music' when the keys vibrate rhythmically from being manipulated by their human owner.

Instrumental music (xichaya) is distinguished from vocal music (yimbelela) by a physical concept involving the human manipulation of some object, the Tsonga word xichaya deriving from the Zulu word -chaya, meaning 'to beat'.

Human and Non-human Music-makers

While most Tsonga stress the human aspect of music-making, some claim that a chameleon really 'dances' music, and that certain birds 'sing' songs. The writer encountered a bone-thrower who, pointing out a goat's astragalus, declared that a mother-goat was 'dancing'; folktales have been noted wherein animals sang songs and blew upon antelope horns (mhalamhala). However, these

legendary animal characters are often highly humanized.

Worthy of more serious consideration is the belief held by many Tsonga that their ancestor-'spirits' perform music. It is said that these ancestor-'spirits' (swikwembu) sing, dance, and play horns in the woods when they are pleased. Should a passerby enter in search of them, the music ceases, only to recommence behind the seeker. Other informants state that, after sacrificial rites, the sound of a horn is heard from distant woods if the offering has been accepted. For the Tsonga, justification of this source of musical performance lies in the fact that ancestor-'spirits' are considered members of the family by extension; they are human, and remember their past musical enculturation.

Special Powers Possessed By Music

For the Tsonga, music occasionally possesses special powers, as shown by the following beliefs:

(a) singing and dancing is prohibited in the vicinity of a new hut under construction, lest the wizards (valoyi) be enticed within, prior to provision of protective charms;

(b) certain work-party songs are said to be able to rid crops of the pest known as nunu (a type of beetle);

(c) communal vocal music is prohibited in the vicinity of large-scale beer-brewing, lest the beer turn sour;

(d) convalescing patients of an 'exorcist' are often adorned with mafowa rattles as protection;

(e) should a patient die, the 'exorcist' may lend the relatives a small flute, the playing of which

(ku yimba xinangana) in the vicinity of the grave destroys the responsible wizard;

(f) protection from lightning is afforded by the playing of a small flute made from an eagle's femur;

(g) the ncomane drum (rather than any other drum) is necessary for the expulsion of undesirable spirits;

(h) a marhonge leg-rattle may be a repository for ancestor-spirits, and its sound may on occasion represent their voices.

Professionalism In Tsonga Music

Apart from drumming instruction within the xigubu boys' drumming school, no special training system exists for Tsonga instrumentalists, nor are musical positions hereditary. Professional instrumentalists emerge by inclination and learn by imitation. Prominent among this class are the 'court' friction-bow (xizambi) player, the wandering minstrel (xilombe -- generally a player of the xitende braced gourd-bow), and, less frequently, the Chief's praise-singer (mbongi, from ku bonga, 'to praise'). Semi-professional musical roles are occupied by the leader of the muchongolo dance (kepe-ngoma), the leader of the rhambela phikezano competitive dance-team (mufambisi), and the women drummers (mabangoma).

There are two administrative appointees whose duties include the supervision of certain musical activities: nkulukumba, the khomba puberty school supervisor; muqambhi, the xigubu boys' drumming school instructor. A Tsonga

Chief also generally has two business associates concerned largely with musical activities: dzwavi, the mancomane 'exorcism' dance organiser; n'anga, murhundzu boys' circumcision school doctor-proprietor.

Both solo instrumental music performed by specialists, and communal vocal music performed by non-specialists under the direction of officiants, are paid for at some stage or other, by remuneration in the form of cash, beer, or similar economic reward. Subsidiary musical roles, such as that occupied by the individual who is called to repair the Chief's drum, also involve payment (a typical fee would be one fowl).

As to the economic role occupied by the instruments themselves, antelope horns, drums, and leg-rattles constitute items of village wealth, and usually change hands only upon the death of their custodian (who, in the case of the last two items, is not necessarily the user). Bows, hand-pianos, flutes, and xylophones are usually the private property of individuals, the first three items being constructed by their owners, and the last item being obtained by purchase or barter from the Chopi or the Ndau.

Call and Response

Tsonga exclusive use of 'circular' form may have psycho-physiological origins traceable in part to antiphonal singing, breath inhalation/exhalation, and progressive/regressive dance movement. For instance, in several observed versions of the Tsonga puberty school dance nanayila (see detailed, step-by-step description in Chapter VI), the number of unison whistle-blasts occurring during each cycle of the tune coincided with the number of breaths conveniently drawn during the same time period, and the perimetral revolution of the circle of dancers occupied an optimum number of tune-repetitions determined by the tempo set and the performers' dance-steps. These repetitions brought the team back into original position with respect to the group of seated drummers.

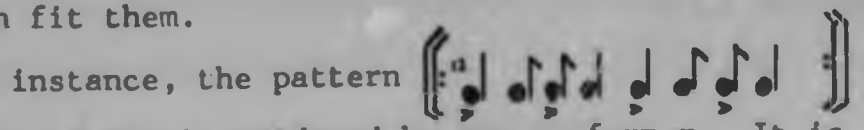
Approximately 90% of Tsonga songs recorded are in call-and-response style, and 80% possess a response which differs melodically from the call. Call-and-response is therefore, to the Tsonga, the most meaningful musical structure, and its import becomes clear after consideration of the xigubu voice-and-drum conversations, the xizambi voice-and-bow alternations, and other forms of Tsonga music that mirror its statement/counter-statement musical characteristics.

The call is known as ritoleritsanana, which means small voice (from rito, the voice), the Tsonga referring to 'high' as 'small' (xitsanana), and to 'low' as 'big'

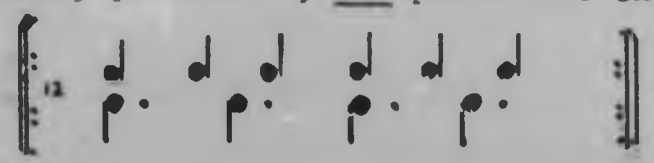
(nkulukumba). This call is sung by a caller known as the mufambisi, from famba, to go. He or she generally occupies a respected musical role in the village, knows most of the repertoire of traditional songs which form part of the Tsonga folklore heritage, and possesses a powerful voice (most Tsonga music is performed outdoors to the loud accompaniment of drums, and volume is a prime requisite). The response is known as the ritolerikulu, meaning big (i.e., 'low') voice, and it is sung by a chorus known as the bahlabeli, generally in unison.

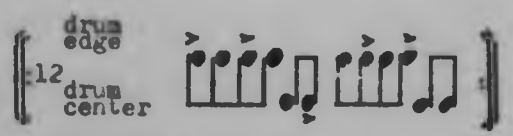
Some Tsonga Rhythmic Principles

Every Tsonga tune possesses a given metrical length or basic cycle, which cycle remains unchanged throughout the many repeats which occur in performance. In most categories of Tsonga music this cycle is based upon that unit-length which offers most scope to the dancers (generally 8, 12, 16, 24, or 32 units), within whose fixed numerical framework regular accentuation such as that in work-songs, or irregular accentuation such as that in beer-songs, may occur. The Tsonga do not consciously learn about these metrical lengths, but they do learn specific methods of producing rhythmic patterns which fit them.

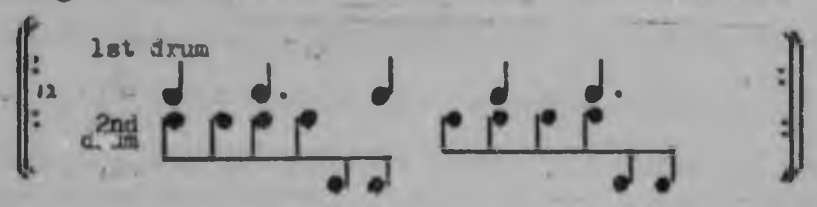
For instance, the pattern  in Tsonga music is rarely produced by one performer. It is

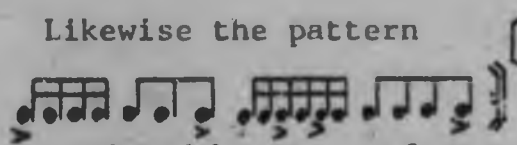
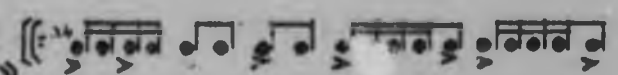
usually produced by two performers thus:

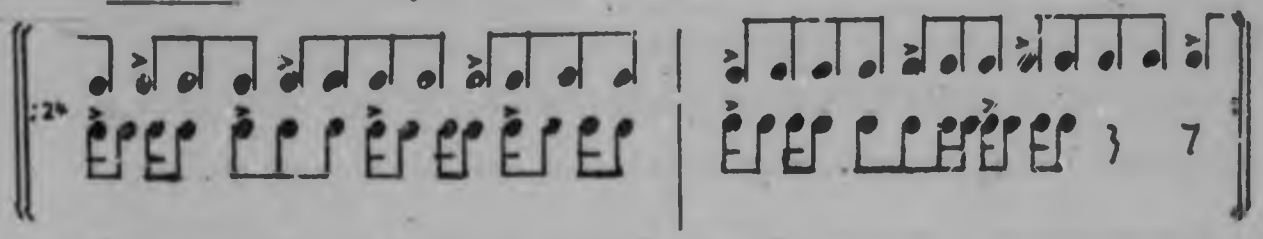


Likewise the accentuation 

in Tsonga music is rarely produced by one performer. It is usually produced by two performers, as shown in the following extract.



Likewise the pattern   in Tsonga music is rarely produced by one performer. It is usually produced by two performers, as shown in the following extract from Xizambi Transcription 60.



Learning the specific clap-pattern assigned to most traditional songs sung at beer-drinks reinforces knowledge of Tsonga rhythmical principles -- children who use an inappropriate pattern (clapping 6 ♩ in a 12 ♩ song which requires 8 ♩. for example) are instructed to clap more 'suitably' (fanekela).

Some Tsonga Melodic Principles

Should a melody ascend or descend below vocal range, Tsonga singers occasionally employ octave transposition, but more frequently employ substitute tones which are a 5th (inverted 4th) distant from the melody. A Tsonga normal pattern of melody may be diverted (in 'midstream') from its expected course, when the singer's voice runs out of notes. The substitute tones are selected according to a system of harmonic equivalence or span process, whereby distant degrees of a descending pentatonic scale are regarded as melodically synonymous.

In addition to being used for substitution purposes, harmonic equivalents may be sounded simultaneously with melody-tones. This produces a type of 'harmony' in which prevalence of either 4ths or 5ths will depend upon the suitability (for the vocal range of the chorus) of the caller's starting pitch -- individual singers will elect to sing above or below the melody according to their sex and age, thus reflecting the social situation in which the music occurs.

Some Tsonga Melodic Principles: Interval Preference

In an interval-count of 344 songs drawn from all categories of Tsonga communal vocal music, it was discovered that every descending and ascending interval between the minor

2nd and the major 9th is represented, with the exception of the following:

descending major 6th
descending minor 7th
descending major 7th
descending 8ve
descending minor 9th
descending major 9th

Interval-counts for the various categories of Tsonga communal vocal music are presented here in the order in which the categories themselves are dealt with in this thesis.

Interval Preference in 40 Children's Songs

Interval (Total of 1011 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	31
minor 3rd, descending	20
major 2nd, ascending	8.5
major 3rd, descending	8.5
4th, ascending	8
major 3rd, ascending	5
5th, descending	5
minor 3rd, ascending	4
4th, descending	3.5
minor 2nd, descending	2
major 6th, ascending	2
5th, ascending	1.5
minor 6th, ascending	1
	100%

Interval Preference in 80 Songs of the

Girls' Puberty School

Interval (Total of 1503 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	26
minor 3rd, descending	19
major 2nd, ascending	9.5
minor 3rd, ascending	9
4th, descending	8
5th, ascending	6
4th, ascending	6
major 3rd, descending	4.5
major 3rd, ascending	3
5th, descending	2.5
major 6th, ascending	2
major 7th, ascending	1.5
minor 6th, ascending	1
8ve, ascending	1
minor 2nd, ascending	0.5
minor 2nd descending	0.5
	100%

Interval Preference in 24 Songs of the

Boys' Drumming School

Interval (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
	100%

Interval Preference in 14 Pentatonic Songs

of the Circumcision School

Interval (Total of 99 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	37
major 2nd, ascending	18
minor 3rd, descending	14
major 3rd, ascending	9
4th, descending	8
4th, ascending	5
major 3rd, descending	2
5th, ascending	2
5th, descending	2
major 6th, ascending	2
minor 7th, ascending	1
	100%

Interval Preference in 6 Heptatonic Songs

of the Circumcision School

Interval (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
	100%

Interval Preference in 60 Beer Songs

Interval (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
	100%

Interval Preference in 15 Work Songs

Interval (Total of 198 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	36
minor 3rd, descending	22
major 2nd, ascending	11
4th, ascending	9
major 3rd, ascending	5
4th, descending	4
5th, descending	3
minor 3rd, ascending	2.5
major 3rd, descending	2
5th, ascending	2
major 6th, ascending	2
8ve, ascending	1.5
	100%

Interval Preference in 30 Muchongolo Songs

Interval (Total of 917 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	26
minor 3rd, descending	19
4th, descending	11
minor 3rd, ascending	10.5
major 2nd, ascending	6.5
4th, ascending	6
major 3rd, ascending	5
5th, ascending	4
minor 6th, ascending	3.5
5th, descending	2.5
major 6th, ascending	2
minor 7th, ascending	1.5
8ve, ascending	1.5
major 3rd, descending	1
	100%

Interval Preference in 51 Pentatonic

'Exorcism' Songs

Interval (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
	100%

Interval Preference in 24 Heptatonic

'Exorcism' Songs

Interval (Total of 496 intervals)	% (approx.)
major 2nd, descending	35
minor 3rd, descending	15
minor 2nd, descending	8.5
major 2nd, ascending	7.5
minor 3rd, ascending	6.5
major 3rd, descending	5.5
4th, descending	5
4th, ascending	4
minor 2nd, ascending	3.5
5th, ascending	2.5
minor 7th, ascending	2
major 3rd, ascending	2
5th, descending	1.5
major 6th, ascending	1
major 7th, ascending	0.5
	100%

Interval Preference in Tsonga Communal Vocal Music

(i.e., all categories combined - 334 songs)

Interval (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
	100%

Accurate weighting of the final percentages given above was attempted by considering the actual number of intervals rather than their percentage figures, but the results are, of course, highly dependent upon how many songs from each category were used. For instance, while the percentage of descending major 2nds is over 30% in six out of the ten categories, and even rises as high as 37% in pentatonic songs of the circumcision school (the latter category is one of the smallest), khomba (the largest category in this thesis) has only 26% of descending major 2nds and brings the final total down to 29%. Add to this the fact that songs of the circumcision school are sung only every four or five years, and it becomes clear that the final percentages given here are less significant than the percentages for individual categories.

Examination of the individual interval-counts reveals that, in all categories other than those of the heptatonic xidzimba 'exorcism' music and the heptatonic tinsimu ta murhundzu of the circumcision school, three of the most frequently used intervals are the descending major 2nd, the descending minor 3rd, and the ascending major 2nd. This reflects a Tsonga preference for easily-sung step-by-step ascending and descending pentatonic melodic patterns (the pentatonic scale contains three major 2nds and two minor 3rds) which readily convey speech-tone rise and fall.

Examination of the interval-counts for xidzimba 'exorcism' music and tinsimu ta murhundzu of the circumcision school reveals that the most frequently used intervals are the descending major 2nd, the descending minor 3rd, and the descending minor 2nd. The appearance of the semitone in these last categories of music reflects Tsonga occasional use of heptatonic melodic patterns.

Some Tsonga Melodic Principles: A Brief Look At Speech-tone

Tsonga is not strictly a 'tone language', as are certain West African languages. Tsonga speech-tone patterns may have both syntactical and semantic significance, though correct tone is not essential to understanding, which can usually be gathered from context. The meaning of similar words may vary according to speech-tone pattern, thus:

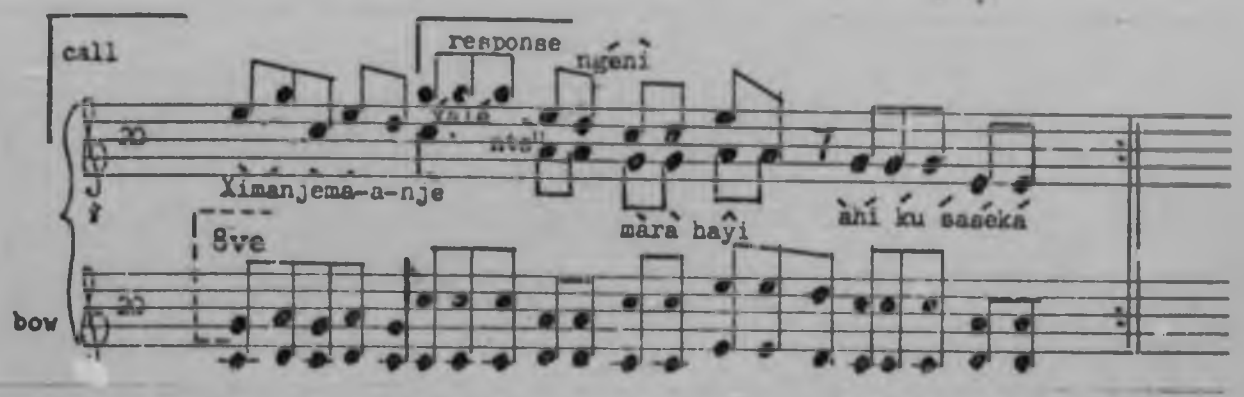
(ˊ = high, ˋ = low, ˆ = falling)

báva	to be bitter
bàvă	father
bòfù	blind person
bòfū	pus
bvîmbá	an aromatic shrub
bvìmba	to seal with a lid

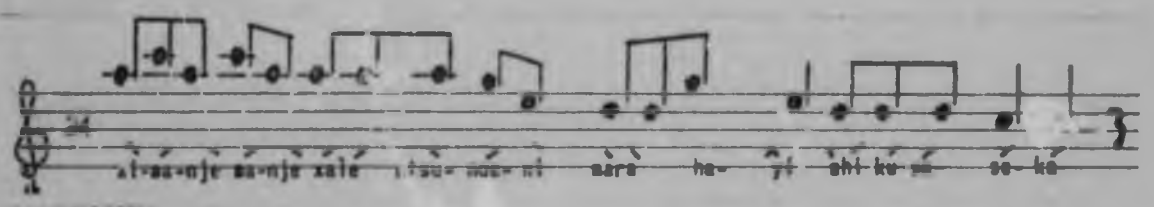
These tone-patterns are not absolute, but may also vary according to context. In the following different versions of five songs, speech-tone markings were supplied by C.T.D. Marivate, linguist at the University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Song 1. Xìmánjèmánjè xálé ntsùngénì màrà hâyi àhí kú sáśeká

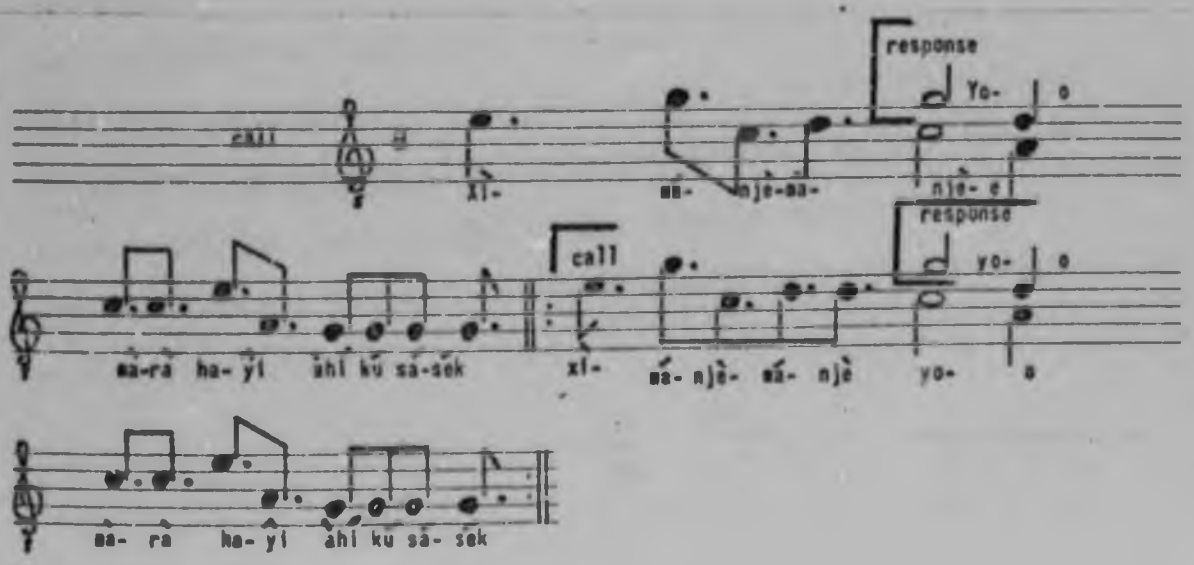
Song 1, Version A (sung by a chorus of men at Samarie)



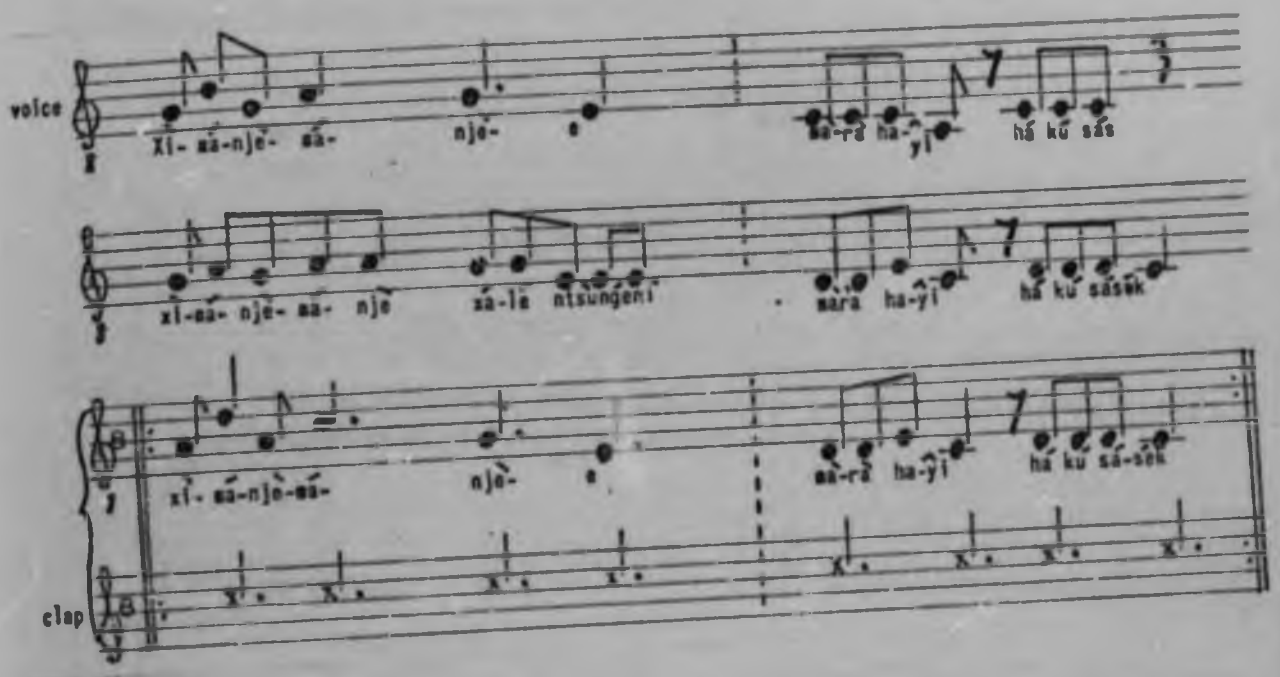
Song 1, Version B (sung by Wilson Zulu)



Song 1, Version C (sung by a chorus of women at Ribola)



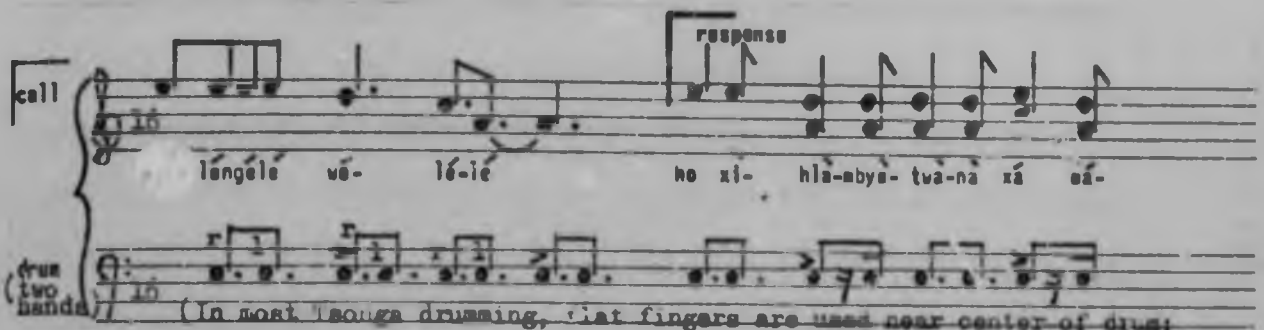
Song 1, Version D (sung by Joel Mashava)



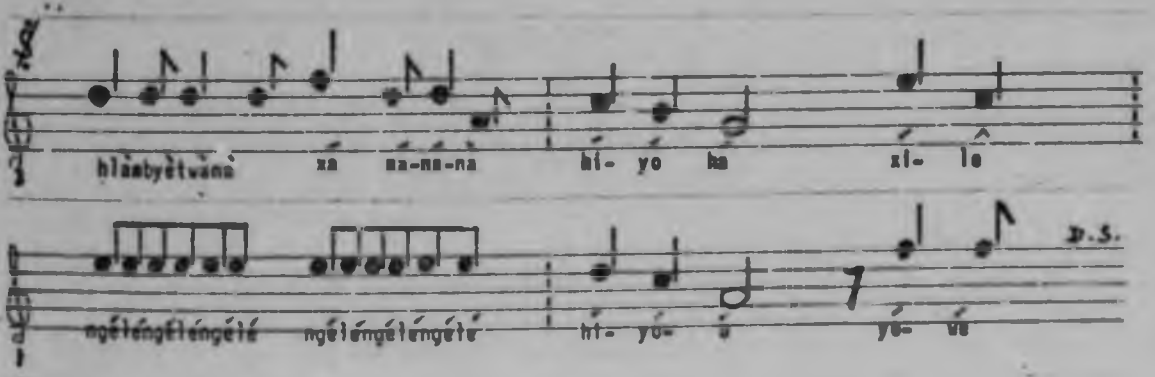
Of the above four versions of Song 1, all melodically observe the various speech-tones of the word xìmánjèmánjè, two observe the 'high-low' at ngéni, and all observe the 'falling' at hayi. Two of the versions exhibit a melodic 'high-low' at sáséká that is not indicated by the speech-tone markings, but sáséká is the song's concluding word, and a cadential drop in pitch is considered (by the Tsonga) musically desirable.

Song 2. Xìhlàmbyètwànà xá mánánà wélélé xítê
ngélengélengélé wélélé

Song 2, Version A (sung by a chorus of women at Mahonisi)



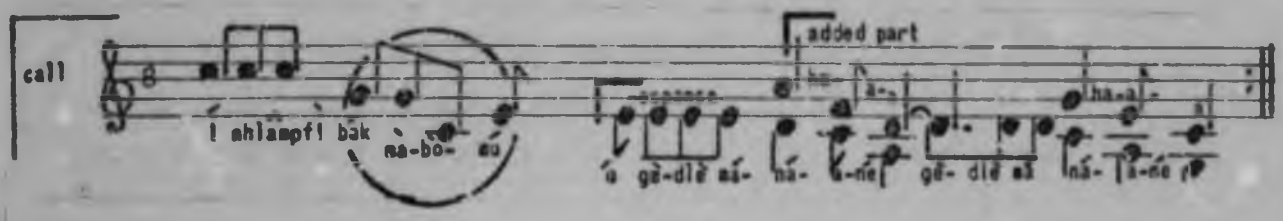
Song 2, Version B (sung by Johannes Mathye)



Of the above two versions of Song 2, both observe the 'high' at xá; version A ignores the 'low' at the end of mánánà but version B observes it; and both observe the 'high-fall' at xítè. Neither version observes the 'highs' at wélélé (see the three melody tones following ngélèngélèngélé), but then this is the song's concluding word, and a cadential drop in pitch is musically desirable.

Song 3. Í nhlâmpfì bák màbòmú ó gèdlè mánáné gèdlè mánáné

(sung by a chorus of women at Mutsetweni)



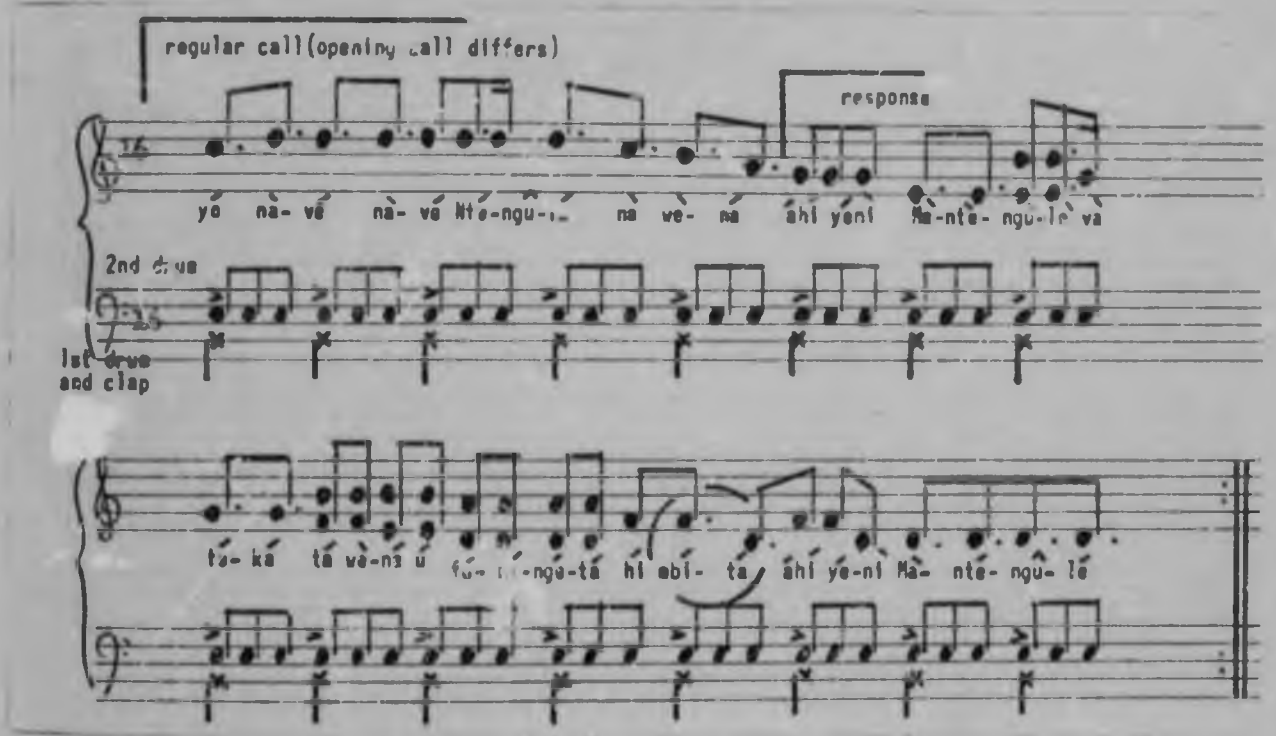


In the melody of this song there is a sharp descent from G to C, followed by a sharp ascent to E. This melodic descent and ascent accommodates the central low syllable bò of màbòmú, and the accommodation suggests that, regardless of

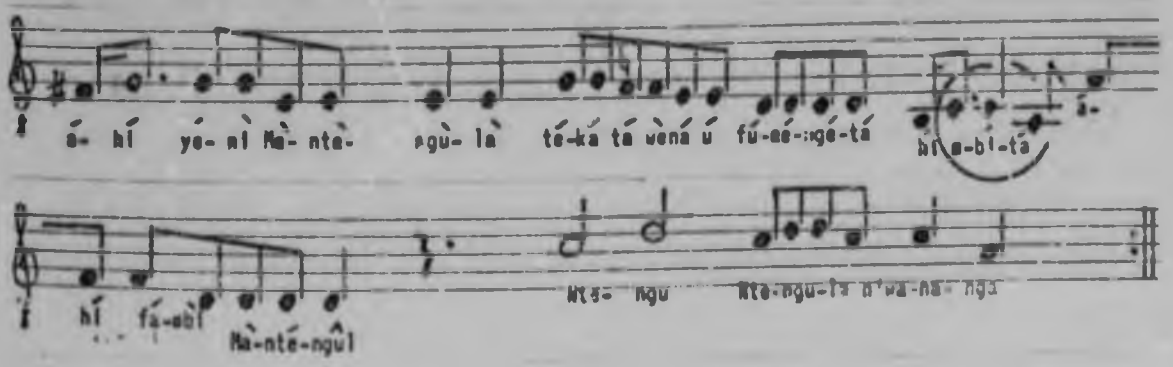
the apparent freedom exhibited by much of a song's melody, the obvious speech-tone contours of key words are preferably retained.

Song 4. Yó nàvénàvé Nténgûlé nà wèná áhí yéní Màntèngùlà ù téká tá wèná ú fúnéngétá hí mbítá áhí yéní Mànténgûlé

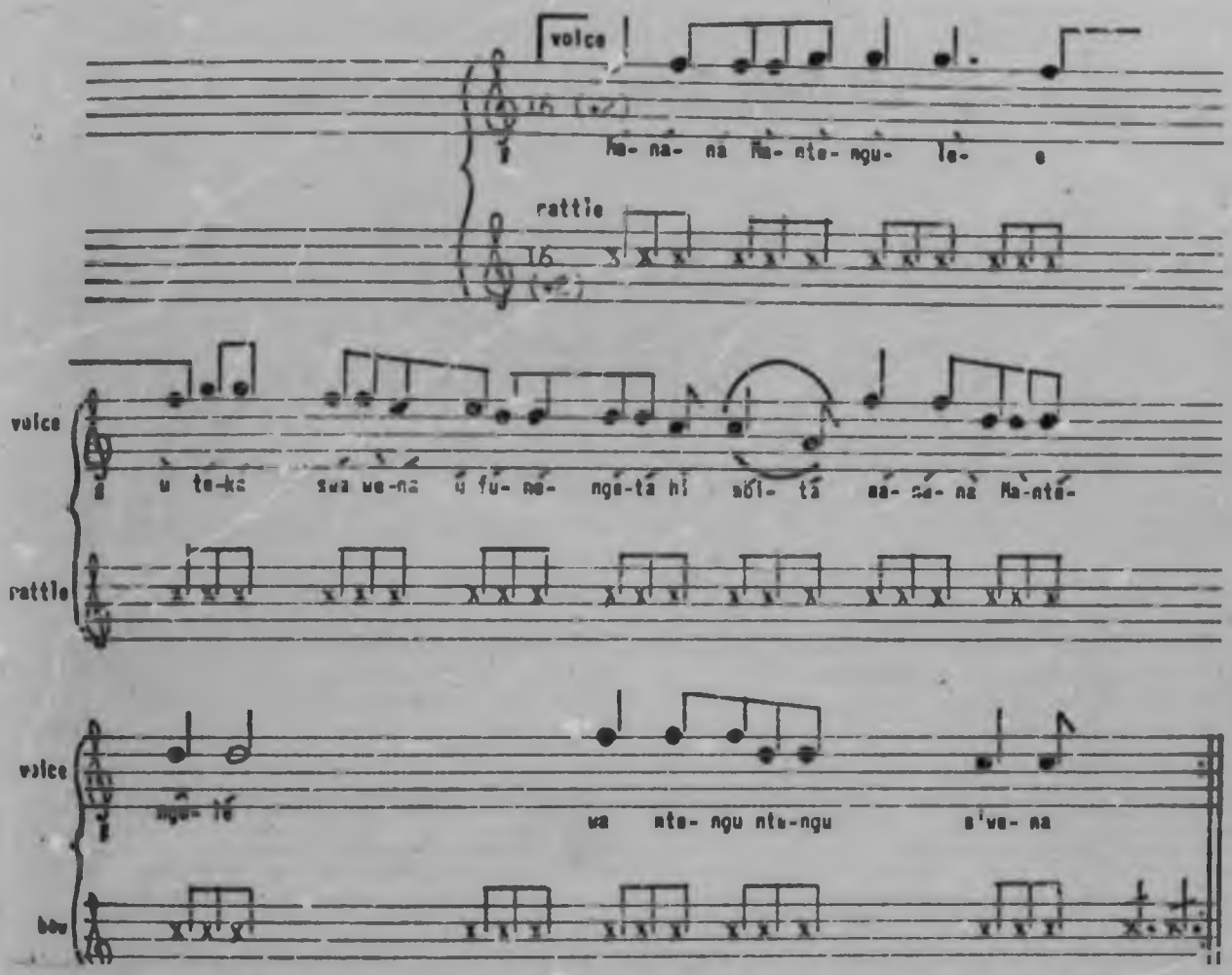
Song 4, Version A (sung by a chorus of women at Mhinga's location)



Song 4, Version B (sung by Johannes Mathye)



Song 4, Version C (sung by John Chauke)

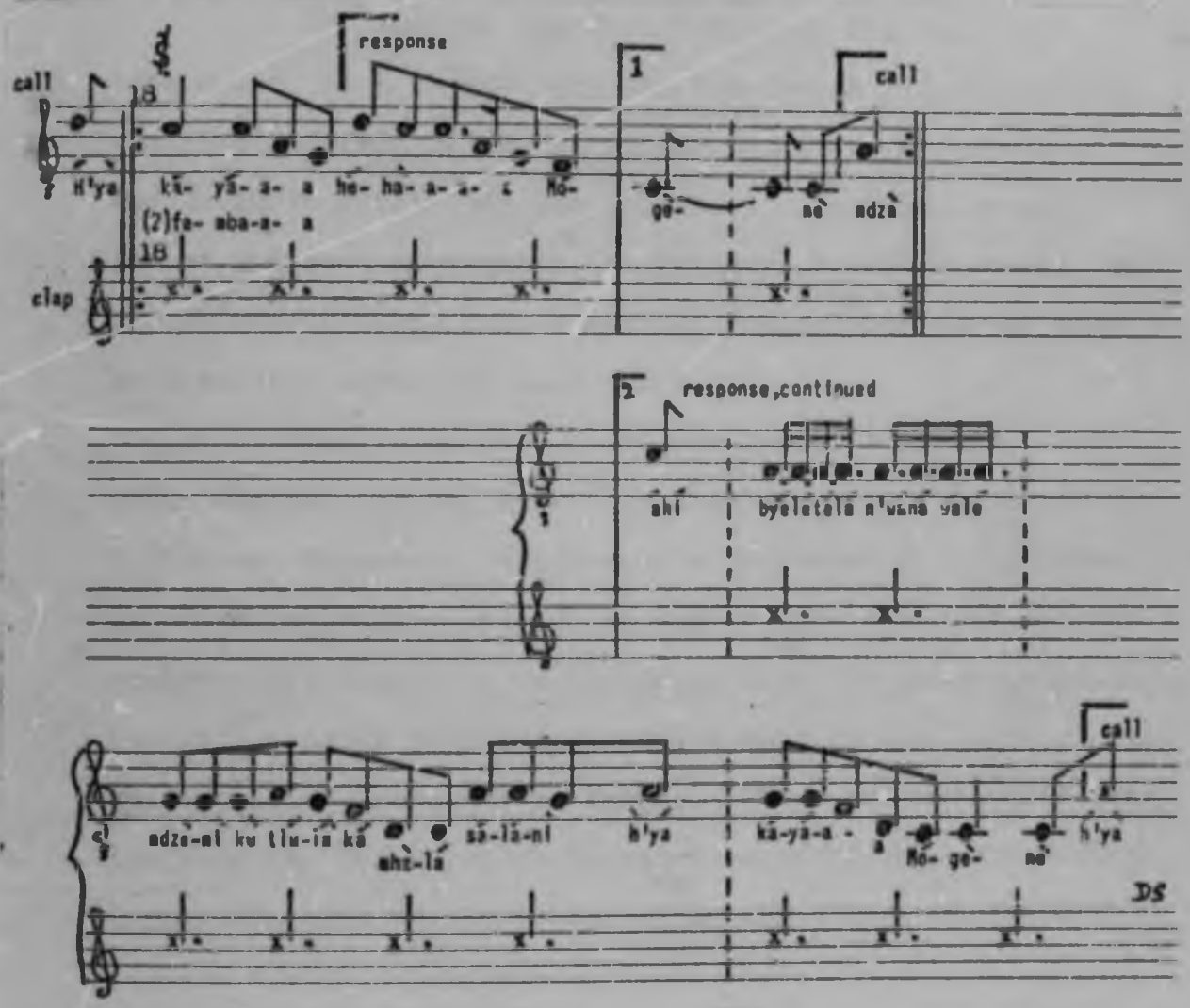


Of the above three versions of Song 4, all exhibit a melodic fall between the two syllables of mbîtá (the two tones following fúnéngétá hí) regardless of the 'fall-high' speech-tones of the word. A possible explanation is that mbîtá occurs at the conclusion of a verbal and musical phrase, preceding the new phrase áhí yéní Màntèngùlè, which

must preferably commence 'high' in relation to its predecessor.

Song 5. Híyà héhà Mógènè ndzà áhí byélétélá n'wáná wálé ndzèni kù tlúlâ ká mhàlá sálání hìyá káyá Mógènè

(sung by a chorus of women at Njakanjaka)



In the above song, the 'high-low-low' speech-tones of Mógènè are melodically observed, as are the eight repeated 'highs' of byélétélá n'wáná wálé. From the end of the latter

phrase to the first word of the next, ndzèní, a speech-tone 'high-low' is indicated and this, also, is melodically observed. The five speech-tones of kù tlúlâ ká mhà -- 'low-high-falling-high-low' are all observed by the melody, as is the 'low' at the end of sálání.

The musical characteristics of the initial 'statement' of a Tsonga song are considerably influenced by the rise and fall of Tsonga speech-tone, and by the length and rhythmic stress[1] of the syllables. Once melody and rhythm are set, subsequent 'statements' may be a product of both linguistic and purely musical forces (the latter will be discussed under the next sub-heading).

The relationship between Tsonga song-words and their musical setting generally involves more than mere imitative processes. Hornbostel's statement that "pitches of the speaking voice, indeed, appear to determine the melodic nucleus; but they have no influence upon its inborn creative forces"[2] assumes particular significance in the light of many compositional practices of Tsonga. There are musical forces limiting the influence of speech-tone on melody, and musical forces limiting the influence of speech-stress on rhythm.

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1. Of Zambian Tonga song-rhythm it is reported that "the theory that the determinant lies entirely in natural speech length and stress is not consistently born out." (Rycroft, David, "Tribal Style and Free Expression", African Music, Vol. I, No. I, 1954, p. 26.)
2. Von Hornbostel, E.M., African Negro Music, Oxford University Press, London, 1928, p. 31.

Some Tsonga Melodic Principles: Musical Forces Limiting the Influence of Speech-tone on Melody

There exists, within Tsonga communal vocal music, a phenomenon which might be termed 'pathogenic' descent. An analysis of Tsonga 'pathogenic' descent reveals that 24% of songs exhibit a first-to-last-tone descent of a 5th; 20% exhibit a first-to-last-tone descent of an octave; 13% exhibit a first-to-last-tone descent of a 4th; and 100% exhibit a first-to-last-tone intervallic descent of one kind or another. These descents are neither sharp nor gradual, but occupy a series of plateaux, and exert limiting counter-influence against speech-tone domination, particularly at sentence-endings where a musical drop is desirable.

There exists within Tsonga communal vocal music a special vocabulary of melismatic syllables such as huwele, welele, hayi-hayi, yowe-yowe, etc., during the singing of which a melody is released from any possible obligation to obey speech-tone rise and fall. Nketia states of Akan singing that "unlike other syllables, interjectory syllables e, ee, o, oo, etc., may be sung to one, two, or more notes."[3] Examples of Tsonga melismatic non-lexical syllables are given below.

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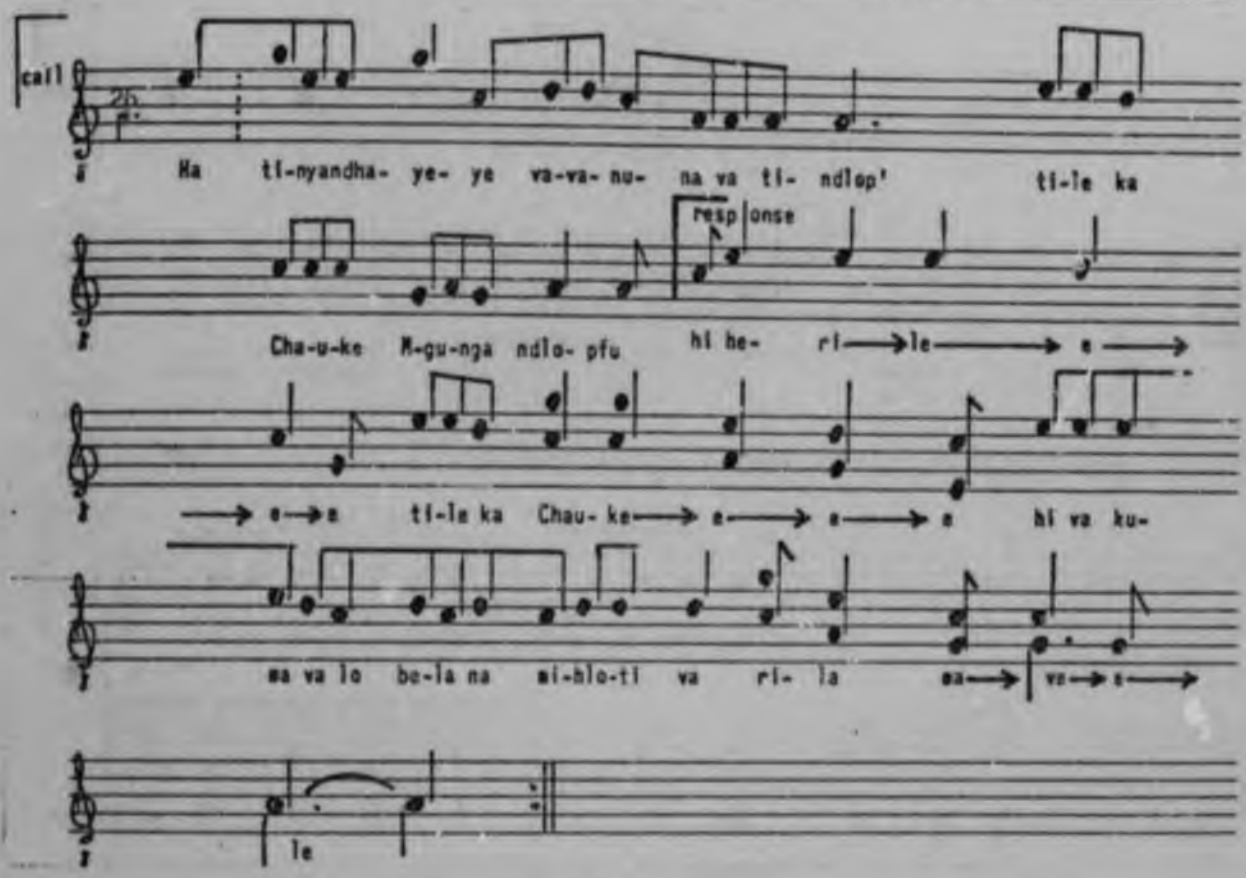
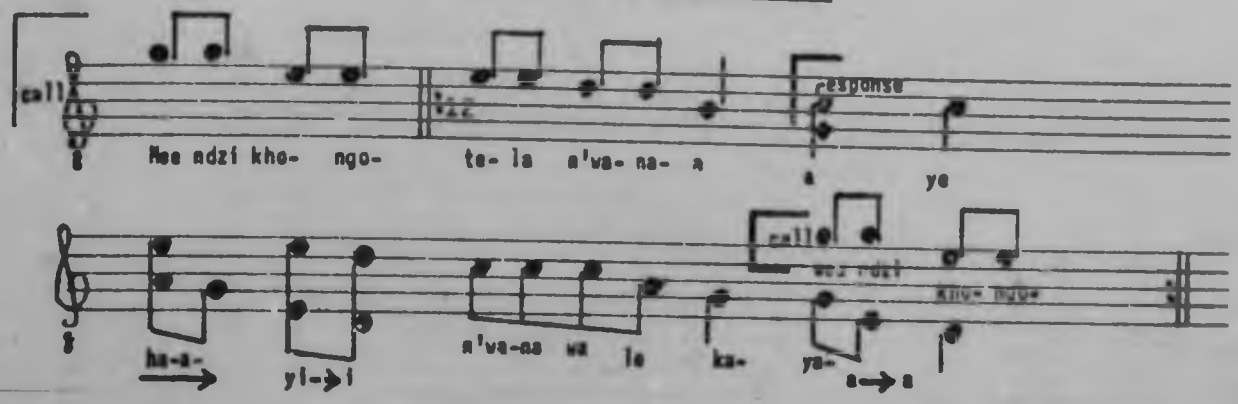
3. Nketia, J.H., Folk Songs of Ghana, University of Ghana, Legon, 1963, p. 9.

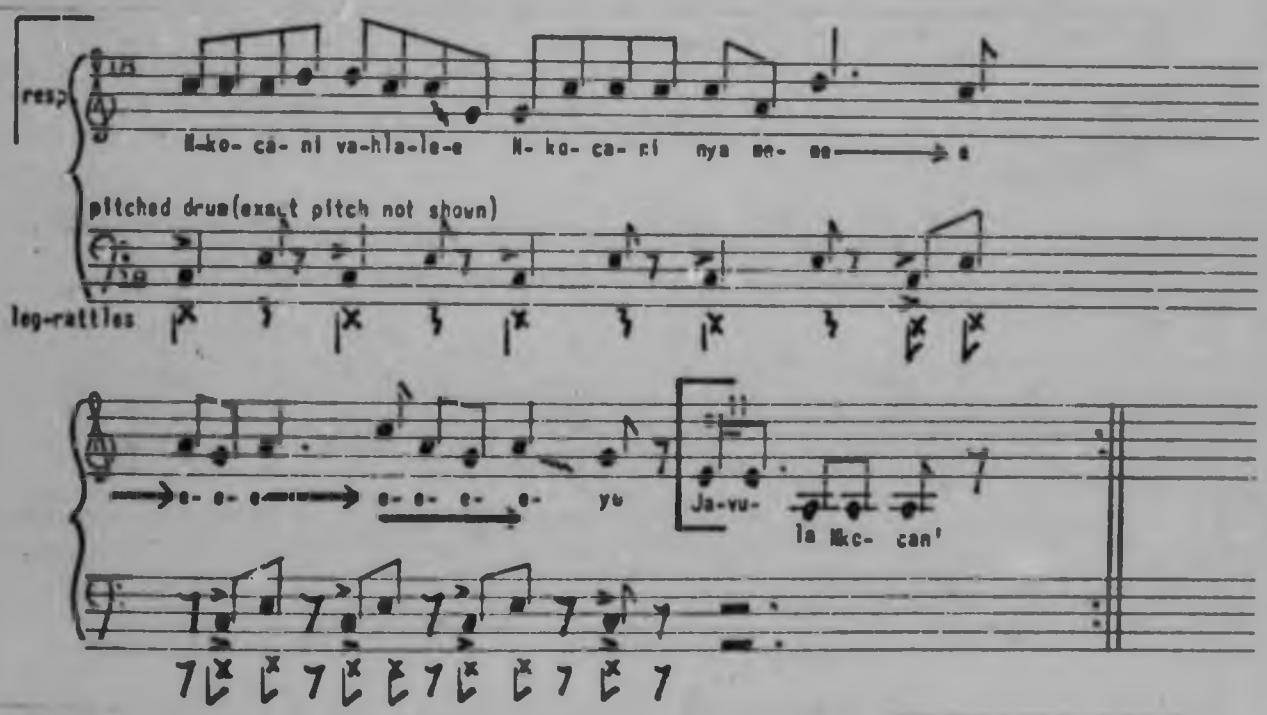
Melismatic Example 1 (he-ri-le-e-e-e, Chauke-e-e-e, mavele-e-le)



Melismatic Example 2 (ha-a-yi-i, ka-va-a-a)



Melismatic Example 3 (va-hla-le-e, myame-me-e-e-e-e-e-yo)

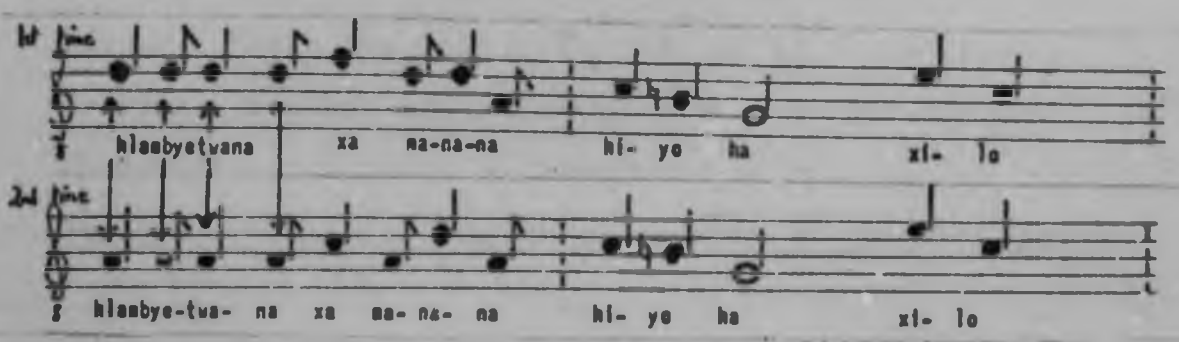


There exists within communal vocal music a system of 'harmonic equivalence' whereby tones a 5th (inverted 4th) distant are regarded by the Tsonga as interchangeable. This system of tone-substitution results in otherwise-inexplicable

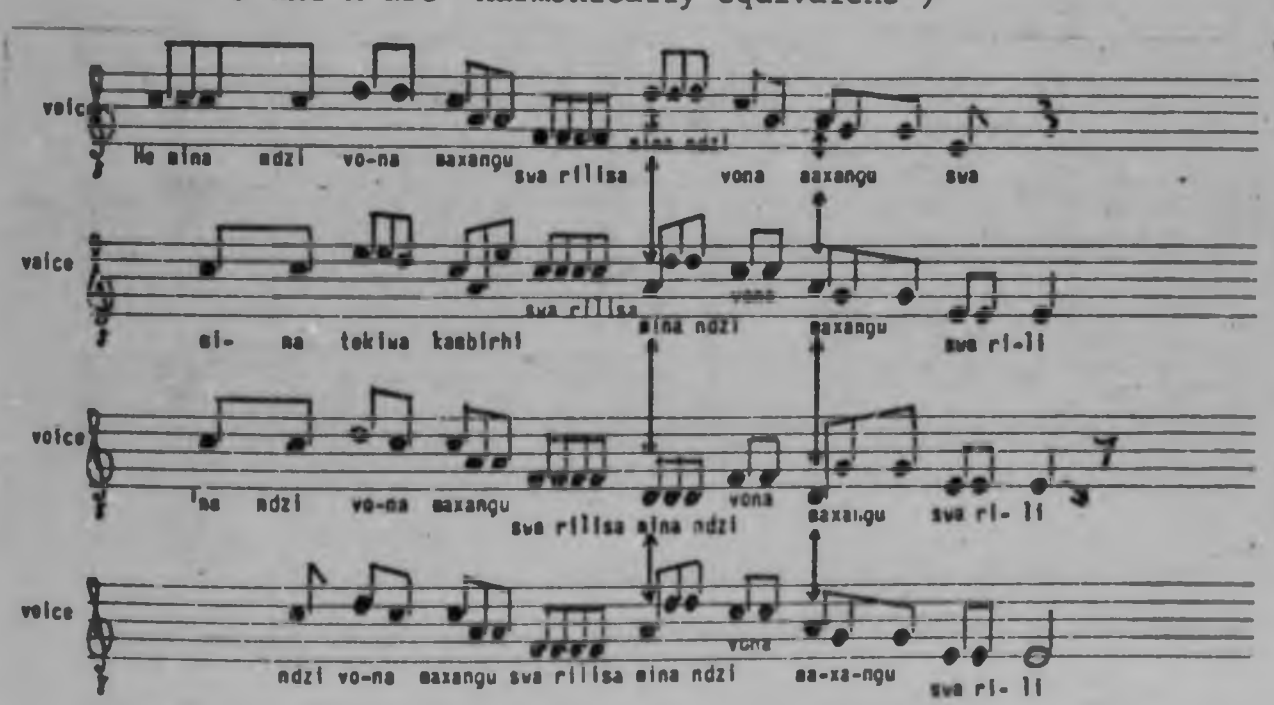
melodic 'highs' and 'lows' during unchanging speech-tones.

Examples are given below.

1st Example of 'Harmonic Equivalence' (the word hlàmbyètwànà which contains exclusively 'low' speech-tones, is melodically represented by D's during the first cycle, and by A's during the second cycle, D and A being 'harmonically equivalent')

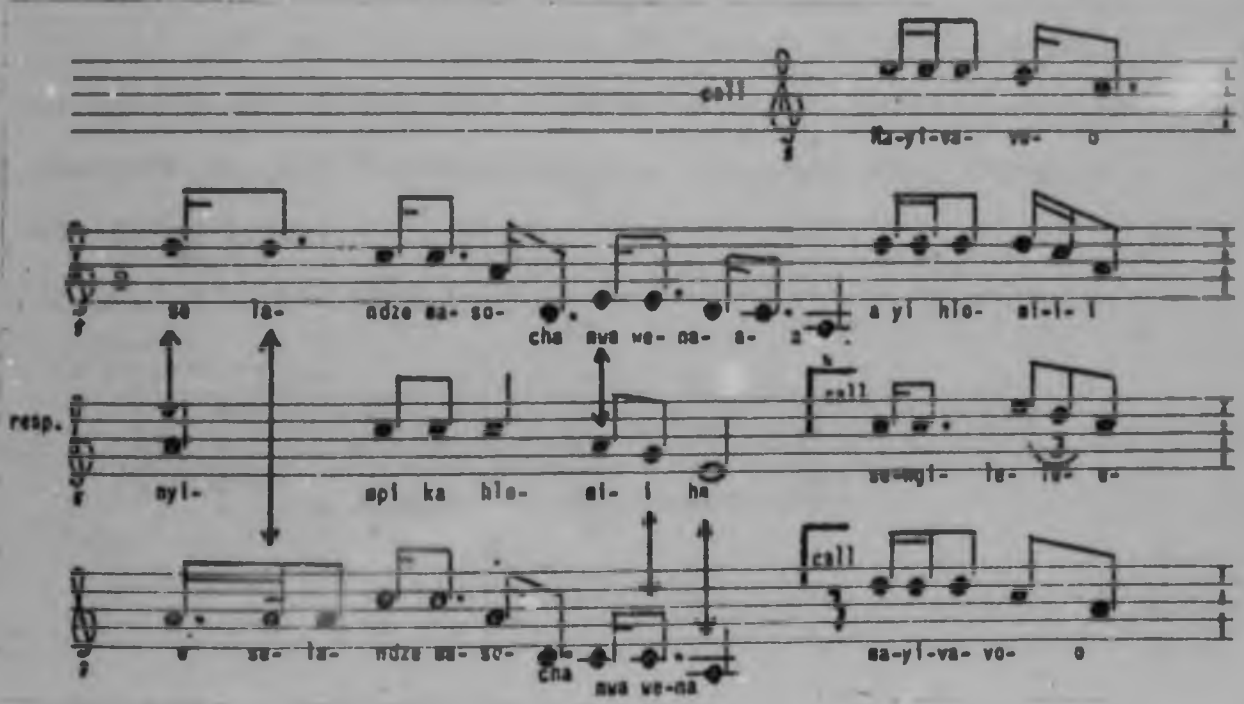


2nd Example of 'Harmonic Equivalence' (note the substitution of D for A at mina and at maxangu -- D and A are 'harmonically equivalent')



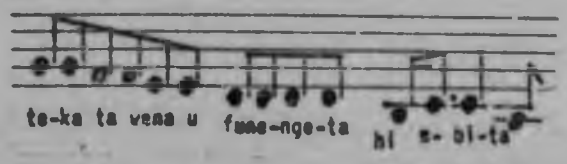
There exists within Tsonga communal vocal music, word-changes which occur during the successive cycles of a song. Choice of these new words is generally made so that their speech-tone approximates that of the old words, and could, should the singers so desire, be sung to the same melody. Where the melody changes (as in the following example), it does so according to an implicit 'harmonic' framework which could be considered as the <u>real</u> control.

<u>Example: Implicit 'Harmonic'Framework as the Real Control</u>



There exists, within Tsonga communal vocal music, occasions on which musical considerations completely overrule speech-tone considerations. The following melody exhibits purely musical characteristics (a descending 4th GD

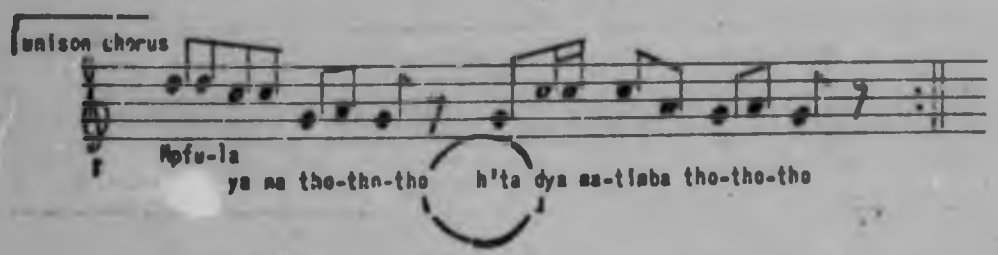
filled-in with 2nds and complemented by a 3rd CA, the whole spanning a 7th) that disregard the speech-tones, which are thus: téká tá wèná ú fúngéngétá hí mbîtá.



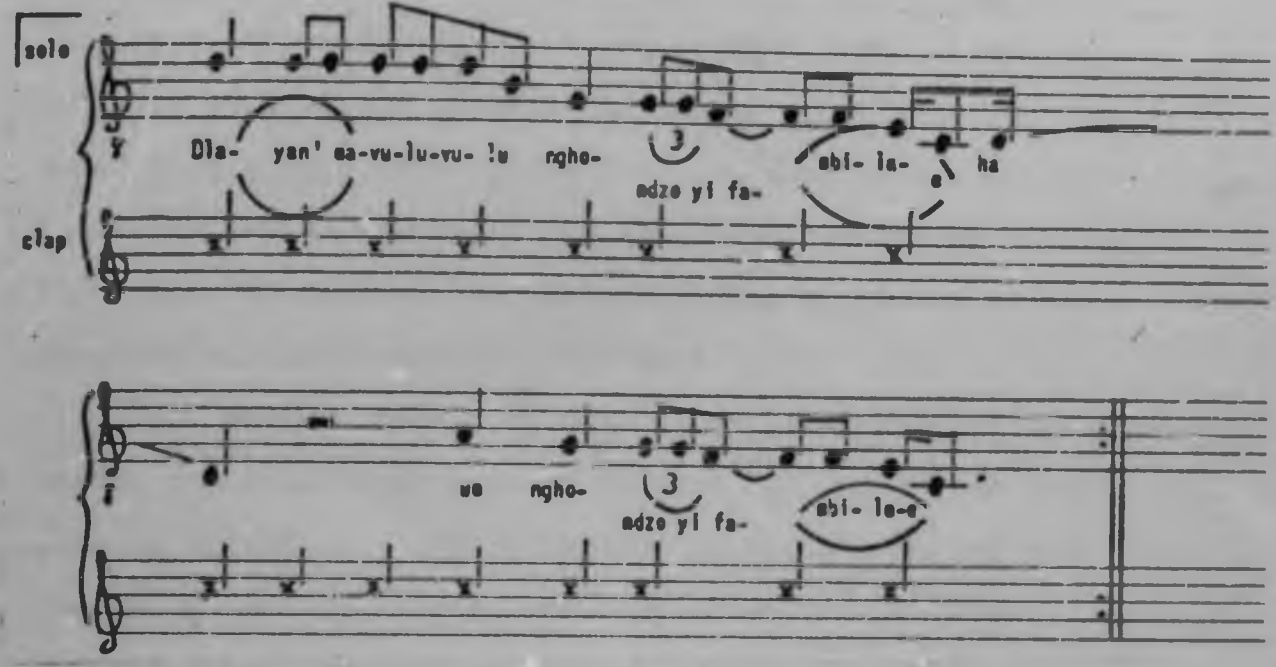
Musical Forces Limiting The Impact Of Speech-stress On Song-rhythm

Of particular use to the Tsonga in the relaxation of speech-stress controls is vowel elision, terminal-syllable contraction, and terminal-syllable prolongation. Examples are given below.

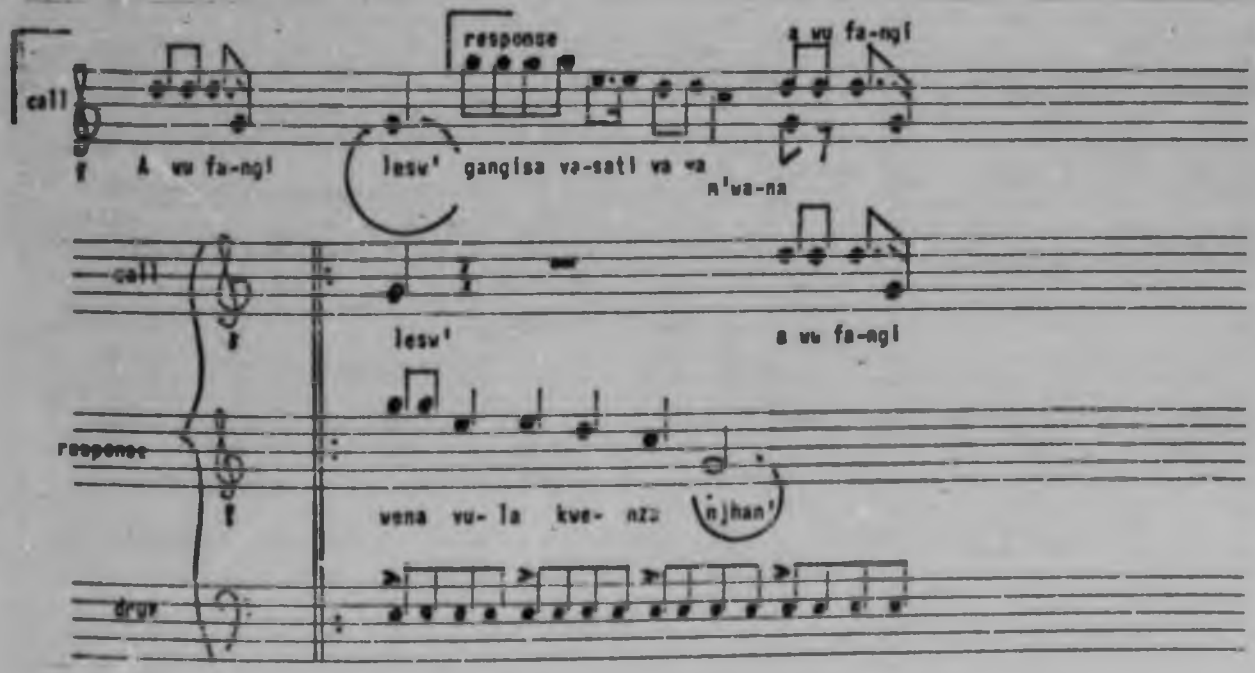
Example 1. (the word h'ta is a contraction of hi ta)



Example 2. (the word dlayan' is a contraction of dlayani, and the word tambile-e exhibits terminal-syllable prolongation)



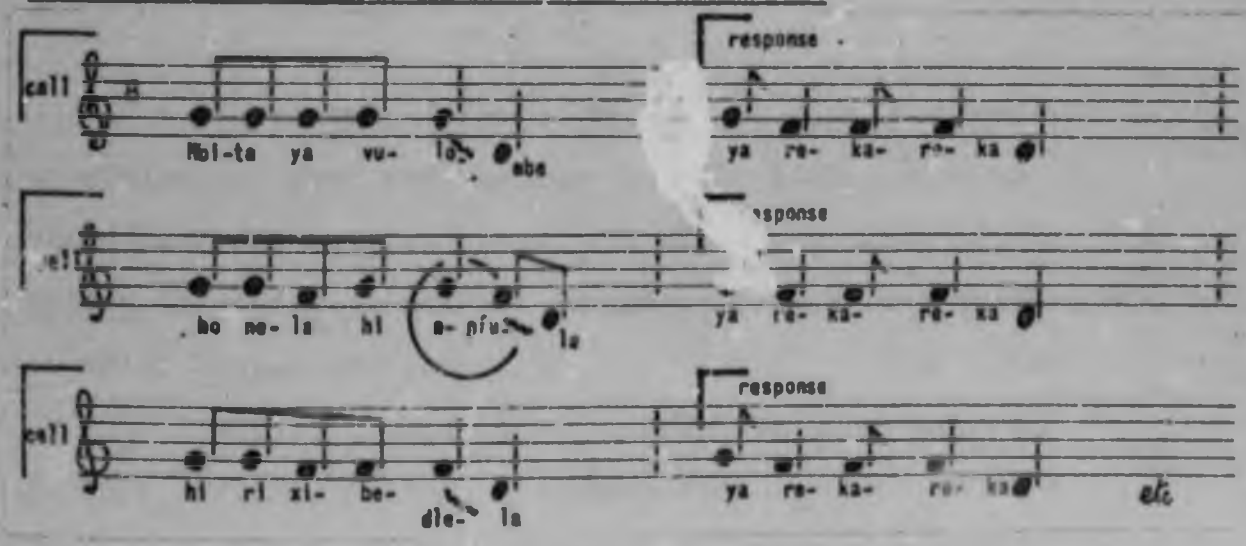
Example 3. (the word lesw' is a contraction of leswi, and the word njhani exhibits terminal-syliable contraction to njhan')



Vowel elision permits the singer (a) to execute one long tone instead of two short tones, and (b) to fit a long word into a relatively short musical space. Terminal-syllable contraction permits the singer to utilize, on the concluding single tone of his song, an otherwise-trochaic bisyllabic word. Terminal-syllable prolongation permits the singer to utilize, on the concluding two tones of his song, an otherwise-monosyllabic word.

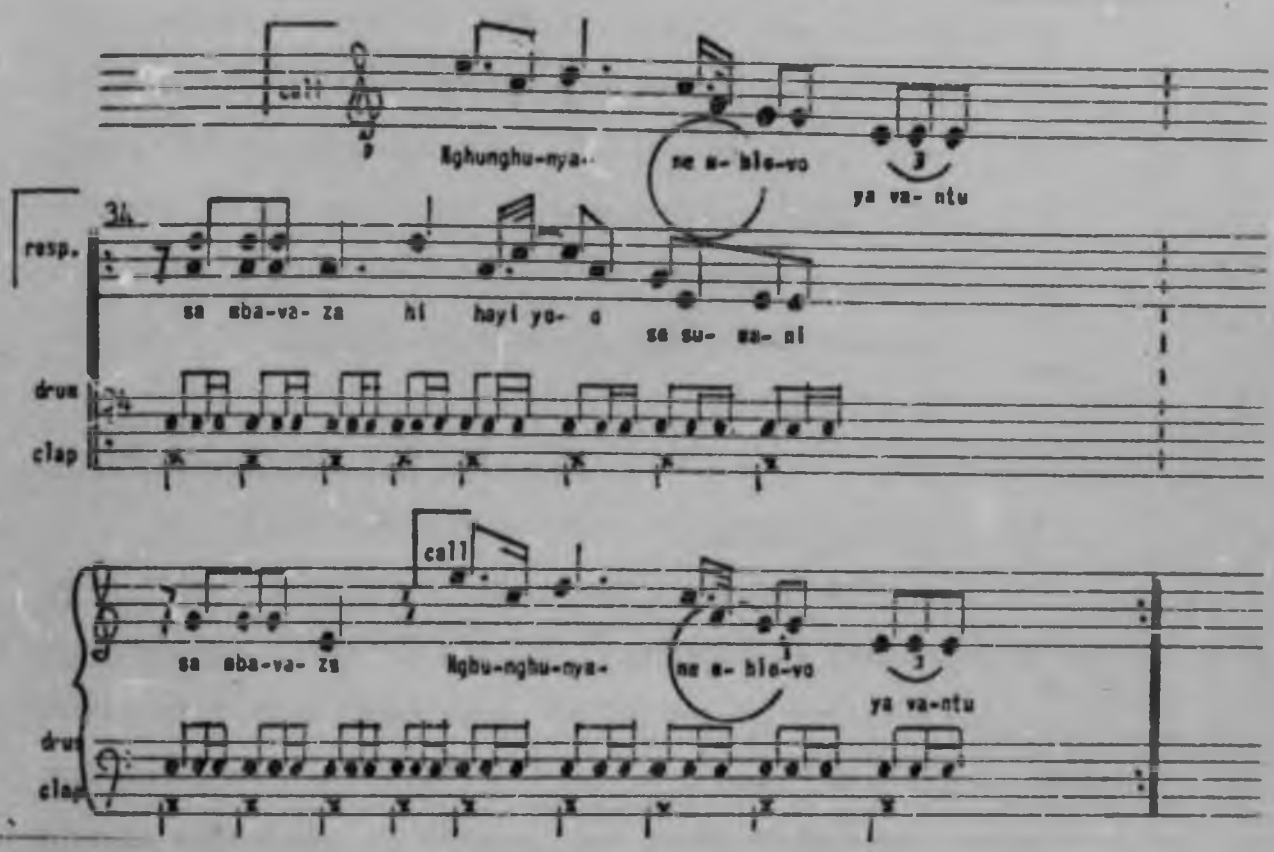
Another method of freeing song-rhythm from speech-stress controls is the use of letters 'n' and 'm' as independent syllables -- Kubik reports of Yoruba singing that "these 'm' and 'n' sounds are considered musically as syllables and can bear one note."[4] Tsonga examples are given below.

Use of 'n' Or 'm' As Syllables: Example 1.



4. Kubik, Gerhard, "Àló -- Yoruba Story Songs", African Music, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1968, p. 13.

Use of 'n' Or 'm' As Syllables: Example 2.



In Example 1 above, the 'm' of mpfula occupies an entire crotchet and enables this bisyllabic word to straddle three musical tones. In Example 2, the 'm' of mhlovo is used as a musical anacrusis for the two quavers on which hlo-vo are sung.

Within Tsonga vocal composition, many musical factors combine to limit speech-tone domination, not the least of which is perhaps a desire for musical contrast between call and response. Concerning the resultant

'distortion' of word-meaning, the present writer sought the opinion of native Tsonga linguists in ascertaining to what extent speech-tone may be ignored within a Tsonga vocal composition. The consensus was that context is as important as speech-tone, and where, for musical reasons, the latter is dispensed with, recourse to context adequately clarifies meaning.

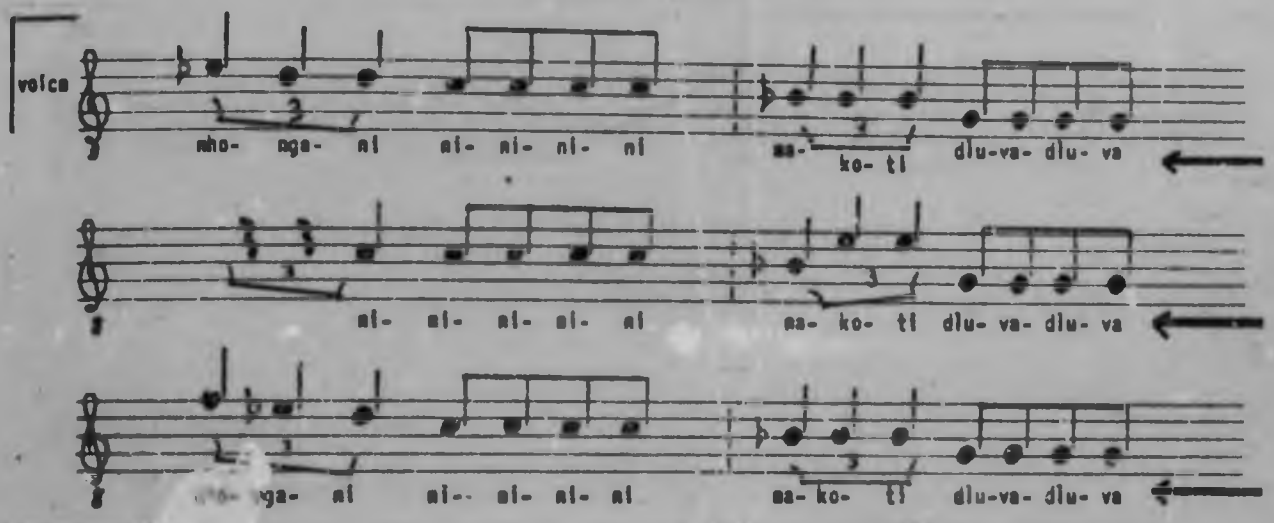
Programmatic Musical Settings

Onomatopoeicisms such as dluva-dluva ('jump'), vula-vula ('gossip'), cela-cele ('carousing'), and ngomu-ngomu ('ogre') receive programmatic treatment at the hands of Tsonga composers, being set to reiterative, motional, or accelerative tone-patterns. Similar treatment occurs elsewhere in Africa, for Kubik states of Yoruba singing that "gbinrin (the sound of dropping iron) ... is worked into the pattern gbinrin ajalubele gbinrin" and that "erin (elephant) suggests the dull movements of a walking elephant."[5] Tsonga examples are given below.

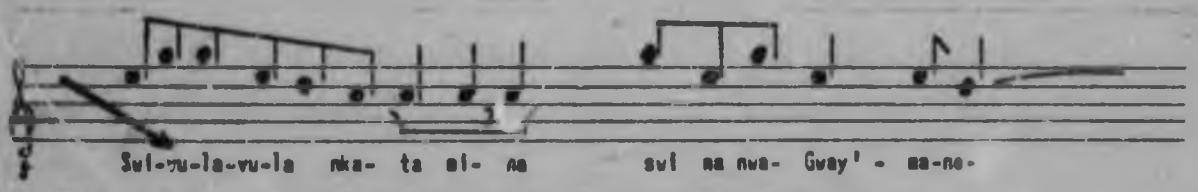
- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

5. Kubik, Gerhard, op. cit., p. 11.

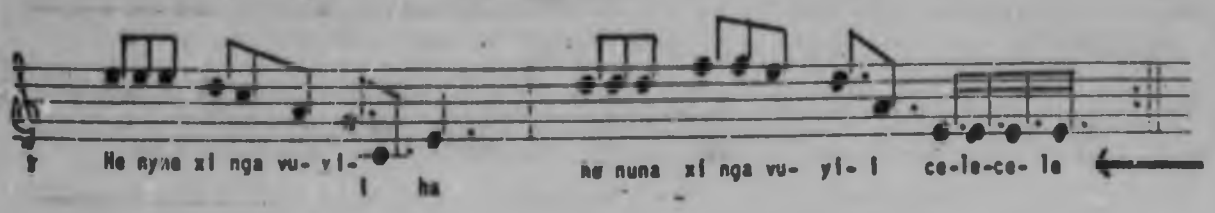
Onomatopoeic Example 1. The Reiterative Setting of Dluva-dluva ('jump')



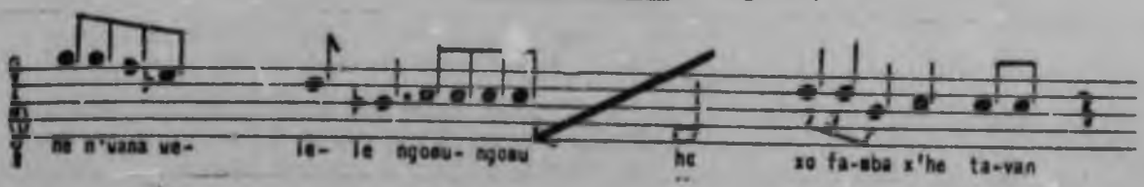
Onomatopoeic Example 2. The Motional Setting of Vula-vula ('gossip')



Onomatopoeic Example 3. The Accelerative Setting of Cele-cele ('carousing')



Onomatopoeic Example 4. The Reiterative Setting of Ngomu-ngomu ('ogre')



Formal Structure

Tsonga communal vocal music, when compared to Venda and other Southern African musics, appears to reveal a predilection for longer metrical periods. These periods contain interesting proportions of call to response, and contain multiple reappearances of the call and response within any one cycle.

Representative Formal Structures Evinced By Tsonga Songs

	Total
Song A (call=9♩ + response=3♩ + call=9♩ + response=9♩ + call=3♩ + response=3♩).....	36 ♩
Song B (call=4♩ + response=4♩ + call=4♩ + response=14♩)	26 ♩
Song C (unison chorus=2♩ + call=4♩ + unison chorus=2♩ + call=4♩ + divided chorus=4♩)	16 ♩
Song D (call=6♩ + response=3♩ + call=6♩ + response=9♩)	24 ♩
Song E (call=4♩ + response=4♩ +call=4♩ + response=8♩)	20 ♩

Song F (call=10 ♩ + response=4 ♩
+ call=4 ♩ + response=4 ♩
+ call=4 ♩ + response=4 ♩) ..... 30 ♩

Song G (call=4 ♩. + response=7 ♩.
+ call=1 ♩. + response=12 ♩.) ..... 24 ♩.

Song H (call=6 ♩ + response=10 ♩
+ call=6 ♩ + response=10 ♩
+ call=5 ♩ + response=27 ♩) ..... 64 𝅗𝅥

Song I (call=2 ♩. + response=3 ♩.
+ call=7 ♩. + response=11 ♩.) ..... 18 ♩.

Song J (call=18 ♩ + response=18 ♩
+ call=2 ♩ + response=4 ♩
+ call=3 ♩ + response=3 ♩
+ call=3 ♩ + response=3 ♩
+ call=3 ♩ + response=3 ♩) ..... 60 𝅗𝅥

Song K (call=6 ♩+ response=4 ♩
+ call=6 ♩ + response=4 ♩
+ call=2 ♩ + response=4 ♩
+ call=2 ♩ + response=4 ♩) ..... 32 ♩

The Transmission, From One Generation To Another, And From One Geographical Area To Another, Of Tsonga Musical Principles

The Tsonga have a reputation among their neighbours for possessing an extensive body of folklore (ntumbuluku wava khale). They are themselves particularly proud of this folklore and ensure that their children become acquainted with it. Generally, in the daytime, small children learn from older children the legend-telling words of the game-songs (tinsimu tavana to huha) used in games such as Xifu-funumu -- The Beetle, and Mbita Ya Vulombe -- The Pot Of Honey, both of which were reported over fifty years ago by Junod. In the evening they watch the adult 'exorcism'

dances, or listen to the story-songs (tinsimu ta mintsheketo) sung by their maternal grandmother at certain times of the year.

Young boys who gather round a visiting bow-player receive an intriguing music 'lesson' (ntsakela-vuyimbeleri) as he carefully tunes his string-lengths to a Tsonga 4th, just as older boys learn by observation how to construct their own hand-piano (timbila) and to correctly arrange and tune its seventeen keys.

In the girls' puberty school (khomba) and the boys' circumcision school (murhundzu) songs are learned under rather rigorous conditions, and the present writer encountered urban Tsonga old men and women, miles and 'years' removed from their rural initiation schools, who could recite or sing rapid and apparently meaningless initiation formulae for up to thirty minutes, with brief rests.

The young people's competitive team-dancing (xifase) of the drumming school and the adult competitive team-dancing (rhambela phikezano) of the beer-drinks are performed during village-to-village visits and contribute toward the geographical dissemination of Tsonga music old and new, as do the musical activities of itinerant doctors and minstrels.

By carefully observing the correct method of producing the rhythmic and melodic patterns used during these various visits, and by themselves reproducing the heard rhythms upon upturned canisters or pebble-filled stick-rattles

(mafowa -- see Plate 45) while singing, children develop familiarity with, and mastery of, many Tsonga musical principles. This does not imply a latent desire to become musical specialists. Engagement in normal social life, which is general, involves the Tsonga in music whether they like it or not, because music is an essential part of Tsonga social life. Thus the acquisition of musical skills may be incidental to acquisition of other skills necessary to social and biological maturation(see Figure 22,The Learning Process).

Having described the historical and social background, the musical instruments, and some of the musical principles, we may now proceed to an enumeration of the traits of single disparate styles representing different Tsonga categories of songs (in nearly all categories there exists the phenomenon of 'style within the style', giving rise to the possibility of an older stratum of music overlain by more recent additions, and of borrowing from other groups).

The Tsonga cognitive process concerning the suitability of music for given social groups within given social situations, is the basis for one of the main tenets of this thesis, namely, that, given group of actors A within social situation B, the musical characteristics of any music performed will conform to those herein described for song category C:

$$C = AB$$

CHAPTER IV

CHILDREN'S SONGS (TINSIMU TO TLANGA TA SWIHLANGI) OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA

Children's songs (tinsimu to tlanga ta swihlangi) belong to one of five sub-classifications according to their customary use, as follows:

(i) tinsimu ta mintsheketo, so[illegible] with[illegible]n folktales, also known a[illegible] nsimu ta tingaringeto (from the [illegible] mary interpolation "garing[illegible]

(ii) tinsimu tavana to huha, [illegible] accompanying games;

(iii) tinsimu to goda, songs of mockery, also known as tinsimu to solana (from ku sola, to censure or reproach);

(iv) tinsimu ta ku hlaya, counting songs;

(v) tinsimu ta varisi, boys' herding songs.

Many children's songs require the audience or chorus to respond in unison with phrases such as guru mantsengele or garingani wa garingani, whose meaning is unknown. Garingani wa garingeni is a formula used by the northerly Tsonga to introduce a folktale, and it is generally answered with "garingani!". In the Eastern Transvaal one more frequently hears garingana wa garinga,

with the response "garinga!", and in Mozambique the formula is karingana wa karigana, answered with "karigana!".

Other children's songs require the participants in a game to 'bounce' snappy phrases quickly back and forth, thus:

Call: Ha honisa?
Response: Honisani!
Call: Ha khoma?
Response: Khomani!

This is a common formula which should be translated thus:

Call: Do we ignore?
Response: Ignore ye!
Call: Do we catch?
Re ponse: Catch ye!

Cuénod gives the explanation that it is "used in a game of children, in which they catch one another and use the phrases, ha honisa, we let you pass, we leave you alone, and honisani, let us pass, leave us alone."[1]

Transcriptions of twenty children's songs are given below. Of forty different Tsonga children's songs recorded, transcribed, and used by the writer for the interval-count given in Chapter III, these twenty were the most widely known and the most frequently encountered.

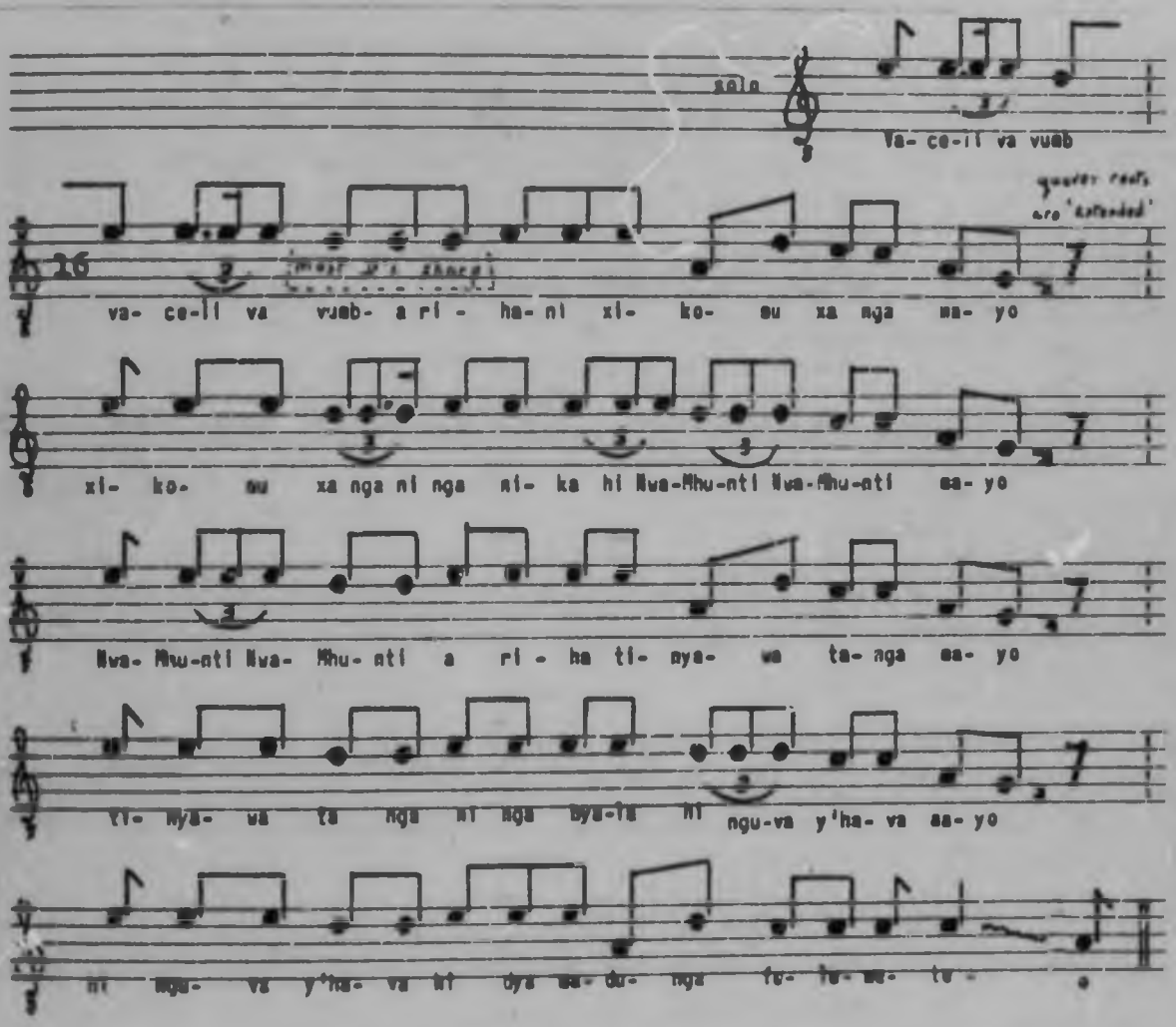
- - - - - - - - - - - - -

1. Cuénod, R., Tsonga-English Dictionary, Swiss Mission in South Africa, Johannesburg, 1967, p. 56.

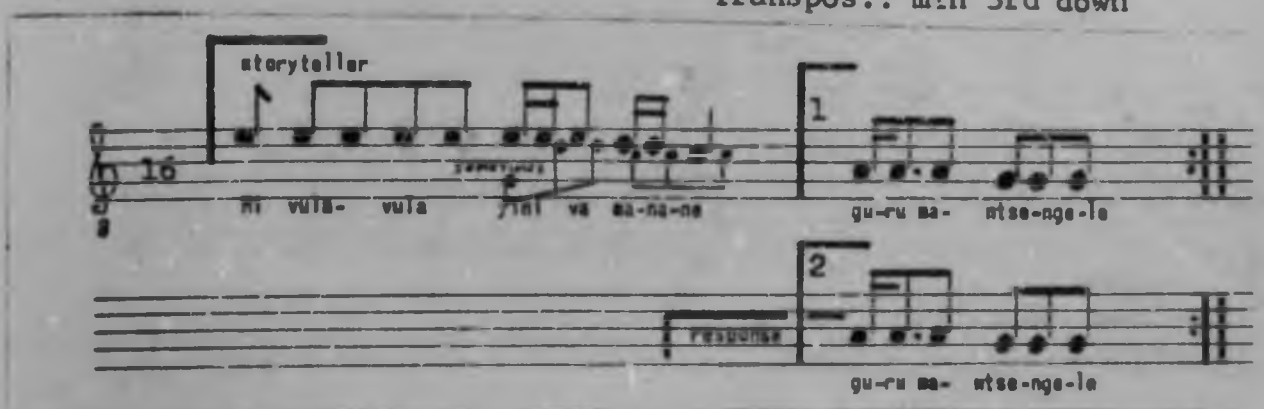
Songs Occurring Within Children's Stories

Children's Song Transcription 1. N'wa-Mpfundla Na N'wa-Mhunti (Master Hare and Master Duiker)

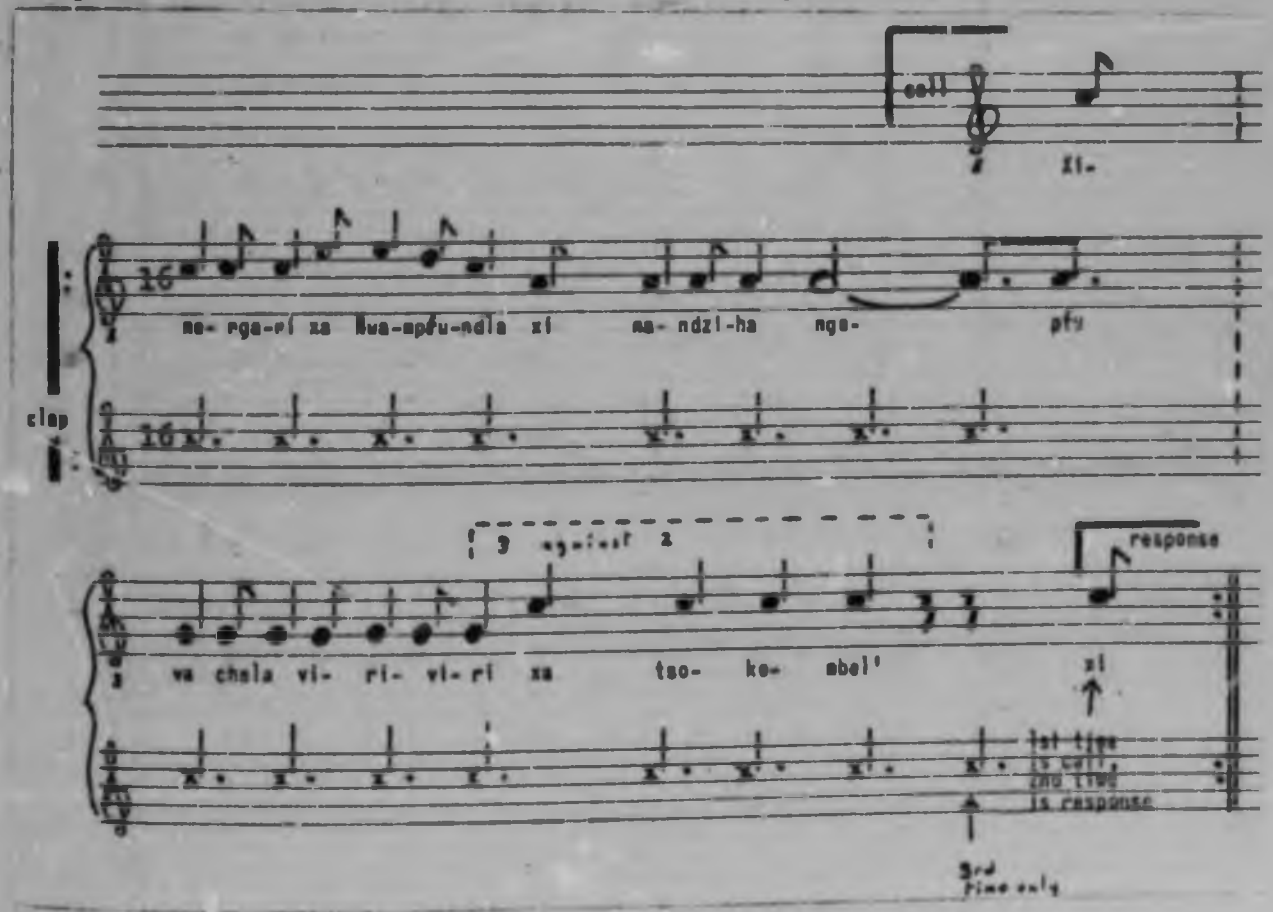
♪ = 208
Cycle: 16 ♪
Transpos.: maj 3rd up



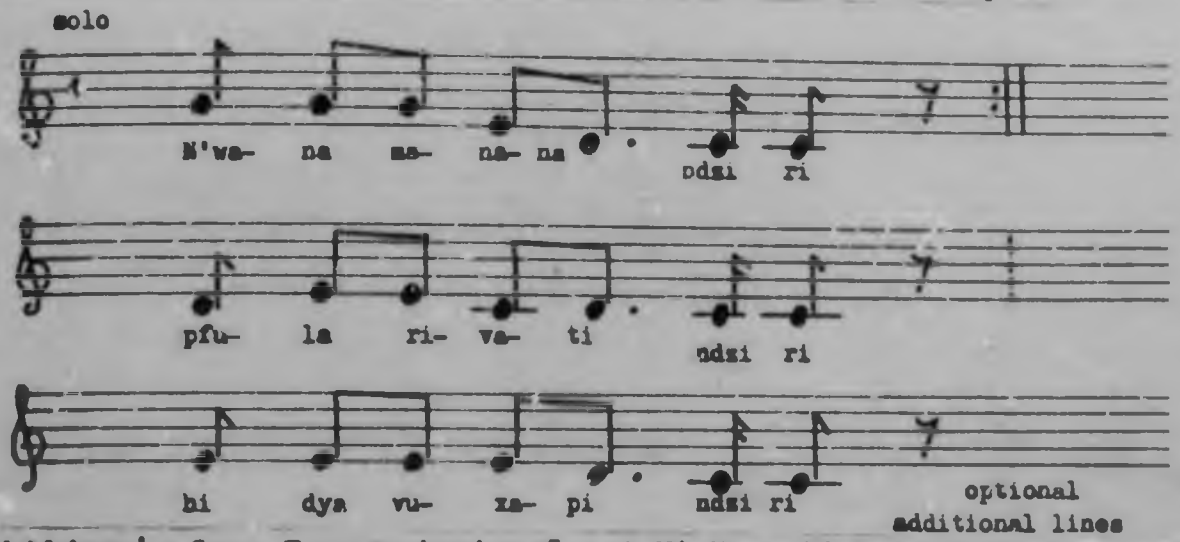
Children's Song Transcription 2. N'wa-Mpfundla, Hi Ya Dla Tinyarni Na Timhunti Na Tingnala (Master Hare, Hunting Buffaloes, Duikers and Lions)
♪ = 400
Cycle: 16 ♪
Transpos.: min 3rd down



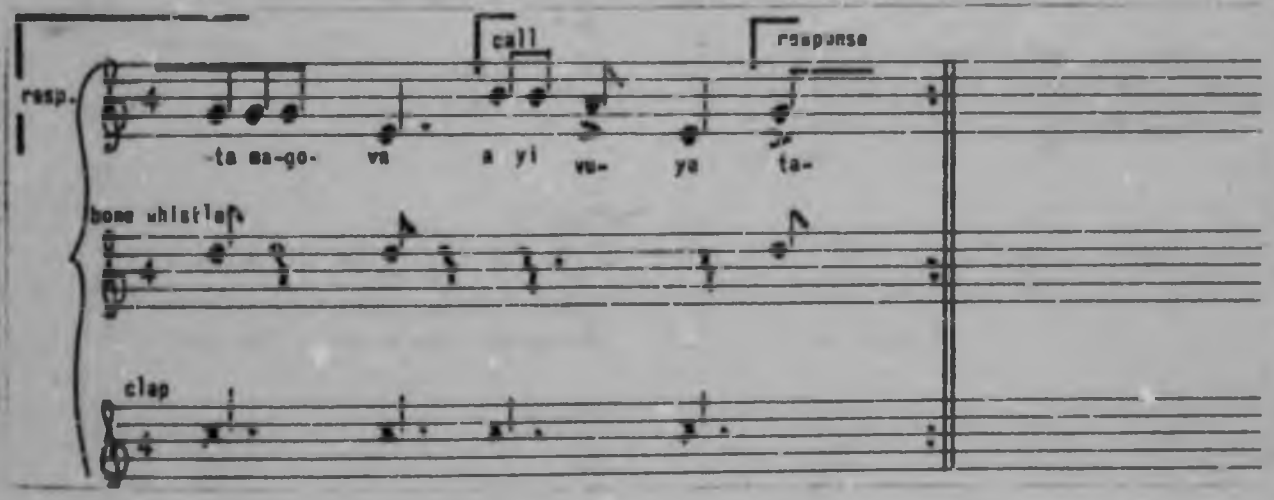
Children's Song Transcription 3. Xinengani Xa N wa-Mpfundla (Little Leg of Master Hare)
♩. = 154
Cycle: 16 ♩.
Transpos.: 4th down



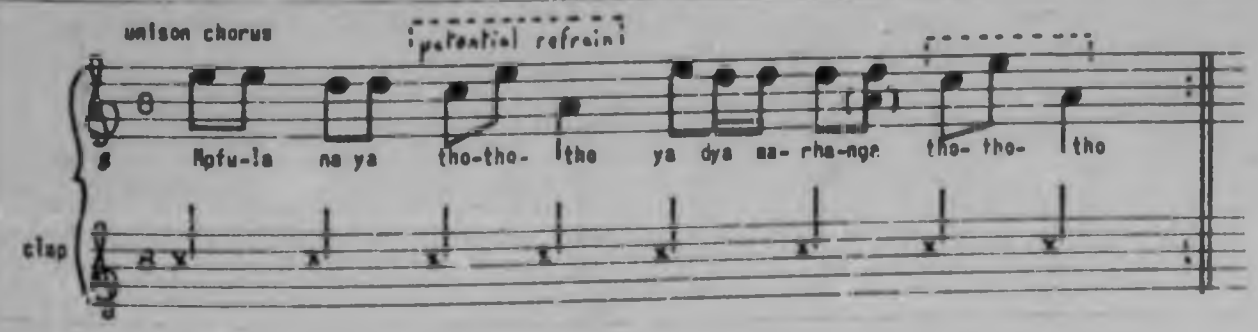
Children's Song Transcription 4. Hi Dya Timanga Ndzi Ri
(So That We May Eat Groundnuts)
♩ = 132
Cycle: 4 ♩
Transpos.: min 2nd up



Children's Song Transcription 5. A Yi Vuye Yi Tata Magova
(Let It Fall And Fill
The Gulleys)
♩. = 100
Cycle: 4 ♩.
Transpos.: nil



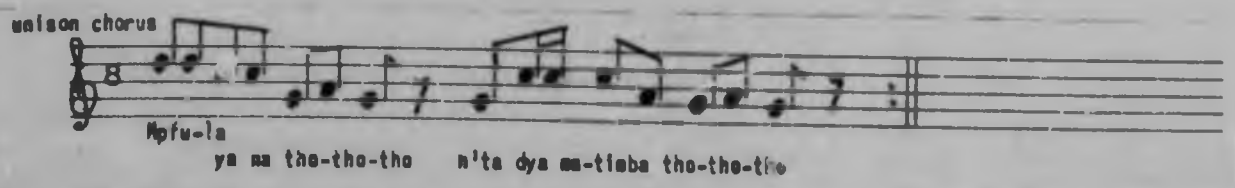
Children's Song Transcription 6. Mpfula Na Ya Tho-tho-tho
(The Rain Is Falling)
♩ = 97
Cycle: 8 ♩
Transpos.: maj 3rd up



Children's Song Transcription 7. An Alternative Version of the Above

♩ = 105
Cycle: 8

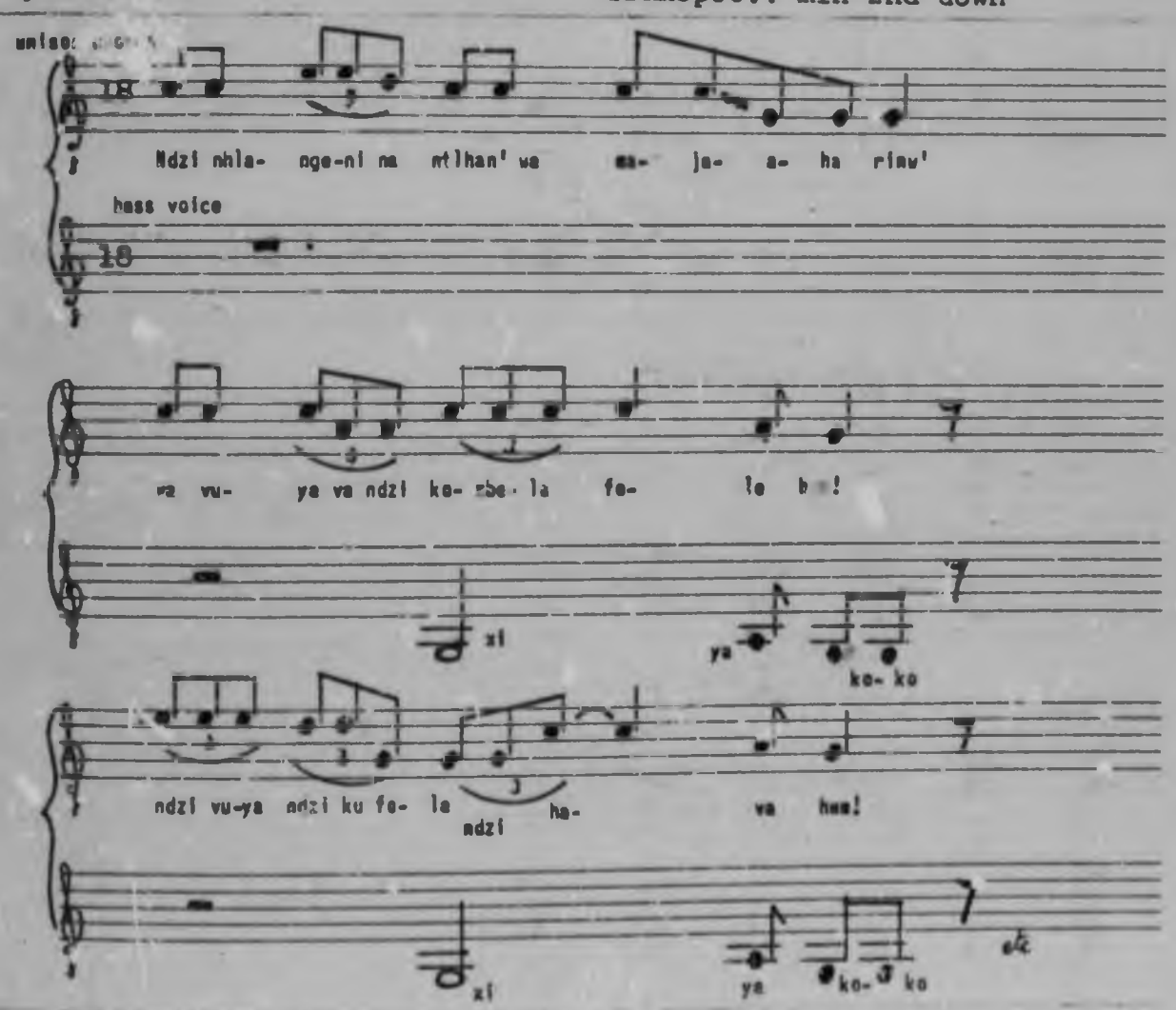
Transpos.: 4th up



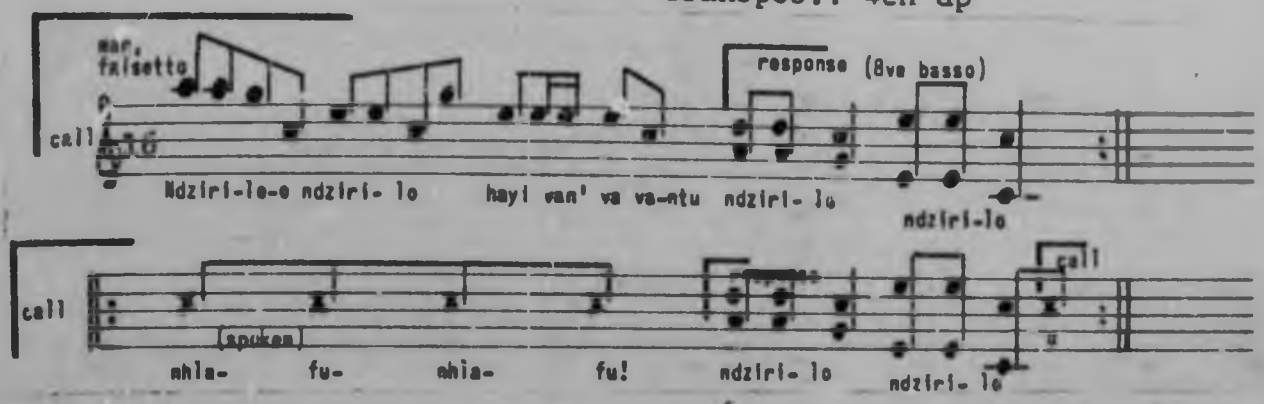
Children's Song Transcription 8. Va Vuya Va Ndzi Kombela Fole (They Asked Me For Some Tobacco)

♩ = 166
Cycle: 11

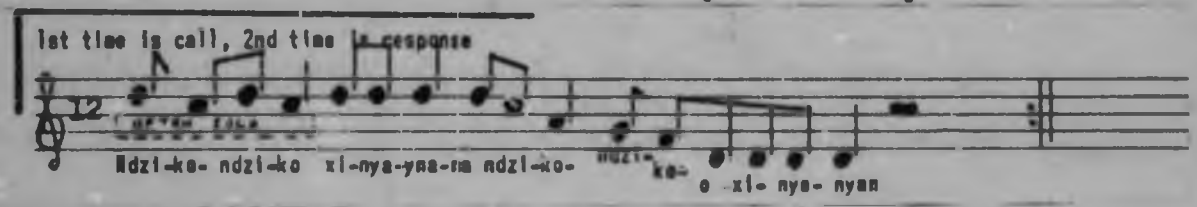
Transpos.: min 2nd down



Children's Song Transcription 9. A Va Nga Pani Hi Tinghala
(There'll Be No Oxen On Account of the Lions)
♩ = 104
Cycle: 16 ♩
Transpos.: 4th up

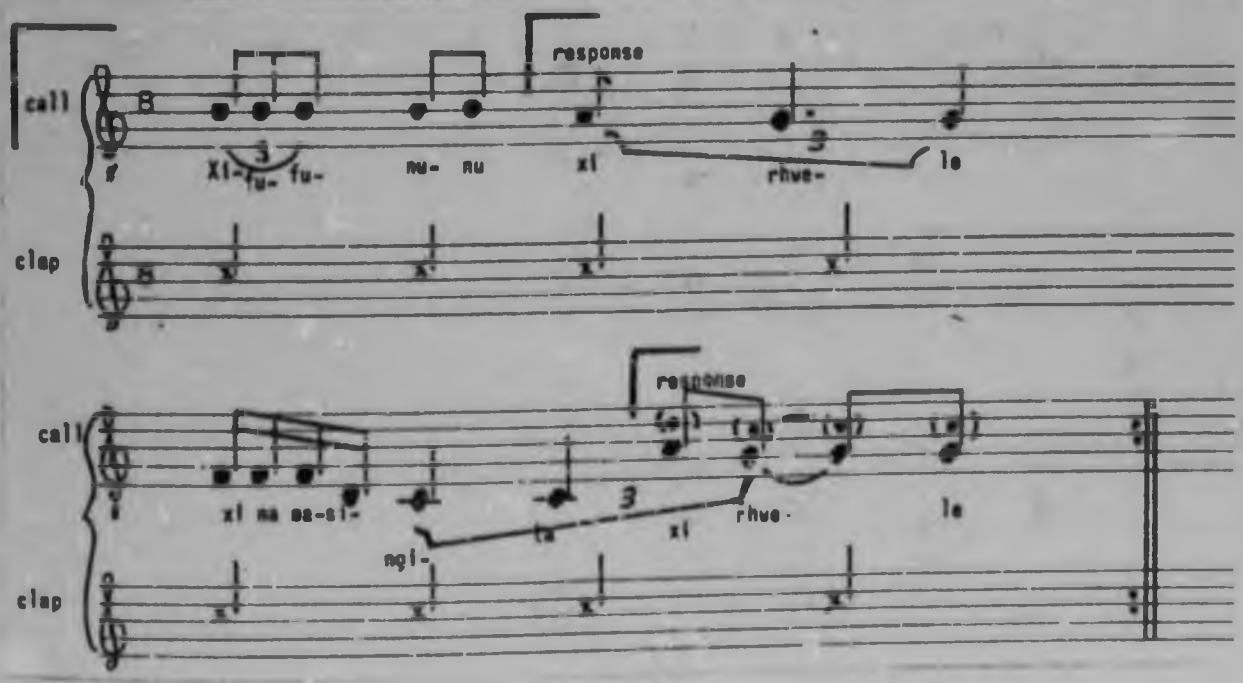


Children's Song Transcription 10. Ndziko-ndziko Xinyenyana
(The Ndziko-ndziko Bird)
♩ = 228
Cycle: 12 ♩
Transpos.: 4th up



Songs Accompanying Children's Games

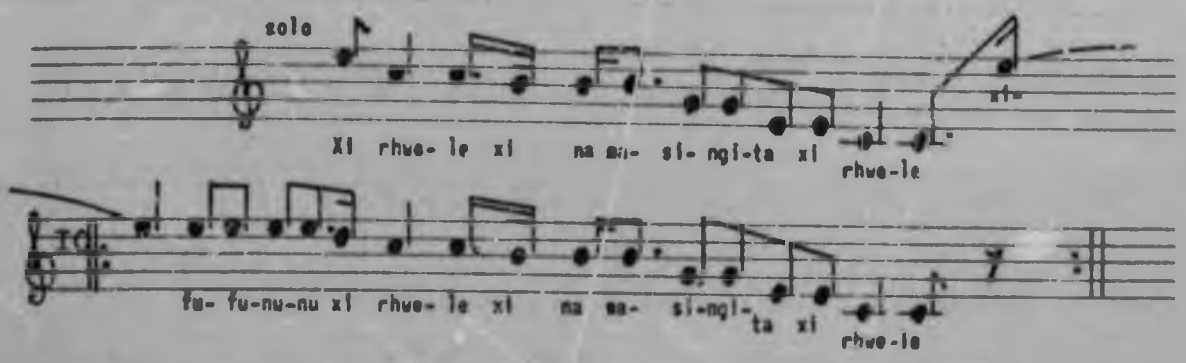
Children's Song Transcription 11. Xifufununu Xi Rhwele
(The Beetle Carries)
♩ = 216
Cycle: 8 ♩
Transpos.: min 2nd up



Children's Song Transcription 12. A Second Version of the Above

♪ = 215
Cycle: 10 ♩

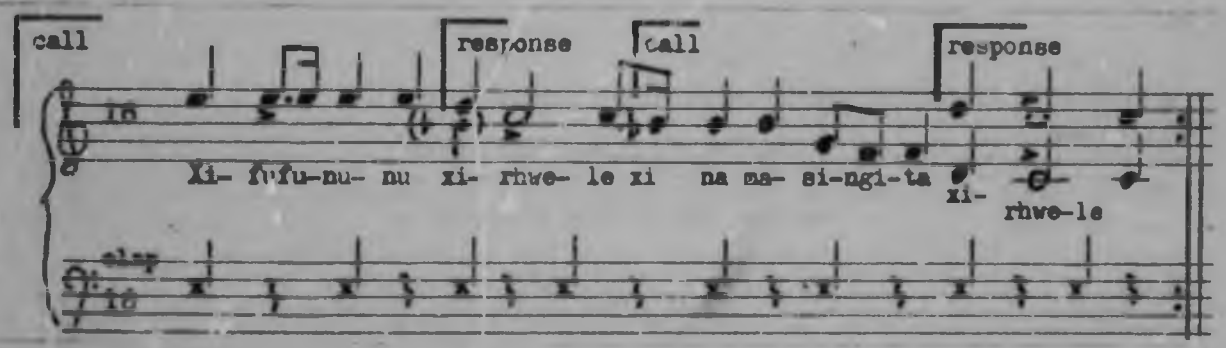
Transpos.: min 6th up



Children's Song Transcription 13. A Third Version of the Above

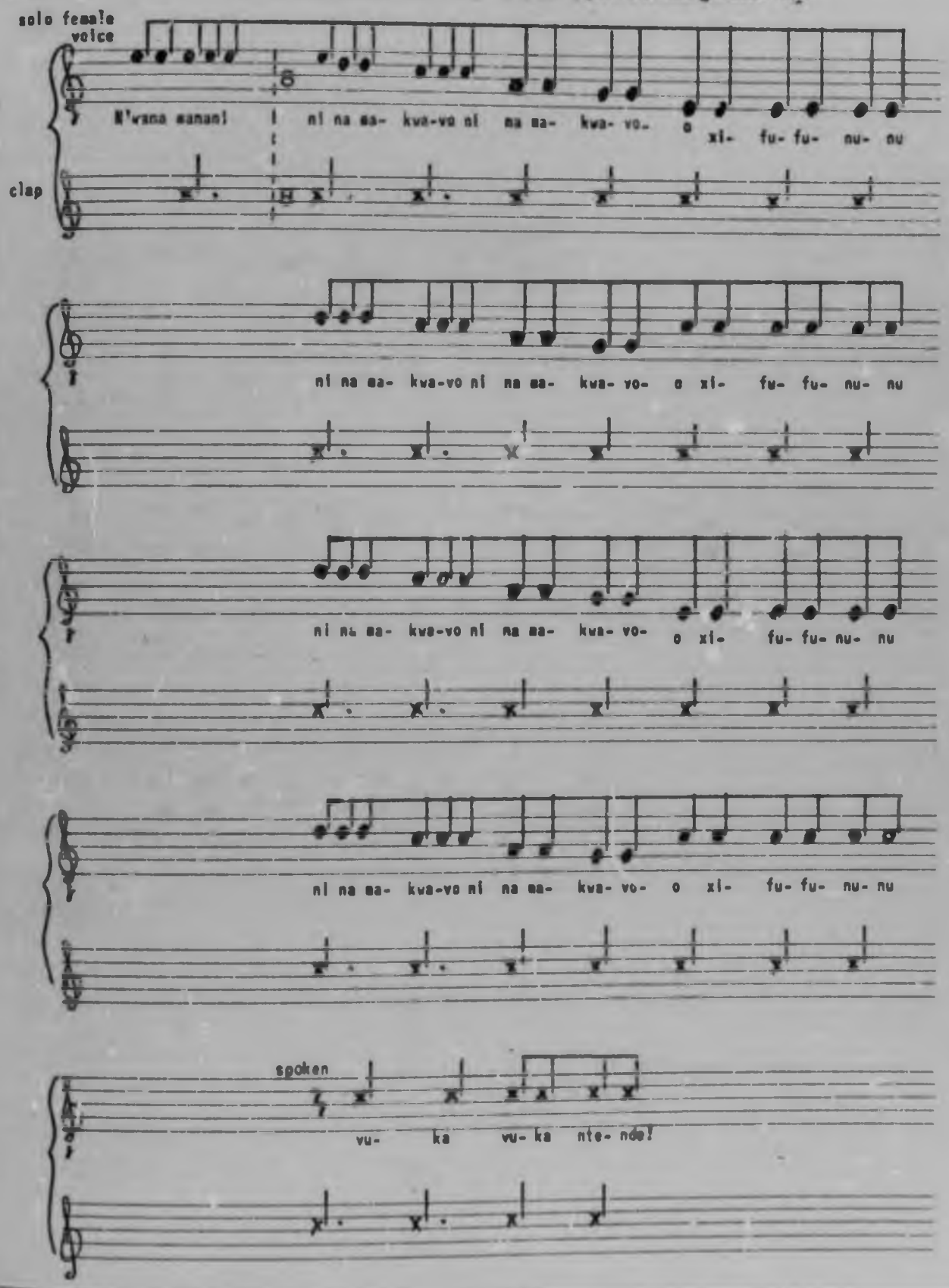
♩ = 108
Cycle: 16 ♩

Transpos.: 4th up

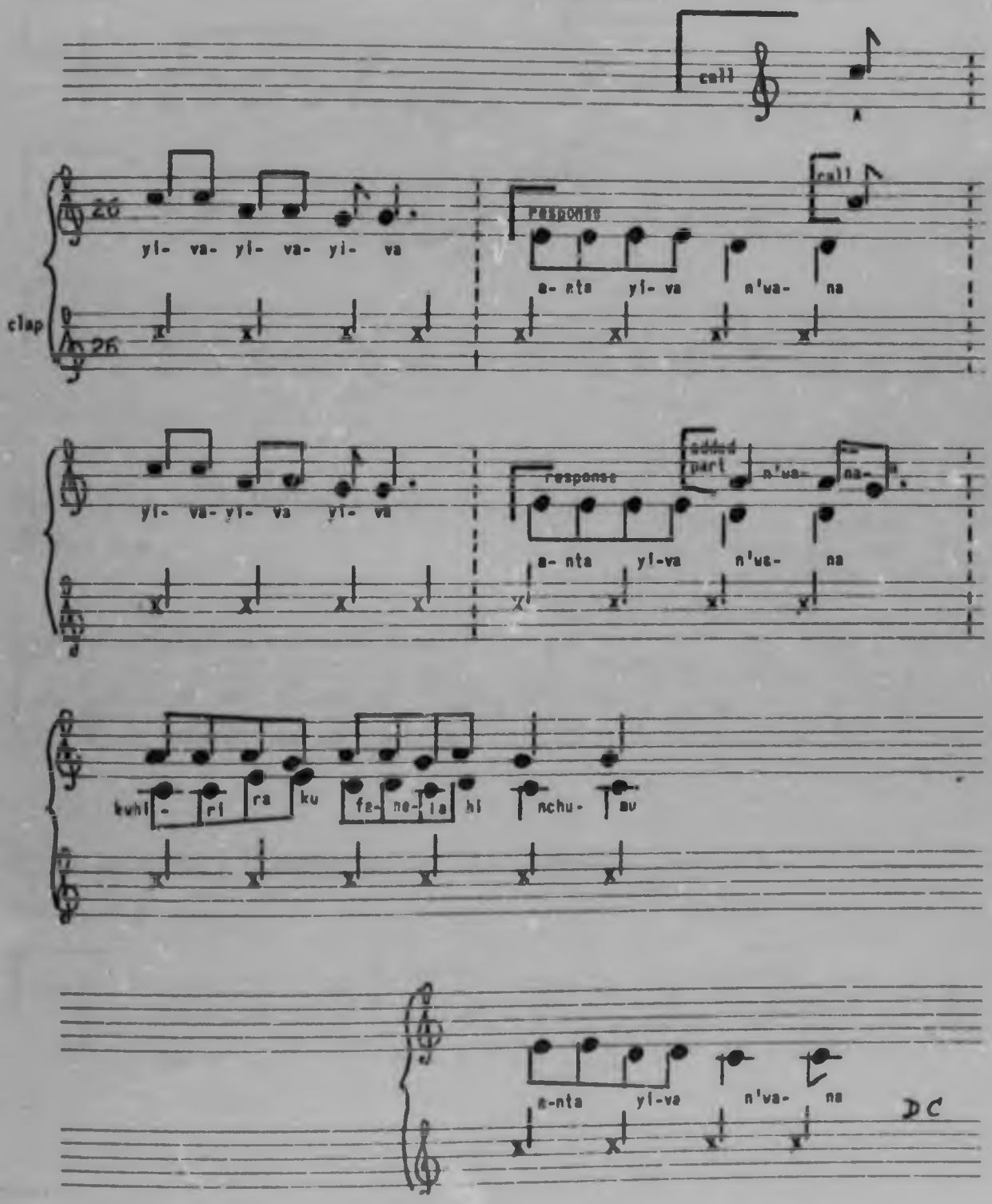


Children's Song Transcription 14. Xifufunumu, Vuka, Vuka!
(Beetle, Wake Up!)

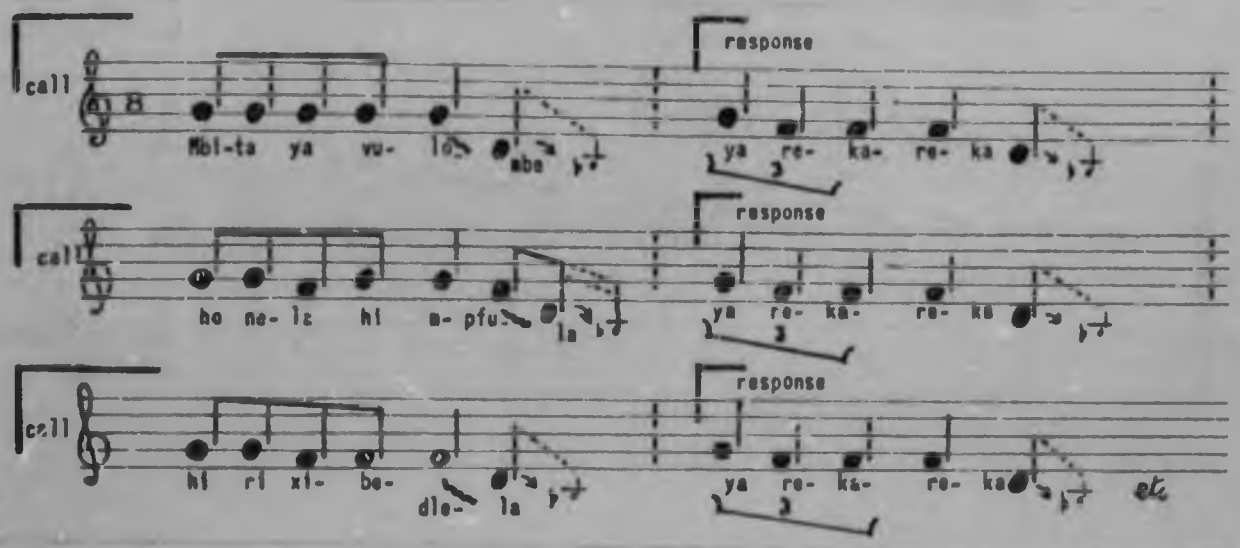
♩ = 308
Cycle: 8 ♩
Transpos.: maj 2nd up



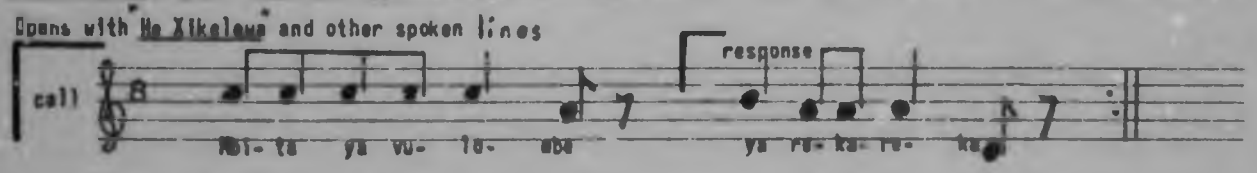
Children's Song Transcription 15. Yiva-yiva-viva!
♩ = 150 (Sway!)
Cycle: 26 ♩ Transpos.: min 2nd up



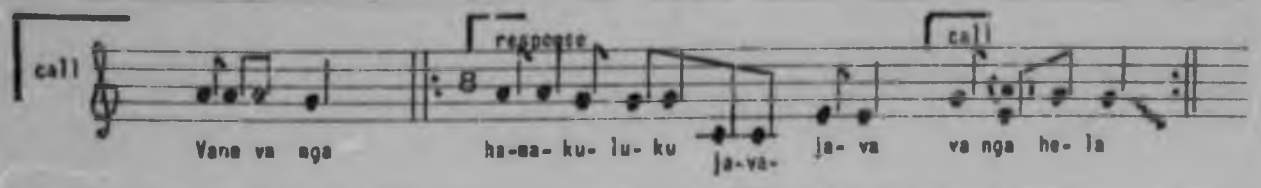
Children's Song Transcription 16. Mbita Ya Vulombe
♩ = 146 (The Pot of Honey)
Cycle: 8 ♩ Transpos.: maj 2nd up



Children's Song Transcription 17. He Xikelewa
♩ = 153 (Hey! Xikelewa) -- related
Cycle: 8 ♩ to Children's Song 16, see
full text given later
Transpos.: maj 7th up



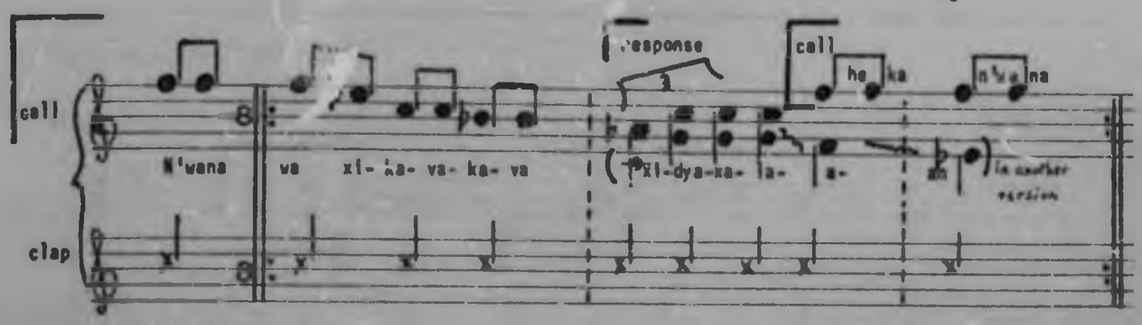
Children's Song Transcription 18. Makuluku Javajava!
♩ = 152 (Great Alarm!)
Cycle: 8 ♩ Transpos.: maj 3rd up



Children's Song of Mockery

Children's Song Transcription 19. N'wana Wa Xikavakava
(Child-of-the-Goshawk)
Transpos.: maj 7th up

♩ = 156
Cycle: 8 ♩



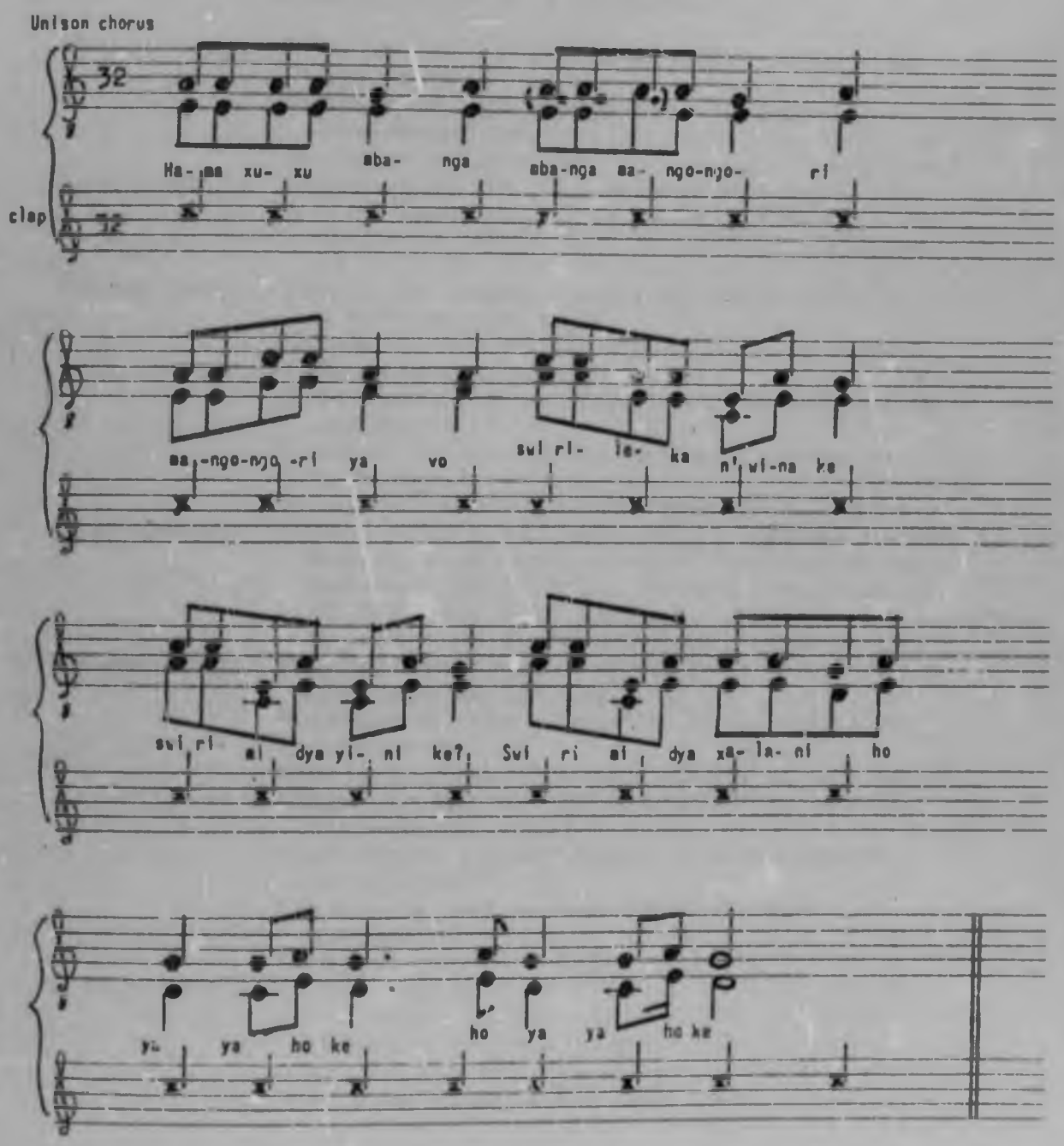
Children's Counting Song

Children's Song Transcription 20. Hamaxuxu Mbanga-mbanga Mangongori! (Somebody Else's Turn!)

♩ = 140
Cycle: 32 ♩

Transpos.: maj 3rd down

Preliminary shout: "Mbale-mbale!"



The Song-words and Their Meaning,

Together With a Commentary

Children's Song 1 (Tsonga version recorded by author).

N'wa-Mpfundla Na N'wa-Mhunti

Unison song: N'wa-Mhunti, N'wa-Mhunti riha tinyawa ta nga mayo!
Tinyawa ta nga ni nga rima hi nguva ya hava mayo!
Hi nguva ya hava ni dya madungu felemete-e!

Solo speech: Kutani N'wa-Mhunti a riha xikomu. Kutani a ya kumu vaceli va vumba. Kutani N'wa-Mpfundla aku hina a hi celi hi timhandzi hi cela hi xikomu. Vona va xitshova.

Unison song: Vaceli va vumba, vaceli va vumba rihani xikomu xa nga mayo!
Xikomu xa nga ni nga nyika hi N'wa-Mhunti, N'wa-Mhunti mayo!
N'wa-Mhunti, N'wa-Mhunti a riha tinyawa ta nga mayo!
Tinyawa ta nga ni nga byala hi nguva ya hava mayo!
Hi nguva ya hava ni dya madungu felemete-e!

Solo speech: Kutani vaceli va vumba va n'wi nyika nkambana. Kutani a ya kuma vahakuli va tinyoxi va hakulela matlukeni. Kutani a ku hina a hi hakuleli matlukeni, hi hakulela nkambanini. Kutani a va lomba nkambana, vona va faya.

Unison song: Vahakuli va nyoxi, vahakuli va nyoxi rihani nkambana wa nga mayo!
Nkambana wa nga ni nga nyika hi vaceli va vumba mayo!
Vaceli va vumba va riha xikomu xa nga mayo!
Xikomu xa nga ni nga nika hi N'wa-Mhunti, N'wa-Mhunti mayo!
N'wa-Mhunti, N'wa-Mhunti a riha tinyawa ta nga mayo!
Tinyawa ta nga ni nga byala hi nguva ya hava mayo!
Hi nguva ya hava hi dyz madungu felemete-e!

Solo speech: Kutani vahakuli va tinyoxi va n'wi nyika vulombe. Kutani aku hina hi chela vulombe. Kutani a ya kuma vakandzi va xigugu. Kutani aku hina hi chela vulombe. Kutani va heta vulombe bya yena hinkwabyo.

Unison song: Vakandzi va xigugu, Vakandzi va xigugu rihani vulombe byanga mayo!
Vulombe byanga ni nga nika hi vahakuli va nyoxi mayo!
Vahakuli va nyoxi, va riha nkambana wa nga mayo!
Nkambana wa nga ni nga nyika hi vaceli va vumba mayo!
Vaceli va vumba va riha xikomu xa nga mayo!
Xikomu xa nga ni nga nika hi N'wa-Mhunti, N'wa-Mhunti mayo!
N'wa-Mhunti, N'wa-Mhunti a riha tinyawa ta nga mayo!
Tinyawa ta nga ni nga byala hi nguva ya hava mayo!
Hi nguva ya hava hi dya madungu felemete-e!

Solo speech: Kutani vakandzi va xigugu va n'wi nyika xigugu a famba.

Master Hare and Master Duiker

Unison song: Duiker, duiker, replace my beans!
The beans which I cultivated during drought!
During drought when we ate madungu felemete-e!

Solo speech: The duiker, however, offered him a hoe. Off went Master Hare until he met some clay-diggers. He told them that, for clay-digging, a hoe was better than a stick. When they borrowed the hoe it quickly broke.

Unison song: Clay-diggers, clay-diggers, replace my hoe!
The hoe the duiker gave me!
The one he gave me in exchange for my beans!
The beans I cultivated during drought
During drought when we ate madungu felemete-e!

Solo speech: The clay diggers offered him a clay plate. Off went Master Hare with the clay plate, until he met some honey-gatherers. He told them that honey is best collected on a clay plate, not on leaves. They borrowed it from him, but it soon broke.

Unison song: Honey-gatherers, honey-gatherers, replace my clay plate!
The clay plate the clay-gatherers gave me!
The one they gave me in place of my hoe!
The hoe the duiker gave me!
The one he gave me in exchange for my beans!
The beans I cultivated during drought!
During drought when we ate madungu felemete-e!

Solo speech: The honey-gatherers offered him some honey. Off went Master Hare with his honey, until he met some peanut-grinders. He told the peanut-grinders that it is best to add honey when making peanut butter, so they took it and poured it all into their peanuts.

Unison song: Peanut-grinders, peanut-grinders, replace my honey!
The honey the honey-gatherers gave me!
The honey they gave me in place of my clay plate!
The clay plate the clay-gatherers gave me!
The one they gave me in place of my hoe!
The hoe the duiker gave me!
The one he gave me in exchange for my beans!
The beans I cultivated during drought!
During drought when we ate madungu felemete-e!

Solo speech: The peanut-grinders offered him some peanut butter. Off went Master Hare with the peanut butter!

The length of Tsonga story-songs varies according to the storyteller -- a two-hundred-line version of this one has been published in the vernacular (without music or translation) by Marolen,[2] and an English translation occupying some one hundred lines has been given by Junod, who states that the "story of the Hare's Hoe is told from one end of the Tsonga tribe to the other."[3] It is told to children by old women during the winter after sunset (xidyambu). Should children be found recounting or singing folk-tales before sunset, they are warned that 'horns might grow from their heads'.

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2. Marolen, D.P., Garingani-wa-garingani, Beter Boeke, Pretoria, 1966, p. 105.
3. Junod, Henri, The Life of a South African Tribe, Vol. II, MacMillan & Co., London, 1927, p. 243.

In those African societies where myth-tellers served a ruler, accounting for the latter's 'supernatural' origin and his privileged existence, the cunning-hero folktale has almost disappeared. The largely classless Tsonga, however, have fifty to sixty folktales featuring Master Hare, and when emphasizing a man's skill or cunning they use the following saying:

Munhu lo i Nwa'mpfundla

This man is another Master Hare

Tsonga Master Hare story-songs reflect varying degrees of legendary figure pictorialization, for while many retain the characters in their basically animal form, certain of them exhibit a high degree of humanization.

Children's Song 2.

N'wa Mfundla, Hi Ya Dla Tinyarhi Na Timhunti Na Tinghala

(Spoken) Call: Garingani wa garingani
Response: Garingani!
Call: Ko na swipfuketana / Ko va N'wa-Mpfundla na N'wa-Mhunti / O a hi longeni timbuva / Hi ya kule / Hi ya ku hloteni / Hi ya dla tinyarhi / Na timhunti / Na tinghala /

(Sung) Call: Mi vulavule yini vamanani
Response: Guru mantsengele!
Call: Niri tindondolodzini / No hiangana na vhimba mukhwana / A ni hoxa ndzeni ka mukhwana / Mafele ya nga guru / Se n'to yini guru / Madlaya manani guru /

(diagonal strokes indicate interpolation of response)

Master hare, Hunting Buffaloes,
Duikers, and Lions

(Spoken) Call: Once upon a time
Response: Garinganil
Call: 'Twas said of yore / Master Hare and Master Duiker / Prepared their rations/ And set off hunting / Hunting for buffaloes / Hunting for duikers / Hunting for lions /

(Sung) Call: Why are your heads together, you women?
Response: Guru mantsengele!
Call: We are gathering wild peas / We met an ogre with a knife / Woe, it is my death / What shall I say? / You kill my mother /

The previous Master Hare story-song (No. 1) consisted of unison song alternating with solo speech. This (No. 2) Master Hare story-song consists of a long spoken call-and-response section during which the cantor relates the story step-by-step and is punctuated by the audience's "garinganil", followed by a long sung call-and-response section during which the cantor digresses from the story and is punctuated by the audience's "guru mantsengele!".

Occasionally the Tsonga story-song serves a 'super-natural' purpose within the story, being sung to effect some miraculous event. In this connection Rycroft has commented that "the (Xhosa) song within the folktale often has magical power."[4]

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4. Rycroft, David, Zulu and Xhosa Praise Poetry and Song", African Music, Vol. III, No. 1, 1962, p. 83.

Children's Song 3.

Xinengana Xa N'wa-Mpfundla

Call: Xinengana xa n'wa-Mpfundla
Xi nandziha ngopfu wa chela
viri-viri
Xo tsokombela xi nandziha
ngopfu
Response: same

Little Leg Of Master Hare

Call: Little leg of Master Hare
Is very sweet with hot chili
Tasty and very sweet
Response: same

The little leg of Master Hare is mentioned above as being 'tasty', and in this connection it is noteworthy that there is a taboo on married girls eating the hare during courtship, lest they become 'too cunning'. The supposed cunning of the hare is legendary and is reflected in the following Tsonga proverb:

Va bile xihlahla,
A va banga mpfundla

They have beaten the bush,
But not the hare

It may be significant that, in these three different Master Hare songs (Nos. 1-3), the pentatonic melody commences at a peak of E and descends to a cadential point featuring AG. Two of the songs (Nos. 1 and 3) exhibit further parallel characteristics in that they terminate with an ascent to C.

Children's Song 4.

Hi Dya Timanga, Ndzi Ri

Solo: N'wana manana, ndzi ri
Pfula rivati, ndzi ri
Hi dya vuxapi, ndzi ri
Hi dya timanga, ndzi ri

So That We May Eat Groundnuts, I Say

Solo: Child of my mother, I say
Open the door, I say
So that we may eat peanuts, I say
So that we may eat groundnuts, I say

This story-song occurs within a folktale called "Master Hare and King Lion", and reference is made to a staple horticultural product of the Tsonga -- groundnuts. Groundnuts provide the fatty principles of the Tsonga diet, and they are roasted or used as seasoning for mealie flour. The plant is unusual -- after having blossomed the peduncle of the flower elongates, enters the ground, and nourishes the seed there. They are unearthed by pounding the ground around the stem and pulling up the whole plant by the roots. The groundnuts are laid out by children on milala palm-leaf drying-floors, to dry in the sun, and then stored in the xitlati storage huts, which are smeared outside with clay.

The following Tsonga song about groundnuts was collected by Junod:

With groundnuts and onions, nte, nte, nte,[5]
Make a good sauce in the pot!

Groundnuts have fertility symbolism and become taboo for the participants in certain Tsonga rites such as circumcision and mourning.

Children's Song 5.

A Yi Vuye Yi Tata Magova

Call: A yi vuye
Response: Yi tata magova

Let It Fall And Fill The Gulleys

Call: Let it fall
Response: And fill the gulleys

Children's Song 6.

Mpfula Ya Na Tho-tho-tho

Unison chorus: Mpfula ya na tho-tho-tho
Hi ya dya marhanga, tho-tho-tho
Hi ya dya matimba, tho-tho-tho
Hi ya dya makwembe, tho-tho-tho

The Rain Is Falling

Unison chorus: The rain if falling
So that we may eat squash, fall
So that we may eat sweet sorghum, fall
So that we may eat pumpkin, fall

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5. Junod, Henri, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 380.

Both of the above two songs are about rain and occur within stories about drought. Thò-thò-thò is translated by Cuénod as 'to fall in drops, as rain', and thòthòthò as 'a native-distilled alcohol'.[6] It is possible that a vernacular pun of some sort is intended.

Children's Song 7 ... same as Song 6.

Children's Song 8.

Va Vuya Va Ndzi Kombela Fole

Unison chorus: Ndzi nhlangeni na ntlhanu wa majaha na ri'nwe
Va vuya va ndzi kombela fole
Ndzi vuya ndzi ku fole ndzi hava
Va vuya va ndzi haxa mpama
Swi hula hi ku khandsi ya xitmela ni ya Joni
Xa kaka hohani xi ya koko

They Asked Me For Some Tobacco

Unison chorus: I encountered five boys
They asked me for some tobacco
I said that I had no tobacco
They hit me with their palms
It is better to go on a train to Johannesburg
My aunt, how the train pulls

This song derives from a 'monster' story which is no longer told, and its words have become changed. Note that the melody descends pentatonically from a peak of E to an AG cadential point, as in Songs 1-3.

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6. Ibid., p. 193.

Children's Song 9.

A Va Nga Pani Hi Tinghala

Call: Ndzi rilo, ndzi rilo
Hayi vana va vantu
Response: Ndzi rilo, ndzi rilo
Call: A va nga pani / Hi tinghala /
Ntlhafu-ntlhafu! /

There'll Be No Oxen Because Of The Lions

Call: I weep, I weep
You children of the poeple
Response: I weep, I weep
Call: There'll be no oxen /
Because of the lions /
Attack! /

This song comes from an animal story, and its subject -- the loss of oxen -- represents a serious eventuality for people whose economy partly depends upon the ownership and transfer of cattle. There were formerly four supposed causes for the loss of oxen: 'witchcraft', Zulu raids, Texas Fever introduced by the whites, and lions. Examining the first cause, 'witchcraft', we find that on this subject Junod writes thus:

> The five chief methods which a noyi (unidentified evil spirit) has at his disposal are the following: ruma ... the ruma consists in sending either a crocodile or a lion .. the mfulo is still worse ... one of them had charms to open the oxen kraals. 7

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7. Junod, Henri, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 513.

Examining the possibility that this song refers to Zulu raids of the last century, it is known that the Zulu frequently referred to themselves as 'lions',[8] and that they stole Tsonga cattle there can be little doubt, as the following statement suggests:

> Oxen were plentiful in Tsongaland before the Zulu invasion; the Ba-Ngoni warriors stole and killed them wholesale. [9]

Junod gives a Ronga song containing the words ndzi file, tihomu teru! (I am killed. our oxen!), and comments that it "doubtlessly refers to the ruin which would be entailed were the enemy to carry off their cattle."[10]

Of the third possible cause for loss of oxen Junod writes thus:

> ... in 1910 they were fewer than ever, owing to cattle plague and to Texas Fever, which had destroyed the herds in the Transvaal .... [11]

The song in Transcription 9 possesses an interesting formal structure, consisting of a repeated 10 ♩ section, followed by a 6 ♩ repeated section the first 2 ♩ of which are spoken rather than sung.

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8. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 463.
9. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 46.
10. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 461.
11. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 46.

Children's Song 10.

Ndziko-ndziko Xinyenyana

Solo: Ndziko-ndziko xinyenyana
N'wana N'wa-Xinana xinyenyana
Andlala mabetsa xinyenyana

The Ndziko-ndziko Bird

Solo: Ndziko-ndziko Bird
Child-of-the-small-tree-frog
Spread the mats on the ground

This song comes from a story concerning the Ndziko Ogres (a Tsonga folktale theme), but upon examination of the words a possible relationship with the boys' circumcision school is suggested. That a circumcision song may have found its way into an 'ogre' story (or vice versa) is not surprising, for simulations of 'lion-men' used to occur within the Tsonga circumcision school.[12]

The mabetsa palm-leaves, which Junod describes as being "spread on the ground so that they (the initiates) do not touch the dust with their feet ...",[13] and the "xinana (frog) which cries is the little circumcised boy whose voice is hardly heard amidst all the noise of that terrible day. He is a small powerless thing, like the frog."[14] That the song probably has circumcision school connections is supported by the fact that the Pedi (from whom the Transvaal

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12. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 76.
13. Ibid., p. 93.
14. Ibid., p. 87.

Tsonga derive some of their circumcision ritual) sing the following circumcision song describing the boys as 'little frogs':

Little frogs, little frogs
The flesh in the water
Whom shall I send? 15

Children's Song 11.

Xifufununu Xi Rhwele

Call: Xifufununu xi rhwele, xi na masingita
Response: Xi rhwele!
Call: Xa na ni vona rhwala, xi na masingita
Response: Xi rhwele!
First Solo Shout: Xifufununu hi mina Tsatsewana wa ka Pete. Wa ka Ngoveni, ndzisana ya Chief Khamanyana
Second Solo Shout: Ndzi le hospital ndzi a hi kuvabya
Response: Xi rhwele!

The Beetle Carries

Call: The beetle carries wonderful things on its back
Response: It carries!
Call: When it spies me, it shows me wonderful things on its back
Response: It carries!
*First Solo Shout: Beetle, I am Tsatsawana, the daughter of Pete. My surname is Ngoveni, the younger sister of Chief Khamanyana
*Second Solo Shout: I'm at the hospital because of my sickness
Response: It carries!

*These are irregular lines from one tape-recorded version only.

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15. Roberts, Noel, and C.A.T. Winter, South Africa Journal of Sciences, "Initiation Rites of the Bapedi", XII, 1915/16.

Children play the xifufununu game in pairs, one sitting astride the other's back and endeavouring to turn him over, as one might a beetle. The Tsonga are familiar with a large beetle (Tenebrionida) which they call xifufununu xa paripari, paripari being an ideophone representing 'a start of surprise'. This beetle, when it beats the ground repeatedly with its abdomen, attracts the attention of children who then gather round and turn it over onto its back.

Note that the singer improvises 'extra' lines to the song.

Children's Songs 11 and 13 ... same as Song 11.

Children's Song 14.

Xifufununu, Vuka, Vuka!

Solo: N'wana manani, ni na makwavo
Ni na makwavo xifufununu.
Vuka, vuka, ntende!

Beetle, Wake Up!

Solo: Child of my mother, I have a brother
I have a brother beetle
Wake up, wake!

This song accompanies a different beetle game.

Note the interesting clap -- 3 ♪ + 3 ♪ + 2 ♪ + 2 ♪ + 2 ♪ + 2 ♪ + 2 ♪

Children's Song 15.

Yiva-yiva-yiva!

Call: Yiva-yiva-yiva!
Response: A nta yiva n'wana
Call: Yiva-yiva-yiva
Response: A nta yiva n'wana
Khwirhi ra ku fanela hi nchumu
A nta yiva n'wana

Sway!

Call: Sway!
Response: I would steal a child
Call: Sway!
Response: I would steal a child
The belly needs something
I would steal a child

The ideophone yíva-yíva-yíva occurs only in triple combination, and means 'to sway back and forth'. The Tsonga verb ku yíva is an entirely different word, meaning 'to steal'. This song alternates the two words, using the ideophone for the call and the verb in the response, giving the impression that a pun is intended. Cuénod's Dictionary contains the following entries:

> -yíva, steal; (fig.) do something illicit, as poaching, adultery.
>
> yívà-yívà-yívà, (id.) sway, as plumes on head of walker. 16

The song accompanies a game in which the leader

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16. Cuénod, R., op. cit., p. 256.

faces a line of children, all of whom arch the trunk forward and sway from side to side, arms swinging loosely.

Children's Song 16.

Mbita Va Vulombe

Call: Mbita ya vulombe
Response: Ya rheka-rheka!
Call: Ho nela hi mpfula / Hi ri xibedlela / Hi ndhava ya vuvabyi / Mpfula ya nyan'waka / Yi dlele mavele / Ho hlupheka / Mi hlupheka ya nan'waka leyi

Pot of Honey

Call: The pot of honey
Response: How it stirs!
Call: Rain is pouring upon us / We're at the hospital / Because of sickness / The heavy rain of this year / Has beaten down our corn / We suffer so / It is the year of suffering /

In the game which this song accompanies, children clasp hands and face each other in two rows, supporting and swinging a child hammock-style while singing the refrain portion of the song. Note the topical nature of the improvised lines -- this version of Mbita ya vulombe was recorded during the unusually heavy rains of March, 1969, when many areas of the Northern Transvaal were under flood.

Children's Song 17.

He Xikelewa

(Spoken)

Call:	He Xikelewa	
Response:	Hee!	
Call:	A ka n'wina ni dya yini?	
Response:	Hi dya maxalani	
Call:	Na yini kambe	
Response:	Na n'wakwa	
Call:	Tihuku-ke?	
Response:	Ti dya vusokoti	
Call:	Ti hlampfi-ke?	Not present in Marolen's version
Response:	Ti dya vulombe	
Call:	Ha honisa?	
Response:	Honisani!	
Call:	Ha khoma?	
Response:	Khomani!	

(Sung)

Call:	Mbita Ya Vulombe
Response:	Ya rheka-rheka!

Hey! Xikelewa

(Spoken)

Call:	Hey! Xikelewa	
Response:	Hey!	
Call:	On what do you dine at home?	
Response:	We dine on sorghum	
Call:	And what else?	
Response:	And the kwakwa fruit	
Call:	What about your fowls?	
Response:	They devour ants	
Call:	What about fish	Not present in Marolen's version
Response:	They eat honey	
Call:	Do we ignore?	
Response:	Ignore ye!	
Call:	Do we catch?	
Response:	Catch ye!	

(Sung)

Call:	The honeypot
Response:	How it stirs!

He xikelewa and Mbita ya vulombe (see Song 16) are normally two separate game songs, but they are here found combined. This may be due to the wit of the singers, who noted that both songs mention honey. Marolen describes the game of He xikelewa thus:

> Two rows of marking-sticks are placed upright in flat ground, one boy standing by the final pair of sticks and the rest standing in a straight line by the first pair of sticks, facing him. They exchange the cited song-formula, and after the responders answer with the final line they run toward the line caller. They must avoid being caught but must not trespass outside the area marked by the sticks. Anyone caught stands with the lone boy and calls with him from then on. The last one to be caught starts the game again as caller. 17
>
> (translation by T.J.)

He xikelewa is an introductory formula, and ha honisa, honisani, ha khoma and khomani are formulae used at various action points. The lines "what about fish / they eat honey" refer to the mtonga bee, which nests underground over subterranean pools where fish are believed (by the Tsonga) to eat its honey.

Children's Song 18.

: Makuluku Javajava!

Call: Vana va nga
Response: He makuluku! Javajava!
Call: Va nga helo / Hi xinoyani /

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17. Marolen, D.P., Mitlangu Va Vafana Vatsonga, Swiss Mission in South Africa, Johannesburg, 1954. p. 10.

Great Alarm!

Call: My children
Response: Great alarm!
Call: Have been finished / By
the witches /

This game has been described by Marolen thus:

> In this game a 'wild dog' tries to catch 'baby duikers'. One child is the 'dog', another is the 'mother duiker', and the rest are 'baby duikers' standing with hands on hips in a line behind their 'mother's' outstretched arms. The 'dog' calls 'Child! Child!', and the 'babies' commence jumping in time to the song. Anyone caught becomes the 'dog's child'.[18]
>
> (translation by T.J.)

The singers are, of course, merely singing about the 'chasing' procedures involved in this game, but their reference to 'being finished by the witches' is based upon very strong Tsonga beliefs -- Guye cites the case of a child being named Nyambu ('their meat') because his brothers had been "eaten by the wizards."[19]

Children's Song 19.

N'wana Wa Xikavakava

Call: He ka n'wana wa xikavakava
Response: Xidya xilani
Call: Ndzi ku wena ndza bomba loyi / Ndzi ku mina ndza cino / Ndzi ku mina ndza tonga / Ndzi ku mina ndzi xibombi / A xi bombela Elim / Ndzi cinela vuvabyi /

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18. Ibid., p. 50.
19. Guye, The Rev. H., "Des Noms Propre Chez Les Ba-Ronga", Bulletin de la Société Neuchâteloise de Geographie, 1920.

Child-of-the-Goshawk

Call: O Child-of-the- Goshawk
Response: Eater of sorghum
Call: I say that I am boasting / I say that I am crazy / I say that I am a boaster / Boasting about Elim / I dance till I am sick

As do the melodies of many other Tsonga children's songs, N'wana Wa Xikavakava descends pentatonically from an initial peak (this time the initial peak is F and E♭ rather than E) to the two tones AG, and terminates with an ascent to C.

Children's Song 20.

Hamaxuxu Mbanga-mbanga Mangongori!

Shout: Mbale-mbale!
Solo song: Haxaxuxu mbanga-mbanga mangongori
Mangongori ya vo
Swi rileka n'winake
Swi ri mi dya yinike? .
Swi ri me dya xalani
Hoyaya hoke cinani swene vana
Vhumani swinene kondla!

Somebody Else's Turn

Shout: Mbale-mbale!
Solo song: Somebody else's turn!
Turns, ya vo
They are crying for you
They say what do you eat?
They say you eat sorghum
Dance hard, children
Answer hard!

The above is a leg-counting song for Tsonga children, and it is also found among the neighbouring Venda in several 'borrowed' versions.[20]

The aforegoing children's songs, and most of the other twenty or thirty known children's songs that comprise a Tsonga child's basic musical repertoire, are known throughout Tsonga territory on both sides of the Transvaal/Mozambique border. Their didactic value is limited, though it could perhaps be shown that their regular performance reinforces certain principles of Tsonga speech, and that their subject-matter helps perpetuate certain Tsonga beliefs (a performance of Hi Dya Timanga, for instance, may remind young singers of the many taboos concerning groundnuts (timanga or vuxapi).

Many Tsonga children's songs can be heard only at certain times during the horticultural year. Boys' herding songs, for example, lose their raison d'être immediately after the harvest when cattle are left to graze on their own in the newly-cut mealie-patches, and night-time story-songs are not told during the hoeing season (xirimo) when everyone retires early in order to work next morning. In this respect, the periodic performance/non-performance of such songs may be said to epitomize the natural cycle on which much Tsonga life is based.

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20. Blacking, John Venda Children's Songs, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1967, p. 58.

Summary of the Musical Characteristics of Children's Songs

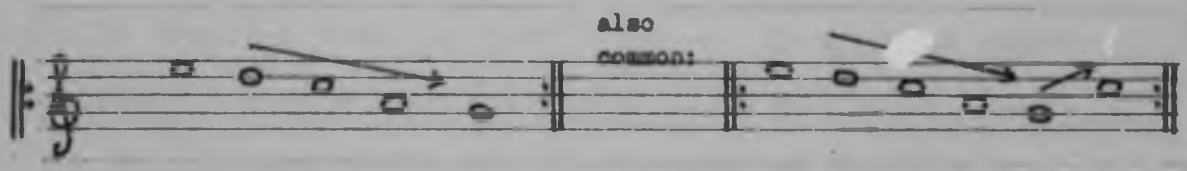
A musical analysis of 40 different children's songs revealed the following:

(i) all exhibit preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and ascending major 2nd;

(ii) all utilize exclusively pentatonic melodic patterns;

(iii) all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;

(iv) 16 descend from a peak of D, E♭, E, or F,[21] to a nadir of A or G, thus:



(v) 12 exhibit the limited vocal range of a 4th or 5th;

(vi) all either have no rhythmic accompaniment or utilize only hand-clapping. Drum-accompaniment is not employed;

(vii) 31 possess either an 8-unit or a 16-unit overall cycle;

(viii) 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 but one distinct and homogenous stage within a larger musical configuration.

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21. Truncation of the common Tsonga melodic pattern GEDCA (see Figure 28 in the Summary and Conclusions).

CHAPTER V

GIRLS' PUBERTY SCHOOL (KHOMBA) MUSIC OF THE SHANGANA-TSONGA

The Tsonga girls' puberty school (khomba -- probably acquired from the Pedi[1]) serves, among other purposes, to announce a girl's marriage-eligibility and bring cattle to her father, and eventually to announce her daughter's marriage-eligibility and bring cattle to her husband. It also teaches and reinforces the social role of women as pleaser of the husband, bearer of children, keeper of the home, and tiller of the soil, in that order. It derives from the Tsonga verb ku khomba, 'to menstruate for the first time', but is not strictly reserved for girls experiencing same. Girls may attend even after marriage so long as they have not co-habited -- co-habitation marks the end of their eligibility for attendance.

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1. " ... a characteristic rite has been preserved, or borrowed from the Sotho-Pedis, who attach great importance to it. It is called khomba ..." (Junod, Henri, The Life of a South African Tribe, Macmillan & Co., London, 1927, Vol I, p.177).

Khomba is held annually in each village from ritlhavula ('the ripening of the maize' -- May onward) to xirimo ('the time of hoeing' -- October onward), and is supervised by a village elder ordinarily known as the nkulukumba ('the big one'), appointed by the Chief in return for a token beer payment known as the nlhengo (the paying of this token is called ku suma -- 'to render tribute'). At khomba the above-mentioned elder becomes known as the mubebuli wa khomba ('carrier of the novice').

A khomba novice must 'formally report the condition' (ni byela sesekuri ni kurili) to her mother's sister (mhani lo ntsongo), whereupon she is formally issued with a special staunching cloth called the xidege. If this should happen to occur between the months of May and October, she attends when word is passed along (yisa xi tluka) and the novices assemble at a special hut called the nhanga. If it occurs between the months of November and April she becomes eligible for attendance at the forthcoming khomba. Reasons for attendance are "to learn vubasi" ('clearness' -- a term connected with Tsonga concepts of the nature of blood[2]) "and xinhanga" ('ways of the girls' hut' -- including lengthen-

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2. Among the Venda, "from a woman's first menstruation to her menopause, she is regarded as ritually 'hot' and dangerous, and is always symbolized by the colour red." (Blacking, John, "Venda Girls' Initiation Schools, Part I, African Studies, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, 1969, p. 25.)

ing of the labia minora, a process begun before khomba).

There are certain Tsonga khomba songs which accompany ritual acts, dances, and mimes performed in seclusion. These are secret and are not heard outside the context of khomba river-rites, or khomba within the special hut. There is, however, a larger body of khomba-associated songs used during the assembly, dispatch, and return of khomba, in the singing of which often a hundred pre-khomba and post-khomba females may participate on any one occasion. Such an occasion will be described in detail when we refer to events which took place in the Northern Transvaal village of Samanie. Seeing that assembly, dispatch and return ('greeting-back') songs may occur daily over the six months' period May to October, thus becoming known to all women and girls in the village, they may be said to constitute a significant proportion of the corporate body of Tsonga communal vocal music.

Khomba at Langutani, June 13, 1970

Langutani is only a small village, but it is centrally-located with respect to several surrounding small villages, and had been previously selected as a rallying site for the area's khomba novices, their 'schoolmothers' (vandzabi), and their attendant friends and relatives, for this year's khomba opening (see Plate 63).

After noon, long organized lines of women and girls could be seen approaching Langutani from the north, east, south, and west. All wore calico salempores (nceka) dyed pale blue, and a soft wound headcloth (managa), also dyed pale blue. Deferential covering of the head is essential up to the point where actual rites commence. Each line was led by a headman's wife blowing an antelope horn -- one long tone followed by several short ones. Words were occasionally shouted through the horn, perhaps representing what Sachs refers to as "the impersonification of the human voice in magical rites"[3] (Lane mentions Nigerian "singing through buffalo horns"[4]).

Behind each horn-blower came a village elder known as the mbangoma, carrying an inverted drum upon her head, and behind her came, in the given order, elders, 'school-mothers', the headman's daughter, the khomba novices, and the younger pre-khomba girls. A very young member of the latter is called mutavini or vutsongwana; when her breasts develop she is called mamayila or warinwenyani, and for the year immediately prior to khomba she is called nhwanyana, nhombela, or warixuburi. These three informally-constituted groups may participate in khomba assembly, dispatch, and

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3. Sachs, Curt, The Wellsprings of Music, Nijhoff, The Hague, 1962, p. 85.
4. Lane, Michael, "The Aku-Ahwa and Aku-Maga Post-burial Rites", African Music, Vol. II, No. 2, 1959, p. 30.

greeting, but are carefully guarded from overhearing secret songs and formulae.

The formal constitution, according to rank, of these marching lines of women is a visible and audible sign of one of the ascending chains of authority within Tsonga society, and, because the institution of khomba annually yields a number of marriages, each marching line 'moves up' from year to year in a never-ending social process.

Each approaching group of women sang Khomba Song 1 unaccompanied, asynchronously to the other approaching groups.

Khomba Song 1 (The music is given later)

Ndzi Ya Ka Homu

Call: Mhani wa rila maseve
Ndzi ya ka Homu
Response: Wa rila maseve
Call: Ndzi ya ka Homu n- Thomo mina /
Ndzi ya Xingowe mhani /
Mhani n'wana wa munghana ndza n'wi teka /

(diagonal strokes indicate a repetition of the response)

I'm Travelling To Homu

Call: Mother, my friend weeps
I'm travelling to Homu
Response: My friend weeps
Call: I'm travelling to Homu and Thomo /
I'm travelling to Xingowe, Mother /
Mother, I carry the friend's infant /

In the above khomba marching song, Homu, Thomo and Xingowe are all place-names, but their literal translations may have some relevance -- 'cat', 'cow', and 'good luck',

respectively. Use of the place-name Homu, furthermore, may be related to the fact that the Tsonga term xi-homu means 'distant relationship established through bride-price'. Khomba graduation often results in the establishment of such relationships, and that the song's mention of this place-name is symbolic is supported by its reappearance in Khomba Song 6, to be given later. The three place-names are described by Van Warmelo as being Tsonga areas,[5] and their occurrence within this and other khomba songs may be associated with 'travel' or 'passage'. Participation in khomba signifies 'passage' from childhood (malembe ya kondlo a ndzi dyi, or lontswa) to womanhood (vukhomba, or vusati).

The final line -- 'I carry the friend's infant -- is of special relevance to khomba, for the khomba supervisor is called 'carrier of the n ice', and one of the khomba acts mimes infant-carrying.

The drumming accompanying Khomba Song 1 was performed upon the oval or goblet-shaped Tsonga drum called ndzumba, or ndzumbana for the smaller model. After the majority of the women had reached the centre of the village, one of these ndzumba drums was set down, and a number of elders gathered around it. The number of villages repre-

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5. Van Warmelo, N.J., A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa, The Government Printer, Pretoria, 1935, p. 95.

sented could be assessed by counting the large and conspicuous antelope horns (possessed only by khomba supervisors), the unusual array of which constituted visible and audible evidence of parallel links in the Tsonga system of musical authority (see Plate 64).

Soon a dance-circle was formed (ku biya dada) and a song-leader (mufambisi) stepped forward. The next hour was spent singing khomba songs of the ku khana class ('joy-dancing' -- used for assembly, dispatch, and greeting-back). Three of these are given below.

Khomba Song 2

Nhwanyana Xo Managa Xi Nga Khombangi Hoza Cawo

Call: Mhane Sarah
Response: Mhane Sarah a Xirindzini hoza cawo
Call: Nhwanyana xo boha mpandini
Response: Nhwanyana xo boha mpandini xi nga khombangi hoza cawo
Call: Lembe ni fako
Response: Lembe ni fako va ta ni rilo hoza cawo
Call: Mo tshika mo ni
Response: Mo tshika mo ni boha mananga ni nga khombangi hoza cawo

The Girl Wore A Headcloth Before Initiation

Call: The mother of Sarah
Response: The mother of Sarah at Xirindzini, come sing
Call: The girl who has tied her forehead
Response: The girl who has tied her forehead before initiation
Call: The year of my death
Response: The year of my death all will mourn for me
Call: You tied for me
Response: You tied the headcloth before I am initiated

Khomba Song 3

He Vikhoma Bya Nyan'waka Xiyisa!

Call: Xayisa vakon'wani a ma wu welele
Response: He vikhomba bya nyan'waka xayisa!
Va ta khomba ro vniki

This Year's Puberty School!

Call: In-laws are coming
Response: This year's puberty school!
They will only spend a week at
the puberty school

Khomba Song 4

A Nga Khombanga

Unison chorus: A nga khombanga N'wa-Xiperepere
Wa gurumbela N'wa-Xiperepere

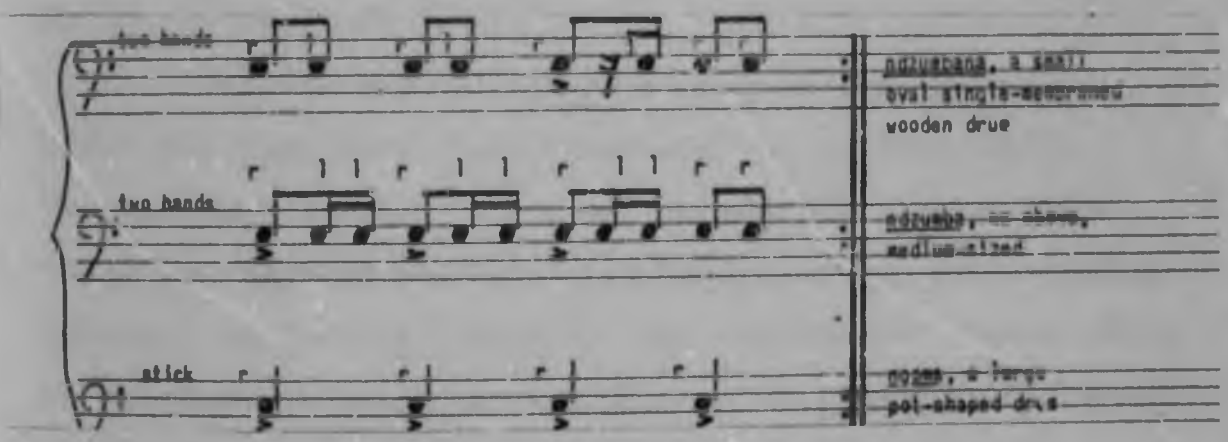
She Did Not Attend Puberty School

Unison chorus: She did not attend puberty school,
Daughter-of-Xiperepere
She shaved herself, Daughter-of-
Xiperepere

In Khomba Song 3, the line "they will only spend a week at the puberty school" refers to the fact that many households cannot spare their 'domestic aide' for longer periods of time, and in Khomba Song 4, the line "she shaved herself" refers to the fact that one may learn to shave pubic hairs without attending khomba.

Presently, the khomba supervisor emerged from the special hut where she had been in conference with a group of

old women. The dancing circle thereupon broke up and large groups of women moved over to the eastern end of the village. There they gathered around the supervisor in V-formation under a high-waving blue flag, with the tip of the V pointing east (vuxa, 'the dawn') -- toward 'the light' and away from 'the darkness'. Doing this is called ku orha masana(Plate 65); greeting the supervisor under the flag is called mujekojeko. Three of the mabangoma (women-drummers) then squatted down and played the xisotho rhythm common to much khomba music, thus:



The khomba supervisor then performed a solo dance called xikhiringo, moving the hands up and down rhythmically toward her left side. Soon, all started toward the riverbed, leaders carrying suitcases on their heads containing straw disguises and other accoutrements. They permitted no man to accompany them.

Khomba at Samarie, June 14, 1970

Soon after sunrise, I found Chief Mutsetweni and herbalist Mahlavahlavani in conference with fifty members of the Samarie council(Plate 66), and, being closely acquainted with the Chief's aide, Wilson Zulu, a xizambi friction-bow player under whom I had spent some weeks studying the instrument, an approach to the Chief was made and it was agreed that I could photograph khomba rites that day. There had been a death near the khomba hut, so those rites normally performed there would of necessity take place in the riverbed along with the 'water rites'.

Outside the village on a strip of flat ground called the puwa, three 'schoolmothers' set up drums while the supervisor shouted 'a prayer' through her antelope horn, asking the 'gods of the bush' (swikwembu swa nhova) to 'gather firewood' (ku rhotela tihunyi). This represented 'consecration' of the ground on which certain semi-secret khomba dances were to take place.

Soon, about two hundred women (Plate 67) assembled outside Samarie, forming a five-deep barrier called ntloko-ntloko, which effectively obscured the puwa area from men and boys in the village. A dance-team of twelve novices, after walking across to a pathway and marking off a level dance-area called the phangu, proceeded to change into uniforms. Ten dancers put on white headcloths called

xifezana, and two assistant dance-leaders put on brown-check headcloths called kepisi. All donned white vests called xisokisana xo rhangisa, red underskirts called roko, brown-striped skirts called nguvu, and red cloth-belts called ngixi. All held a wooden 'stage-prop' hatchet called swigwagwa in the right hand and carried a metal police-whistle strung around the neck. These uniforms and props for khomba are (so the writer was informed) currently in vogue throughout large areas of the Northern Transvaal at the time of writing, and from Rhodesian Shona dancers Andrew Tracey recently (1970) collected almost-identical wooden 'stage-prop' hatchets.

The dance-leader wore a cone-shaped hat (Plates 68 and 69) specifically to distinguish her from the novices, and led the team into a dance called nanayila ('to move slowly'), with singing of the following song by the drummers and dance-leader (but not by the dancers).

Khomba Song 5

Swivulavula Famando

Call: Famando, swivulavula Famando
Response: Hayi, hayi Famando
Vulavula Famando
Call: Wa yi vona Famando /
Na ku famba na famba /
Na ku cina na cina /

They Are Talking Of Famando

Call: Famando, they are talking of Famando
Response: Hayi, hayi Famando
They are talking of Famando
Call: Do you see Famando /
I can walk and walk /
I can dance and dance /

To execute this dance the team formed a curved line which moved counter-clockwise around the drums and dance-leader. The two girls wearing brown-check head-cloths occupied 'vanguard' and 'rearguard' positions respectively, and affixed small pink 'flags' to their hatchets(Plates 70,71). All the dancers moved parallel to the perimeter but with the trunk half-turned inward and, until signalled to begin nanayila, merely blew rhythmic whistle-blasts as they nodded their heads in time with the drums and the singing.

The song's cycle lasted 18 ♩ with primary accents occurring every 6 ♩ , and at the first primary accent after the signal each member of the team lunged inward with the left foot and the hatchet-waving right hand, the upper trunk and head inclined to the left. Each hatchet was pointed toward the drums and brought sharply down with a chopping movement (see Plate 72).

The nanayila dance consists of a pendulous swaying to and from the drums while proceeding round them, and 6 ♩ after the inward lunge each dancer swayed outward on the right foot, lifting the left knee high so that it crossed the former. The right hand was fully extended away from the trunk, with the hatchet raised ready for the next inward lunge(Plate 73).

After several revolutions around the drums each dancer dropped the whistle from between her teeth and marked time on the spot by shifting weight from foot to foot. The

left knee was raised higher than the right, and both hands were held facing upward at waist height, with the left palm slightly extended forward (see Plate 74).

Soon, a dancer with many arm-bangles blew a new whistle-signal, whereupon the team, instead of facing half-inward, turned to face the direction of counter-clockwise movement. The girls then commenced a step that jangled the leg- and arm-bangles that some were wearing. In this step the feet were kept together, the arms were extended in front of the body at waist height with wrists together, the head was turned inward to the left, and the whistle hung loosely at the neck (see Plate 75).

The nanayila dance completed, an elder selected a new, smaller area (xivandla) for the managa dance, and sprinkled the ground with medicine (see Plate 76). Two girls donned brown bandoliers called mukhupula and green milala palm-leaf skirts called xidundo, and performed a dance wherein the skirts were made to 'swish'. The dancers faced each other holding a wooden hatchet in the right hand and a yellow scarf in the left. While one's wooden hatchet was raised the other's scarf was raised and vice versa, so that the audience saw a 'ping-pong' effect of raised 'colour' changing from one side of the dancers to the other, with the hip-propelled skirts joining the 'colour'(Plate 77). The crowd,now gathered closer than before, sang the following song.

Khomba Song 6

Ni Va Siya Ka Homu

Call: Mhane!
Response: Bazi mayengi no nehe
Call: Mo nehe bazi mayengi mhane /
Ni ta famba ni va siya chiridzini
le Chiawelo /
Ni ta muka ni va siya ka Homu /
Ku vula mina /
A lo wawuna xi ni yengile
hikunene mhane /

So That I Can Go To Homu

Call: Mother!
Response: Just bring the bus
Call: Just bring the bus, mother /
So that I can go to Chiawelo and
leave them behind /
So that I can go to Homu and leave
them behind /
I am stating it /
This man has deceived me, mother /

After the managa dance, the crowd was ordered back into the village and khomba moved to the riverbed area. At the time of writing, a special uniform for riverbed rites was prevalent throughout many areas of the Northern Transvaal, and the various items of clothing will be listed here in detail both because of their universality and because their step-by-step removal marks phases of the rites. The Langutani khomba supervisor wore a khancu (red-and-white patterned salempore), the four 'schoolmothers' each wore a xambalo and hembe outfit (white-fringed blue pleated dance-skirt with blouse), and the twelve novices each wore the following:

(i) gumegume, navy-blue undershorts;
(ii) lapi ro khwaxa, a white-towelling waist-wrap;
(iii) yeleli, a 12" blue ruffled skirt;
(iv) xitlakatlaka, a pale-blue salempore tied over the right shoulder:
(v) khancu, a salempore tied over the left shoulder, of the same pattern as that of the supervisor;
(vi) rihlalu, strings of coloured beads.

The riverbank was inspected for a convenient 'stage' or 'platform' area (khwatikhwati), and the riverbed below it then 'consecrated' with medicine. A half-circle was formed and two novices, A and B, knelt to be undressed and 'prepared' (xangula'd) by two 'schoolmothers', while the remaining novices stood behind with hands clasped in front and heads bowed (Plate 78).The 'schoolmothers' then sang the following song.

Khomba Song 7

Xangula!

Call: I mi xangu-xangu wo xangula khomba
Response: Ayi ye xangule
Call: Na va Makhanani va xangule /
Na va Tsatsawani va xangule /

Prepare Her!

Call: Prepare, prepare, prepare the novice
Response: Ayi ye prepare
Call: Makhanani and the others are being prepared /
Tsatsawani and the others are being prepared /

It is noteworthy that the Venda vhusha initiation school also uses similar words with similar music (given later) for the same function, during the same initial stage of the rites.[6]

While both novices knelt upright, novice A was stripped down to the 12" blue ruffled skirt. Above the waist only the coloured beads remained (Plate 79); as the 'school-mothers' took these, novice A sang the following song.

Khomba Song 8

Va Teka Vuhlalu Bya Mina

Call: N'wananga va teka vuhlalu bya mina
Va nyika vanuna va vona
Response: Hayi, huwelele n'wananga
Call: Va teka tikhwini ta mina
Va nyika vanhwana va vona /
N'wananga xipitifaya xi huma
enyimpini /
Ni ta rhuma tsolo n'wananga /

They Took My Beads

Call: Child, they took my beads and
Gave them to their boys
Response: Hayi, huwelele, child
Call: They took my beads and
Gave them to their girls /
Child, a bomber will arrive
from the Congo, there is war /
I will send my kneecap for protection, child /

Novice B then knelt lower while her left shoulder was bared and the red-and-white patterned salempore removed.

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6. Blacking, John, op. cit., p. 12.

At this point novice A folded her arms and moved up and down on haunches with feet together (ku thaga--see Plate 80)to this song sung by the 'schoolmothers'.

Khomba Song 9

A Va Rubeli

Call: A va rubeli
Response: Huwelele
Call: A va kombeli /

They Don't Beg

Call: They don't beg
Response: Huwelele
Call: They don't entreat /

Novice B's right shoulder was then bared and the pale-blue salempore removed (Plate 81). Novice A continued doing ku thaga and the 'schoolmothers' sang the following song.

Khomba Song 10

Rila Rila Khomba

Call: Rila, rila, khomba
Response: Hiya he
Call: Loko 'nga rili awukhombangi /
He xikhombana rilo! /
Rila, rila, n'wana /

Cry, Cry, Novice

Call: Cry, cry, novice
Response: Hiya he
Call: If you do not cry you
are not initiated /
Little novice, cry! /
Cry, cry, child /

The above text appears to indicate that a Tsonga novice must cry, and this is supported by Junod's statement that she "goes to her adoptive mother to weep near her (a rilela ka yena)".[7] It is noteworthy that the Venda vhusha initiation school also uses the same words, with different music, at the same stage of the rites.[8] During the rila rila song 'schoolmothers' pinched novice B in an endeavour to make her cry, and when they snatched off her white-towelling waist-wrap she cried. The horn was then blown, and both novices bowed their heads, folded their arms, and knelt sitting on their heels (ku putsa mavoko --see Plate 82). The other novices stood as previously described, and the 'schoolmothers' sang the following song.

Khomba Song 11

I Yivile

Call: I yivile
Response: Va n'wi rhuma xitolo yiva ngopfu
Call: I yivile
Response: Tihuku ta vanhu, ha! Mina!

She Has Stolen

Call: She has stolen
Response: When sent to the shop, she steals much
Call: She has stolen
Response: Fowls of people, my goodness!

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7. Junod, Henri, op. cit., p. 1-7.
8. Blacking, John, op. cit., p. 12.

The references to begging and stealing in Khomba Songs 9 and 11 do not refer to actual events, but refer to formal acts performed within the context of khomba and related to 'laws of the novices' (tumbuluku wa tikhomba).

Novices A and B maintained their bowed, kneeling position while the horn was blown again and a 'schoolmother' stepped forward and demanded the names of their 'boy-friends'. The novices were each required to give, not the name of their real boy-friend, but the name of a male infant of the village, this rite being known as ku ganga xifanyatani a khombeni. Novice A then sang the following song, in which she volunteered the name 'David'.

Khomba Song 12

Ni Deviti Wa Manana

Solo: Wa manana, i Kiyasi wa manana
Ni ku yini?
Ni Deviti wa manana

It Is David Of My Mother

Solo: Oh mother, it is Kiyasi of my mother
What should I say?
It is David of my mother

It was now mid-morning, all rites which belong exclusively to the opening day of khomba had been completed, and the novices' ritual condition was now known as tyambu-tyambu ('naked as a new-born infant'). Rites between tyambu-tyambu and coming-out are daily rites of the khomba puberty school.

They were performed at mid-morning on this day at Samarie, and are as follows.

The supervisor took a spherical lump of reddish-orange clay, the size of a tennis-ball, and smeared a novice from head to toe with faint orange-coloured stripes (vatola ntshumani). Of Pedi initiation it is known that girls are "smeared from head to foot with red ochre",[9] and of Zulu initiation that girls "paint themselves red and white".[10]

The ochre-smeared novice then laid curled up upon a milala palm-leaf mat which had been spread out(Plate 83), the position being called ku losa (among the Luvedu losa occurs in the boys' circumcision school).[11] The Tsonga greet a superior with the spoken phrase hi losile, so ku losa can be taken to mean 'humble one's self'. It involves lying on the left side with feet together, knees half-drawn up, head down, eyes closed, fingers touching the palms but not clenched, and knuckles pressed to the forehead.

While the novice losa'd, the supervisor wound several strings of brightly coloured beads around the waist of another novice, and led her to the drum (Plate 84).The girl

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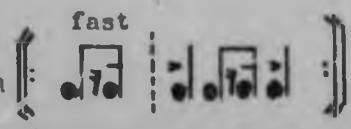
9. Huskisson, Yvonne, "The Social and Ceremonial Music of the Pedi" (A Ph.D. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, November, 1958), p. 207.
10. Krige, Eileen, The Social System of the Zulus, Shuter, Pietermaritzburg, 1962 (4th edition), p. 103.
11. Beyer, Gottfried, "Die Mannbarkeitsschule in Südafrika", Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Vol. LVIII, Heft 3/4/17 Berlin, Julius Springer 1926, p. 118.

played the following rhythm 

known to khomba drummers as nyanyula ('working-up excitement'), and the 'schoolmothers' sang the following song.

Khomba Song 13

Mavala!

Call: Ria rona ria rona mpidi mavala
Response: I-i-i-i-i-i

Colour!

Call: Ria rona ria rona mpidi colour
Response: I-i-i-i-i-i

The Tsonga word mavala means 'colour', and the novices claimed not to understand the other words. It is noteworthy that the Venda vhusha initiation school also uses the same words, but with different music. Blacking's translation is given below.

Call: We are smearing ash
Chorus: We are smearing on the zebra's stripes[12]

After the ochre-smeared novice had losa'd, 'schoolmothers' threw down (or 'planted') handfuls of small twigs across the mat and ordered her to pick them up while hopping. As she did this the following song was sung.

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12. Blacking, John, op. cit., p. 12.

Khomba Song 14

Doba, Doba

Call: Hayi dombe
Response: Hiya tlakula hiya
Call: I mi dobi dobi wa ndzi komba /
Mbeku-mbeku /

Pick Up, Pick Up

Call: Hayi, pick up
Response: You there, lift
Call: Pick up, pick up, she shows me /
Walk about much /

The above song and its accompanying action symbolize a woman's agricultural or home-keeping duties, such as planting seeds or gathering firewood. The Venda vhusha initiation school uses the same words, with different music, at the same stage of the rites.[13]

After doba doba had been sung the drum was removed to another spot and the novices formed a half-circle next to it, sitting on their haunches with arms crossed but not folded. Two novices were brought forward and told to rhwala tingoma, which, translated literally, means 'to carry the ceremonial drums' or 'to carry the ritual acts'. Tsonga ritual acts (with the sole exception of circumcision) are usually accompanied by the playing of drums, and both the drums and the ritual acts are known as tingoma.

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13. Ibid., p. 13.

Each girl put her right-hand fingers behind her back and up to meet the fingers of the left hand over the left shoulder, the tips just meeting, and keeping them thus, she moved from squatting to upright position, facing her partner who was doing likewise(Plate 85). The 'schoolmothers' meanwhile sang the following song.

Khomba Song 15

Lunyo, Lunya

Call: Lunyo, lunya
Response: Ha Mavulayis'

Cheek, Cheek

Call: Cheek, cheek
Response: Will cause your death

Cuénod translates lunya as 'incorrigibility',[14] and the song instructs the novice that she must obey her future husband. The Venda vhusha initiation school uses the same words, with different music, at approximately the same stage of the rites.[15]

The drum was now moved to the centre of the riverbed, and the twelve novices crawled from one riverbank to the other and back, keeping their heads down (Plate 86) and singing the following song.

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14. Cuénod, R., Tsonga English Dictionary, Swiss Mission Press, Johannesburg, 1967, p. 88.
15. Blacking, John, op. cit., p. 15.

Khomba Song 16

Fela Madambi

Call: Fela madambi
Response: Yowe-e, haye-e
Call: Ho kasa-kasa-sani /

Snuff That Has Been Bewitched

Call: Snuff that has been bewitched
Response: Yowe-e, haye-e
Call: Crawl ye about /

The above reference to 'snuff that has been bewitched' instructs that a woman should not accept snuff from a stranger -- the latter may be a 'bewitcher'

Khomba Song 17 accompanies an action performed on hands and knees (ku qaqa) by the novices one behind the other lobbing the neck and head left and right (Plate 87) to the following song sung by all.

Khomba Song 17

Wa Yi Vona Ngwenya

Call: Wa yi vona na wa yi vona
Ngwenya nkelenga
Response: as above
Call: Yi mitile vanhu ngwenya /

You See The Crocodile

Call: You see it, you see it
The crocodile
Response: as above
Call: That crododile has devoured people /

The above song warns women to approach a crocodile-infested river with caution, for the drawing of water and the washing of clothes there can prove dangerous.

At noon the mitala palm-leaf mat was again laid out in the riverbed and the drum set up alongside it. There commenced an action called khoma loko yi vuya e ku petiweni loko yi huma, wherein each novice grasped the hips of the girl in front of her tightly with both hands, keeping the head down against her back (Plate 88). Khoma means 'to grasp', and huma means 'to come out', and 'schoolmothers' stated that the action simulated birth-delivery. The following song was meanwhile sung by the 'schoolmothers'.

Khomba Song 18

Ku Tswala Hi Vambirhi!

Call: He mhane ndzi na khombo
Response: Ndzi na khombo!
Call: A ku tswala hi vambirhi /
Solo shout: Sikayi xikwembu

To Conceive Twins!

Call: Mother, what misfortune befalls me
Response: What misfortune!
Call: To conceive twins! /
Solo shout: 'Tis the decree of the gods

While the action simulates birth-delivery, the song (Khomba Song 18) laments the birth of twins, which is regarded as a misfortune by the Tsonga. With the ochre-smeared novice again in quasi-foetal position upon the mat,

the supervisor sang the following song and the novices moved forward once more.

Khomba Song 19

Ndza Bela Mina Mama!

Solo: N'wa-Maxasani ma huwelele
Lili xinga sise
Nana xinga sise
Joyce xinga sise
Johanna xinga sise
Ni ta nghena ka va mhani
N'wa-Miswazi i mhane
Hlengani xinga bava
Ni ta vula vahahani
N'wa-Xixawuli i hahani
Ni ku lan'wisa i mhani xi ngani
N[illegible]bela mina mama yilo!

[illegible]ck As A Baby!

Solo: Ch[illegible]-Maxasani huwelele
I[illegible], a sister
M[illegible]s a sister
Joyce is a sister
Johanna is a sister
Enter, mother
Child-of-Miswazi, mother
Antelope the father
To say and fly
Child-of-Xixawuli, to fly and
To lose patience. How many times
To suck as a baby!

With the ochre-smeared novice still on the mat and the file of stooped novices still circling, the supervisor and the 'schoolmothers' sang the following song in 'organum' style.

Khomba Song 20

Hiya Cinela N'wana

Chorus: He ndhuma! Bombisa n'wana
Hiya cinela n'wana

We Are Dancing For the Child

Chorus: We celebrate! Dress the child
We are dancing for the child

For the next miming action the supervisor sent each girl off to find a stick of about an arm's length, this errand being known as xidzingedzinge. Upon their return they formed a single file along the riverbed and held the stick to the ground like a walking-stick. The left hand was placed on the rear of the left hip, the trunk was half-stooped forward, and the 'walking-stick', although held in the right hand, was placed to the left side of the body. In this position the file moved forward (Plates 89 to 91) to the following song, sung by the 'schoolmothers'.

Khomba Song 21

Ndzi Ku Swa Ririsa

Call: Ndzi ku swa ririsa n'wina
Response: Hikunene n'wana mhani swa ririsa
Call: Me ndzi khumbula Ndaheni n'wana mhani /
Ndzi ku Ndahena-ndaheni n'wana mhani /

It Is Lamentable

Call: It is lamentable, you
Response: Honestly, my mother's child,
it is lamentable
Call: I think of Ndaheni my mother's child /
It is Ndahena-ndaheni my mother's child /

For the next action, called xipesupesu, the novices mounted the 'stage' area on the bank above the riverbed, while the supervisor stood facing them holding the horn vertically high in the air. With the wide end of the horn pointed toward the sky, and the embouchure end held in the right hand, she rocked forward on her right foot and backward on her left foot, in time with the rhythm of the drum on her left. Behind her stood a girl holding a large coloured bangle in the left hand, and in front of her the novices inclined forward from the waist, extending the right foot and open right palm in a stationary pose(Plate 92). They sang the following song.

Khomba Song 22

A Ni Cin' No Rengelela

Call: Kwelele, kwelele
Haleno, N'wa-Masimanyana
Response: Hiyo hahani kwelele N'wa-Masimanyana
Call: Ni navela N'wa-masimanyana
Na chava xizambe /
A ni cin' no rengelela /

I Am Not Dancing But Singing

Call: Envy, envy
On this side, Daughter-of-Masimanyana
Response: Envy, Daughter-of-Masimanyana
Call: I wish for the Daughter-of-Masimanyana
I am afraid /
I am not dancing but singing

As soon as the singing of the above song got underway, the girl holding the large coloured bangle in her left

hand moved forward from behind the supervisor and performed a solo dance called xijimo. She transferred the bangle to her right hand, held it at shoulder height, and faced the opposite direction to that in which the novices faced(Plate 93). Xijimo means 'thudding', and as the dancer's feet thudded on the ground her many leg-bangles jangled.

Junod states of a child's illness that "the offering consists of a bracelet ... the priest will pour consecrated beer over it and say his prayer. The bracelet will then be fastened to the child's foot. He may not remove it, nor exchange it for anything else; it belongs to the gods."[16] Thus the possibility that this 'bangle dance' represents a protective rite should not be overlooked.

Following the bangle dance, novices and 'school-mothers' lined up side by side behind the drum, facing the riverbed with their hands on their heads. They performed an action called xigonya in which all moved with feet together, revolving 'on the spot'(Plate 94). This is called xigingi, and was accompanied by the following song.

Khomba Song 23

N'wa-Majozi Wa Rhendzeleka

Call: N'wa-Majozi wa rhendzeleka
Response: N'wa-Majozi wa jika-jika
Call: N'wa-Majozi wa vona-vona /
Solo shout: A rhendzeleka hi ya kaya Phadziri!

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16. Junod, Henri, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 397.

Child-of-Majozi Is Turning Round

Call: Child-of-Majozi is turning round
Response: Child-of-Majozi is spinning round
Call: Child-of-Majozi is seeing all round /
Solo shout: Let her turn round so that we can
go home to Phadzirl!

For the next action the novices filed diagonally across the riverbed, each girl leaning toward the rear and reaching backward over her shoulders with both hands. This action projected the elbows forward toward the girl in front, and each girl's elbows were clasped by the backward-reaching hands of the girl in front. 'Chained' together thus, and simulating a file of escorted prisoners, the entire line of novices moved forward swaying from left to right (Plate 95) while the 'schoolmothers' sang the following song about passbook arrests.

Komba Song 24

Va Ta Mi Khoma

Call: Madomupasi!
Loko u nga teki mhane
Response: Eya, hayi
Call: Ni kwala timangeni ku na valungu
Va ta mi khoma /
Me ndzi khala N'wa-Manara /

Coming To Arrest You

Call: The passbook!
Beware, if you do not take it, mother
Response: Eya hayi
Call: The whites will get you in the
groundnut field
Coming to arrest you /
I weep for Child-of-Manara /

The next mime was performed by three novices at a time, on the 'stage' area of the riverbank. One climbed about 12" up a tree while another struck her back once with a stick held in the right hand (ku nwi hlavela nawu wa le wambyeni hi khavi a ndza ku ka hlana), and the third did ku losa on the ground (Plate 90). The tree-climbing action is known as khayeni yo werisiwa khomba, khayeni meaning 'to pluck fruit' and khomba meaning 'novice'. In the Tsonga term referring to the stick-wielding action, nawu wa le wambyeni means 'law of the novices'. That the tree-climber was being taught a 'law' is supported by the fact that the calling of the following song by the stick-wielder is known as ku hlaya nawu wa le khombeni -- 'to recite the law to the novice'.

Khomba Song 25

Va Ta Dlaya Ndaheni

Call: Ha vana vela Ndaheni mhane n'wina
Response: Va ta dlaya Ndaheni
Call: A ri kama nhlonhlo /

They Will Kill Ndaheni

Call: Child, to carry on one's back, Ndaheni
Response: They will kill Ndaheni
Call: To squeeze the nhlonhlo tree /

The nhlonhlo tree is the naboom or Candelabra euphorbia (Euphorbia cooperi N.E.Br.), but a novice may climb any tree for the purpose, referring to it as the xipingwana, which means 'hammered-in drum peg'.

The next action was performed by seven novices, each in turn being supported by six others. In one movement each girl was heaved up into the air and her thighs, knees and calves grabbed by the other six girls in order to retain her there. The raised girl stood erect and held in each hand a 12" stick which she raised high. Facing the supervisor and the drum, she then formed the perimeter of a circle with her arms and the two sticks. When the drumming started the raised girl 'measured' the air with the tips of the two sticks, a procedure known as to tlanga tingoma. Ku tlanga refers to elongation of the labia minora, and the girl was demonstrating her stage of elongation (see Plate 97).

Khomba Songs 13-25 are sung daily, and by the early afternoon of the day in question they and their accompanying actions had been completed by the group. The 'schoolmothers', being aware of the spectacular nature of the mimes of the penultimate and final days, then asked the supervisor to continue into them on that same day. The supervisor decreed that this would be acceptable so long as the newer khomba arrivals did not witness them, whereupon six of the latter were sent away. A message was sent to the village, asking old women to come to the riverbed and to bring with them the necessary accoutrements.

Soon eight old women arrived carrying a sheet of stiff waxed paper, a canister of water, three 4' poles, and

a suitcase. While the six remaining novices knelt low on the ground around the canister stretching the paper across its mouth, three elders each thrust a pole through the paper and 'swished' the water within (see Plate 98), to the following chant, performed by a senior 'schoolmother'.

Khomba Song 26

Namuntlha Wa Xaxa

Solo chant:
Namunthla wa xaxa
Mindzuku wa huma
N'wana loyi wa ka Ntimane
Huma n'wananga huma
Khomba khomba huluhulu
wena Ntimane
Huma n'wana Johannes Ntimane
Khomba huluhulu
Wa xaxa n'wana
A va ku a a nga humi

Today They Are Dancing

Solo chant:
Today they are dancing
Tomorrow she will go home
This Daughter-of-Ntimane
Go home, go home
You novice Daughter-of-Ntimane
Go home, Daughter-of-
Johannes Ntimane
You novice
The child has danced
They used to say she would not go home

The above formula, while chanted rather than sung by Tsonga novices, is sung in echo-style by Venda vhusha novices, "with one group of singers repeating what the others have just sung. It is for the end of vhusha, as the words

suggest".[17]

The stretched-paper mime is called ku handzula n'wana loko a ri ndlwini, meaning 'to cut the girl (on the thigh) in the hut'. Much talking, joking, and dancing followed the water mime, and the following three songs were sung.

Khomba Song 27

Ma Rhumbini Ya Vona Va Siye Xikhova Na Swona

Call: N'wa-Jani wa loya ma n'win' xo hlamba mahlwen'
Response: Valoye ho mi nga ni dlayi mpela
Call: Ma rhumbini ya vona va siye xikhova na swona /
Ndzi mi lorhile matolo mi ndzi tshame mhlokweni /
Aho he vabvana va xitesi mi nga ni dlayi tshambele /

They Have Left An Owl At Their Ruins

Call: Child-of-Jani, when it sees me it washes its face
Response: Witches, do not kill me
Call: They have left an owl at their ruins /
I dreamt last night of you sitting or my face /
You of the station do not kill me /

Khomba Song 28

Dlayani Swikhova

Call: Hayi lomu ka valungwana
Response: Hayi ka valungwana hayi
Call: Hayi khomani manjenje
Response: Khomani manjenje hi ya dya xitimeleni
Dlaya hi torha hi dya xitimeleni
Call: Hayi lomu ta Rosie / (1st)
Hayi dlayani swikhova / (2nd)
Hayi lomu ka Ma-Gwamba / (1st)
Hayi bulani tinjija / (2nd)

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17. Blacking, John, op. cit., p. 27.

Kill The Owls

Call: Place of the little whites
Response: Of the little whites
Call: Catch the termites
Response: Catch the termites so we'll eat on the train
Call: At Rosie's place / (1st)
Kill the owls / (2nd)
The place of the Ma-Gwamba's / (1st)
Catch the locusts / (2nd)

Khomba Song 29

Magalachani Ya Van'wani

Call: Magalachani ya van'wani Sinoni
Response: Ye-ye hayi huwelele

You The Deceivers of Others

Call: You the deceivers of others
Response: Ye-ye hayi huwelele

Songs 27 and 28 mention the nocturnal 'owl' and Song 29 mentions 'deceivers'. These references allude to the suspected non-virginity of nocturnal women, and to the verification of novices' virginity by elders. The Tsonga say the following of a non-virgin bride:

Manyana a chati muchatu wa ku
Chachela hi swikhova ni swisepula

She had a marriage feast
Where the dancers were owls

Having performed the four songs (Nos. 26-29) peculiar to the penultimate day of Tsonga khomba, the group resolved to continue into the songs, dances, and mimes normally

reserved for the final day (doing this partly for their own amusement and partly for the writer's benefit). A senior novice known as the mudyundzisi (named thus after ku dyondzisa, 'to instruct') did ku ncisa swikwembu to each of the other novices. Swikwembu means 'gods' or 'ancestor-spirits', and the mudyundzisi assumed the role of a 'medium' by appearing disguised and administering doctor-type rites to a novice who was lying on the mat completely enveloped within a large blanket.

The 'medium' appeared from out of the bush wearing the following (see Plate 99):

(i) magangu, a yello grass dome-shaped hat from which grey feathers protrude;

(ii) tino harani yo khavisa (literally, 'teeth of the coarse rope'), a yellow chin-strap affixed to the hat at each side, and which envelopes the face in yellow taselled raffia 'teeth';

(iii) xikavu, a golden-brown bandolier of dried herbs;

(iv) murhi, a grey necklace of dried pods;

(v) ntsembyani, a slung satchel containing lumps of fur;

(vi) nfeko, a skirt of stiff yellow reeds, the centre of each of which has been painted brown;

(vii) timintsu, a belt of entwined dark-brown leaves.

Following the 'medium' out of the bush came a 'schoolmother' wearing a wayawaya (thick skirt of soft grass) and a nhlonge (grass cape), and carrying four square lumps of dark grey clay into which had been stuck eight 12" lengths

of stiff yellow reed. As they appeared the horn was blown and the assembly of old women, 'schoolmothers', and novices stood in a half-circle facing the riverbed uttering wailing ululations. Ululating at this time is called ku khuwasa. The two disguised girls advanced slowly forward one behind the other (ku longoloka), and the 'medium', who was in front, held her arms stiffly forward and outward in front of her.

The mat was spread, a novice was rolled up in the blanket (this action is called puputsala), and the 'medium' knelt beside her. The latter then threw divining bones to the accompaniment of the following song, sung by the 'schoolmothers'.

Khomba Song 30

Rhambu Ra N'anga

Call: Rhambu ra n'anga
Response: He n'wana wa n'anga
nta byela mhane hayi
Call: Byela noti wa n'anga /

Bones Of The Doctor

Call: Bones of the doctor
Response: Child of the doctor
to whom shall I tell it
Call: Whistle of the doctor /

The 'medium' then took the four clay squares containing protruding reeds, and pushed them inside the blanket between the legs of the wrapped novice. The

'schoolmothers' then sang the following song.

Khomba Song 31

Hlamba Mahlweni Yi Ku Caca

Call: Ndzi ku he valoyi
Response: A ni nga hanyi mpela
Call: Mari kokwana wa mina le marhumbini ya yena /
U siye muti hi loko yini vana va ka hina /
Hlamba mahlweni yi ku caca /
Hi va byerile, ka hina a ni nga poni mpela /

Wash Your Eyes Clean

Call: Hey, you witches
Response: I really shall not live
Call: My grandmother there at her old home /
Has left the family on what account /
Wash your eyes clean /
We told them, we shall not be spared, really /

The song instructs that women, when they marry, should watch out with 'clean' eyes for witches in their husband's village.

The 'medium' next laid a pile of fresh clothing next to the wrapped novice, together with a solitary coloured bangle. This action is called ku rhandzunula leswaku n'wana a hala vuvambyi, meaning 'to revive a shocked person' (deriving from the fact that communication with the 'gods' had occurred), and the fresh clothing signifies 'entry into the new' (see Plate 100).

As each novice was unwrapped she was declared xemula (a 'mature one'), and the 'schoolmothers' sang the following song.

Khomba Song 32

Vamisanda Va Ta Vuya

Call: Vamisanda va ta vuya
Response: Hayi va ta vuya
Call: Va ta vuya na swiwitsi na makhekhe /
Va davula va ta vuya mhane /

The Chief Is Coming Back

Call: The Chief is coming back
Response: He is coming back
Call: He is coming back with sweets and cakes /
They are sweethearts. He is coming back, mother /

Similar words, with different music, is used in the Venda vhusha initiation school.[18]

Ku Vuyisa (Greeting-back') Songs of Khomba

As in the Tsonga ngoma (boys' circumcision school) coming-out ceremony, the extended family and friends of novices perform ku vuyisa ('greeting-back') songs, of which the following six are examples.

Khomba Song 33

I Khombile N'wananga

Call: I khombile n'wananga
A xikepe a xi le Mtsungeni
Eka Mulamula
Response: Iye, iye o ka nga hume
Call: Huma, huma Mthavine /

18. Ibid., p. 27

She Is Mature, My Child

Call: She is mature, my child
The ship lies on the far bank
of the river [19]
At Mulamula
Response: Iye, iye, go home
Call: Go home, go home, Mthavine /

Khomba Song 34

Wa Huma N'wana

Call: Si ya nghena thina mabuthu makhulu
Khawula, hi va ka Ntimani
Response: same
Call: Wa huma n'wana nkata Abraham /
Xa huma namuntlha
A va ku a a nga humi /
Ho xi khombili! /

Go Home, Child

Call: We are going in, we the big army
Khawula, we are Ntimane's
Response: same
Call: The child is going home, Abraham's
wife / [20]
She goes home today
They said she would not go home /
She is initiated! /

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19. Junod states that a novice "has now crossed (wela, like a boat across a river)" (Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 76).
20. Before khomba, a girl may marry but not co-habit.

Khomba Song 35

A Hi Famba Le Kaya

Unison chorus:
A he makwasa-kwasa makwasa
Qhavula ntangha yanga
Hengixifi sula nyuku
A hi fambi xitichini
Yimela wa mina nuna wa mina
Xi chika ka valungu xivuya-na-valungu
Xi chika dorobeni
Qhavula yo swi ti pholichili na tinfangu
Fika ka mina tshunela nuna wa mina
Avixeni nuna wa mina
A hi fambi dali wa mina
A hi fambi le kaya
Hi ya fika vhengeleni
Hi xava na swiswitsi
Hi xava hengixifi
A hi fambi ntangha yanga
Nuna wa mina nika mina swo swiswitsi
Hi ya fika kwale kaya
Komba yena ntangha yanga
Ntangha nga yanga ye lovisa
Komba yena mali ya mina
Hi tekana hi ri swin'we-ne?
Fika kwale kaya
Fika yena lovola mina
Mina byela mhani
A hi fike nthangha yanga
Xiyisa makwasa

Let's Go Home

Unison chorus:
A he makawasa-kwasa makwasa
Shake hands dear friend
Here is a handkerchief, wipe your sweat away
Let's go to the station
I am waiting for him
He alights from the train of the European
He comes from town
Don't you see how he has polished his shoes
Come to me, come near me, mine
Greetings, mine
Let us go my darling
Let's go home
Get to the shop

And buy sweets
And buy a handkerchief
Let's go dear friend
Mine, give me sweets
Let us reach home
Shall we dear friend
My friend you have caused me to spend
I will show you my money
We shall marry, shall we not?
Come on home
Come and pay my lobola (bride-price)
I shall tell my mother
Let's go home my spouse
Xayisa m[illegible]

Khomba Song 36

Bamba Ni Chiawelo[21]

Call: Bamba ni ya Fasiko
Response: Bamba ni ya Chiawelo
Call: Bamba M'mtititi
Response: Mabasi ya le Fasiko

I'm Going To Chiawelo

Call: I'm going to Fosker
Response: I'm going to Chiawelo
Call: Going to M'mtititi
Response: For the buses to Fosker

Khomba Song 37

Salani Ni Ya Kaya

Call: Salani ni ya kaya
Response: Ayi helela
Call: Mina ni vona maxangu /
Timhaka ta meyila /
Salani ka Maguri /
Salani ka mhane /

21. Graduation from khomba often precipitates a rural girl's departure for one of the large Soweto townships such as Chiawelo, where she marries or works to save for marriage.

Goodbye, I'm Going Home

Call: Goodbye, I'm Going Home
Response: Ayi helela
Call: I see all the misery /
It is because of the train
Goodbye, my child Maguri /
Goodbye, mother /

Khomba Song 38 (there are 38 song-texts, 40 musical transcriptions -- 2 of the latter being alternative musical versions)

N'wananga U Khombile[22]

Call: N'wananga u khombile
Response: N'wananga u khombile
Call: Se i ngoma ya nqima va yaku
nambyeni se i kurile! /
Solo shout: Khomba n'wana Gavaza, vuya
na jaha ra wena!
Unison shout: Khomba, khomba!

My Daughter Is Mature

Call: My daughter is mature
Response: My daughter is mature
Call: This is the song of the novice /
Solo shout: Be of age, Child-of-Gavaza, come
back with your lover!
Unison shout: Of age, of age!

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22. Junod reports the use of this phrase thus: "These are distinct separation rites. She says ndzi khombile -- I am of age". (Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 177.)

Tsonga Girls' Puberty School (Ambutsa)

In Mozambique

The Tsonga girls' puberty school in Mozambique is known as ambutsa, and differs in certain respects from that of the Transvaal Tsonga. It is these differences that will be briefly stressed here.

The school takes place during the three autumn months of March, April, and May, and, for the novices, consists of one month of communal activity followed by two months of isolated seclusion. They pay a small cash fee rather than a beer payment, and this is paid to the supervisor (nyambutsi), whose horn symbol of authority is known as tsondo and is used to deflower each novice.[23]

The performance of ambutsa rites is known as ku rhwala xitsandza, which, in comparison to the Transvaal Tsongas' ku rhwala tingoma (meaning 'to carry the drums or the rites'), means 'to carry impossibility' and refers to the compulsory handling of very hot food, among other trials. Much of the activity involves symbolic use of carved dolls known as mayika, also of drums known as ntakula and nkiringwane. After 'coming-out' the novice is required to sleep one night with her fiancé, or failing her fiancé, her sister's husband.

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23. Information obtained from nyambutsi informants Maria Ngobeni of Dumela and Felicia Maluleka of Mapai, Mozambique. This method of deflowering is also used among the Pedi.

Summary of the Musical Characteristics

Of Puberty School Songs

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

(i) all exhibit preference for the intervals of the descending major 2nd, descending minor 3rd, and ascending major 2nd;

(ii) all utilize exclusively pentatonic melodic patterns;

(iii) all observe an overall pathogenic descent from an initial peak;

(iv) most use a rhythmic accompaniment which may consist of drumming, handclapping, or both;

(v) half of the songs use either a 16-unit or an 8-unit metrical length;

(vi) all but twelve employ call-and-response alternation (seven are sung in unison chorus and five are sung solo);

(vii) all but six are monodic rather than 'harmonized';

(viii) 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 (compare Songs 7 and 7A). This is due to cultural selection;

(ix) when a song is shared with a neighbouring Southern African culture, parts of the song may appear to be 'transposed' a 4th lower (compare Songs 16 and 16A). This is due to the principle of 'harmonic equivalence';

(x) 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 (compare Songs 7 and 7A). This is due to 'circular' form. [24]

24. The term 'circular' form is used by David Rycroft in his article "Nguni Vocal Polyphony", Journal of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. XIX, 1967, p103.

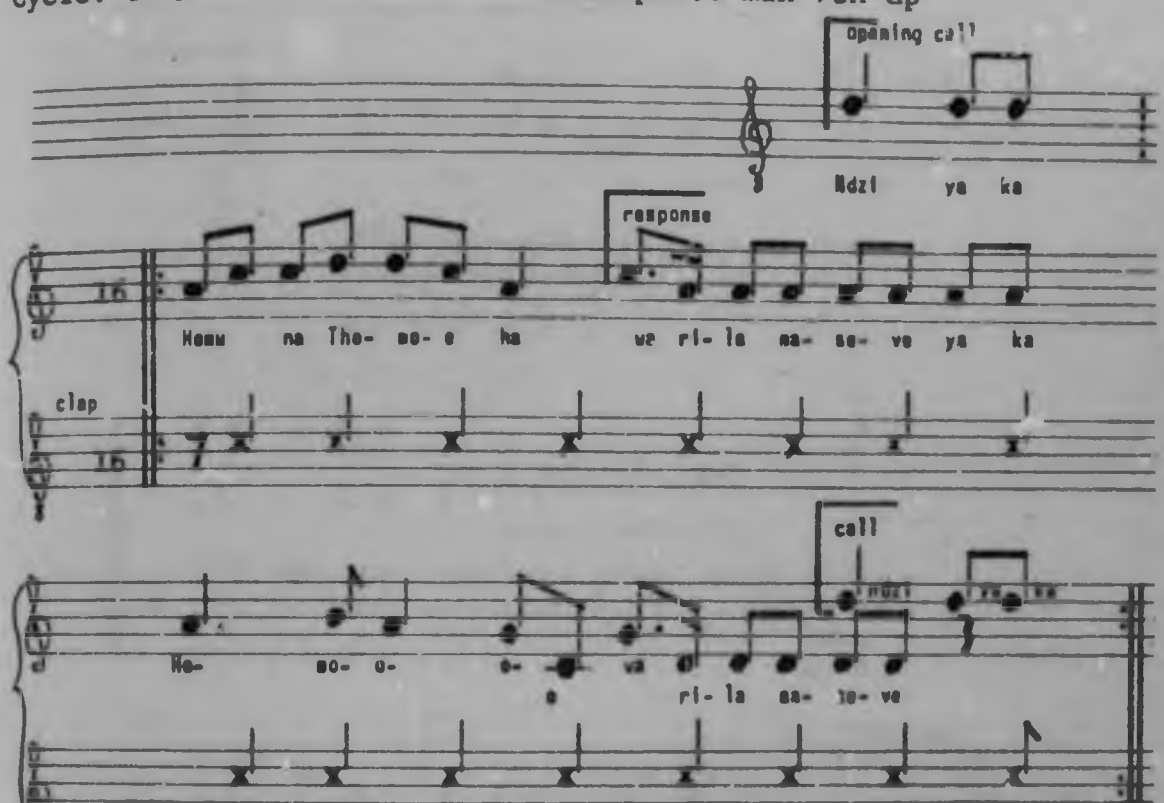
The songs (as opposed to the laws) of the Tsonga girls' puberty school are mainly in the Tsonga language, and their melodic contours reflect speech-tone rise and fall. They serve primarily as an interlude or contrasting factor to much verbal instruction involving the 'laws of the novices', which laws are in a secret language for which a special vocabulary must be learnt. The Tsonga words of khomba songs are not in themselves intended, by the supervisor and the 'schoolmothers', to instruct, and it is almost certain that to Tsonga participants the main interest lies in the musical situation. The way in which Tsonga girls move with their peers 'along' processive musical situations or stages, is illustrated in Figure 22 of the Summary and Conclusions at the end of this thesis.

The Khomba Song Transcriptions

Khomba Song Transcription 1. Ndzi Ya Ka Homu

♩ = 140
Cycle: 16 ♩

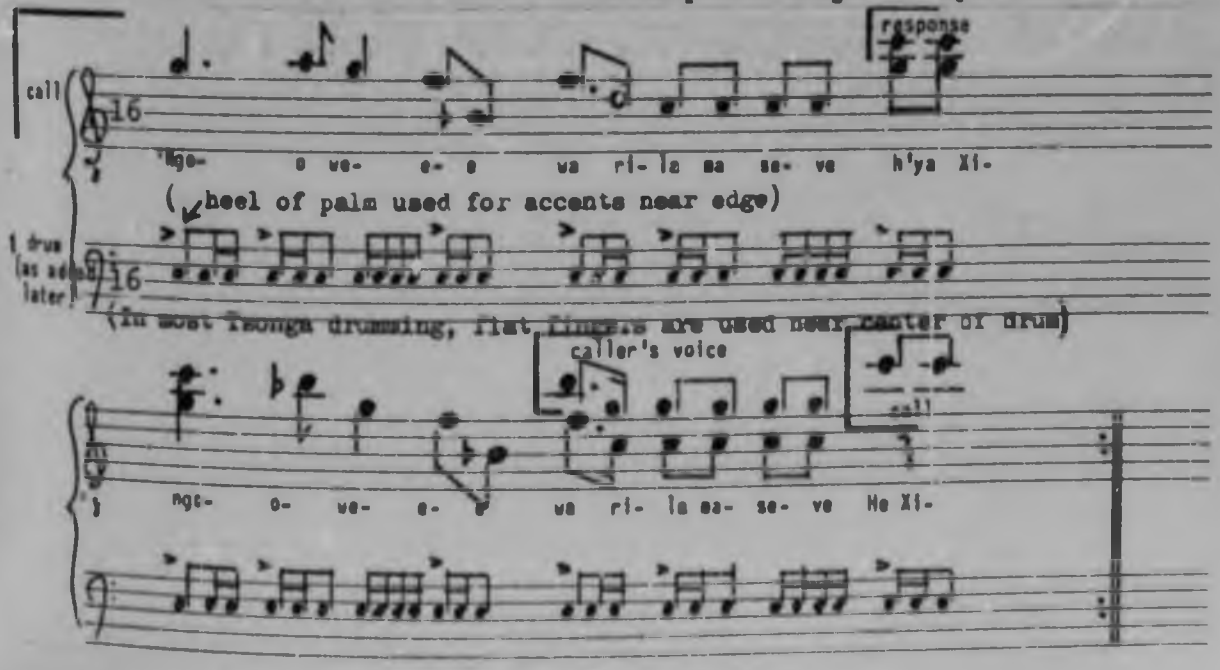
(I'm Travelling To Homu)
Transpos.: min 7th up



Khomba Song Transcription 1A. An alternative version of the above.

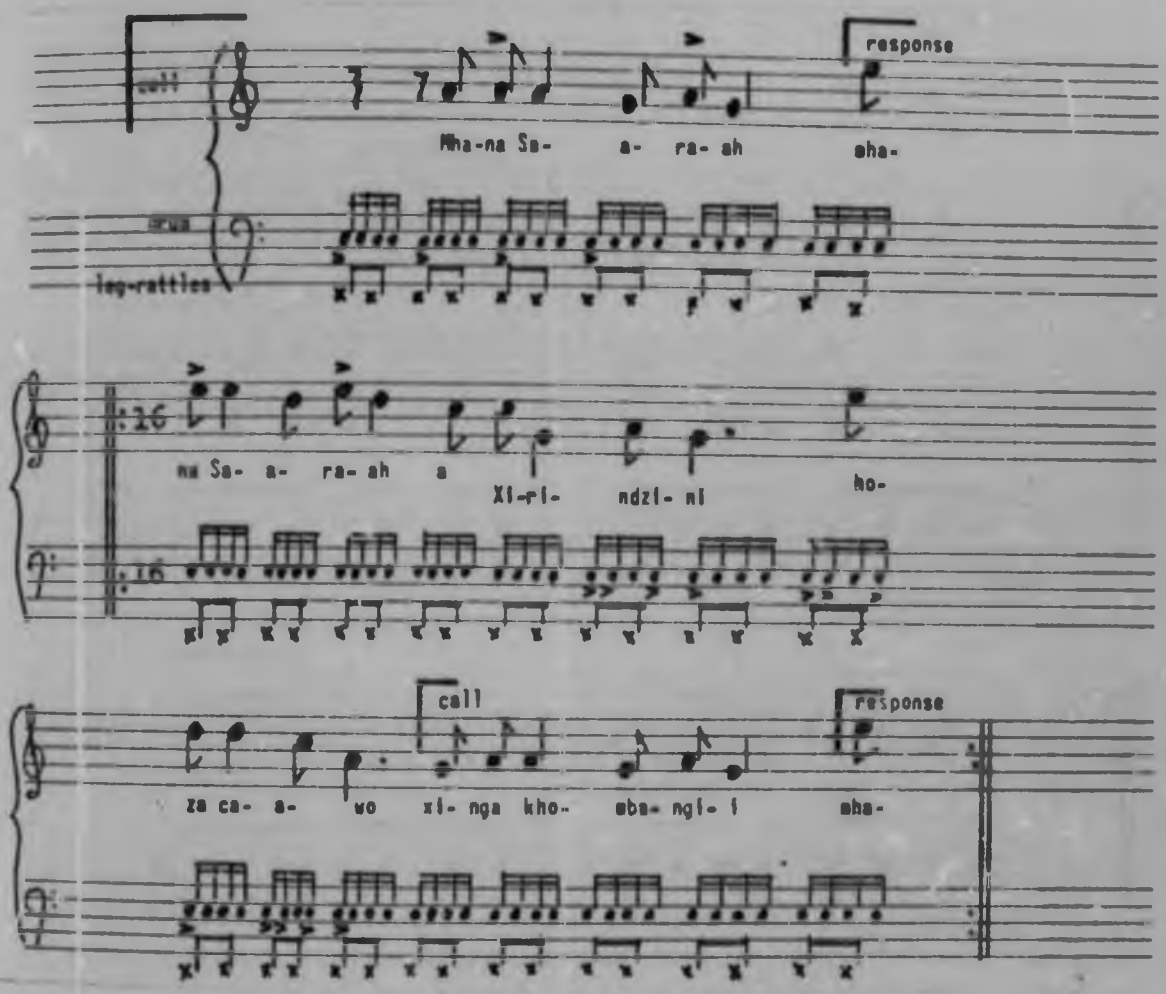
♩ = 132
Cycle: 16 ♩

Transpos.: maj 3rd up

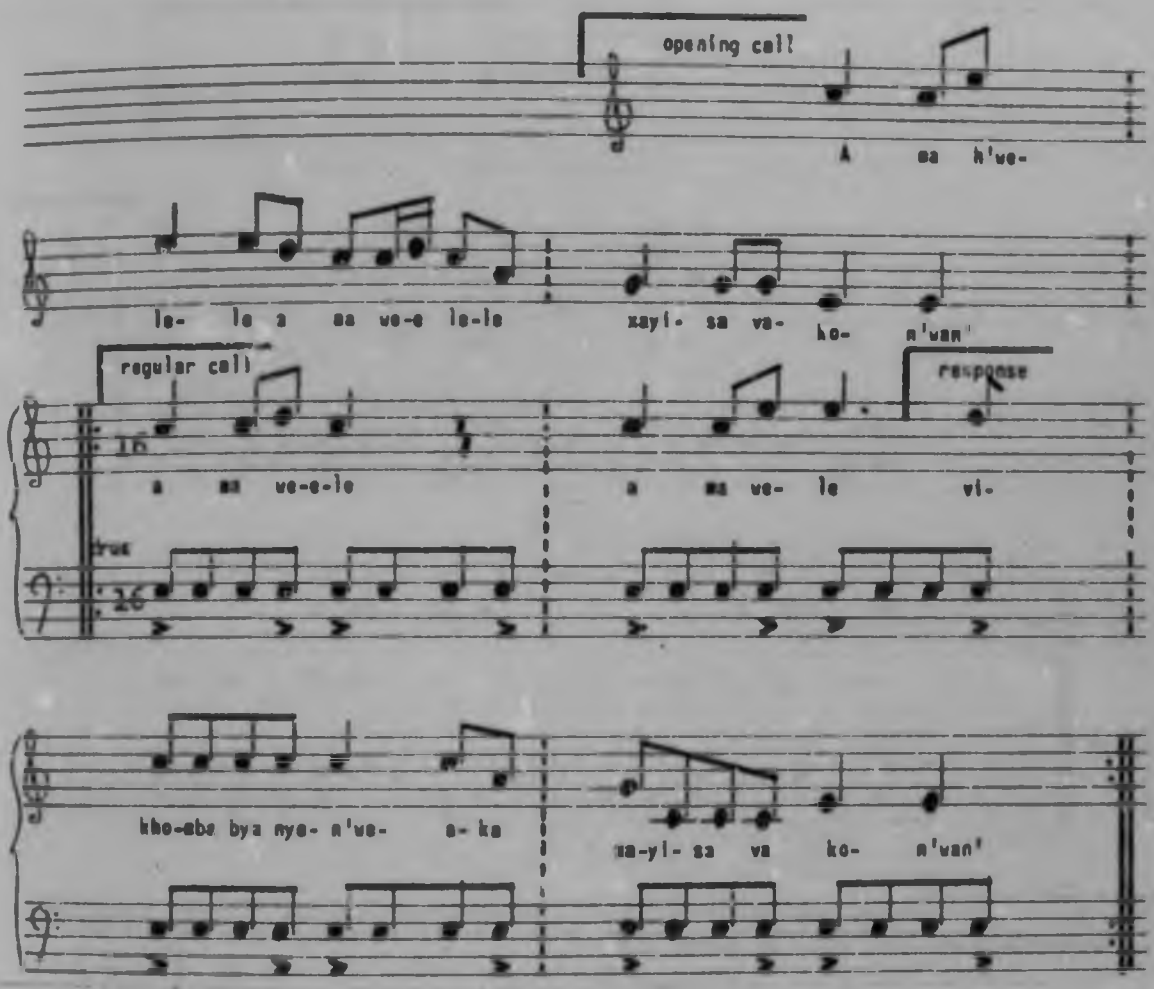


Khomba Song Transcription 2. Nhwanyana Xo Managa Xi Nga Khombangi Hoza Cawo (The Girl Wore A Headcloth Before Initiation)

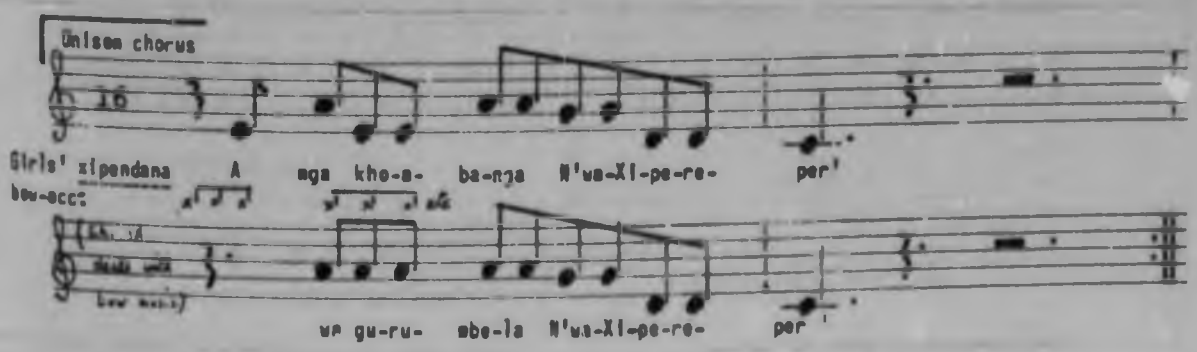
♩ = 126
Cycle: 16 ♩
Transpos.: 5th up



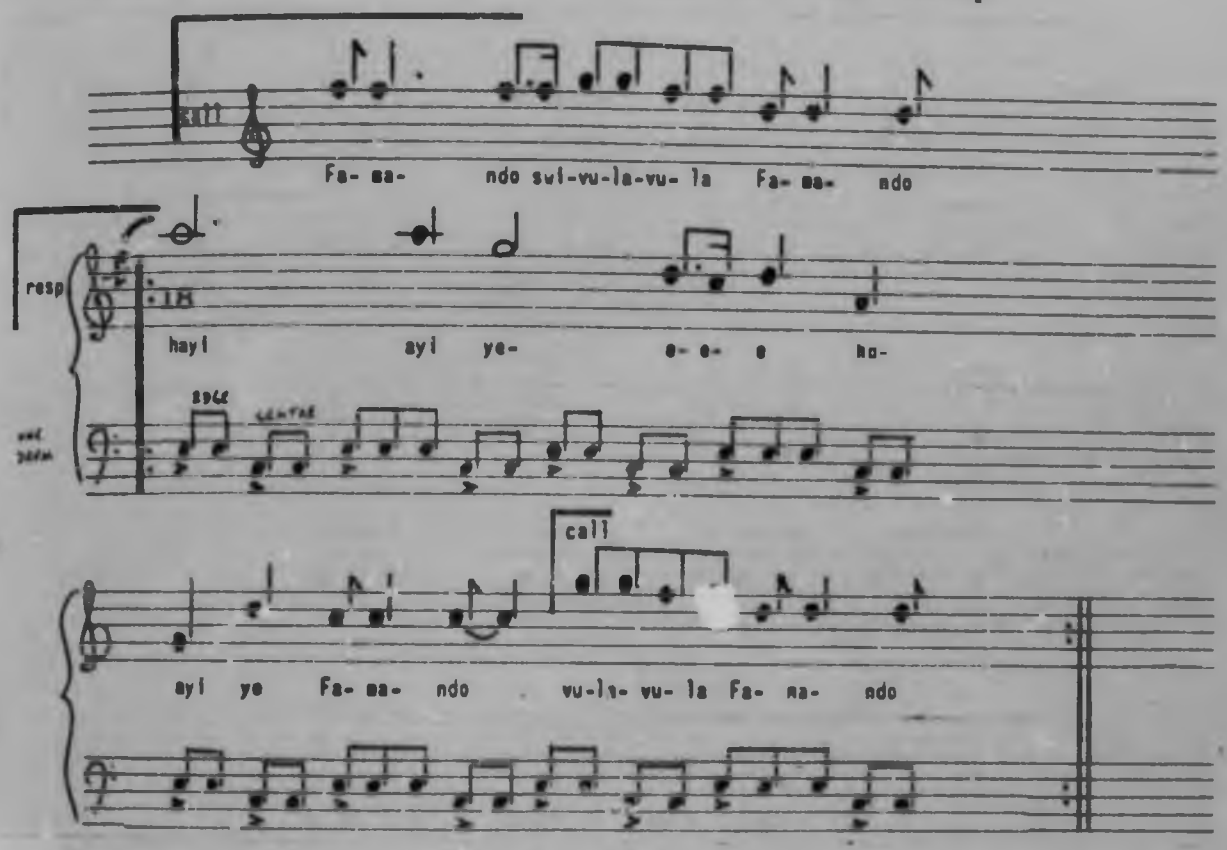
Khomba Song Transcription 3. He Vikhomba Bva Nan'waka Xavisa!
(This Year's Puberty School!)
♩ - 212
Cycle: 16 ♩
Transpos.: 5th up



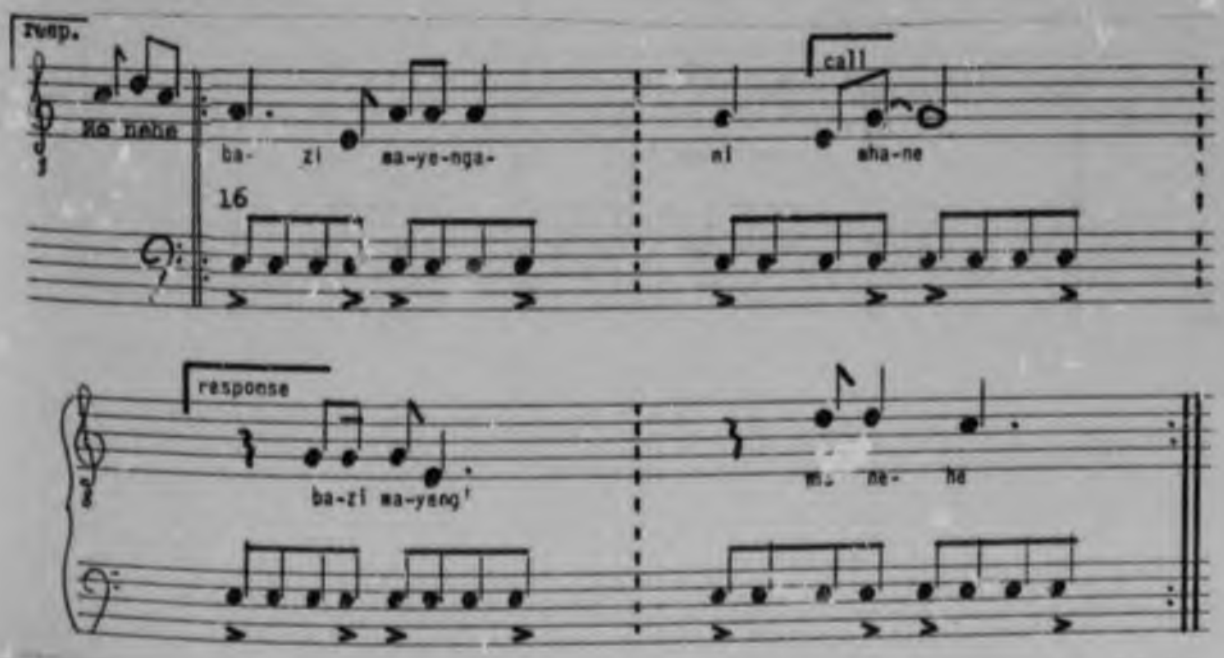
Khomba Song Transcription 4. A Nga Khombanga
(She Did Not Attend Puberty School)
♩. = 132
Cycle: 16 ♩.
Transpos.: maj 3rd down



Khomba Song Transcription 5. Swivulavula Famando
(They Are Talking Of Famando)
♩ = 198
Cycle: 18 ♩
Transpos.: min 7th up

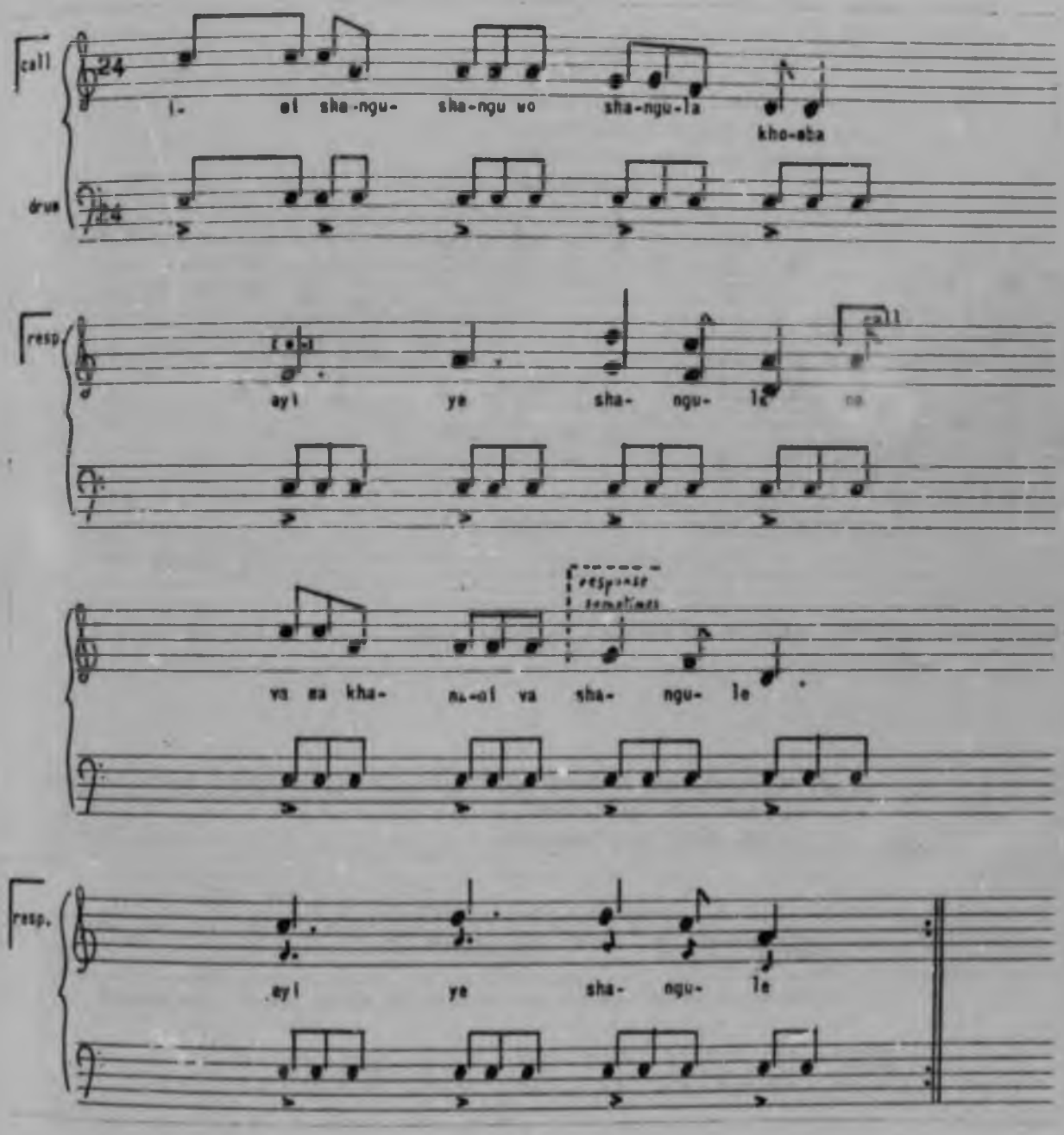


Khomba Song Transcription 6. Ni Va Siva Ka Homu
(So That I Can Go To Homu)
♩ = 232
Cycle: 16 ♩
Transpos.: maj 3rd down

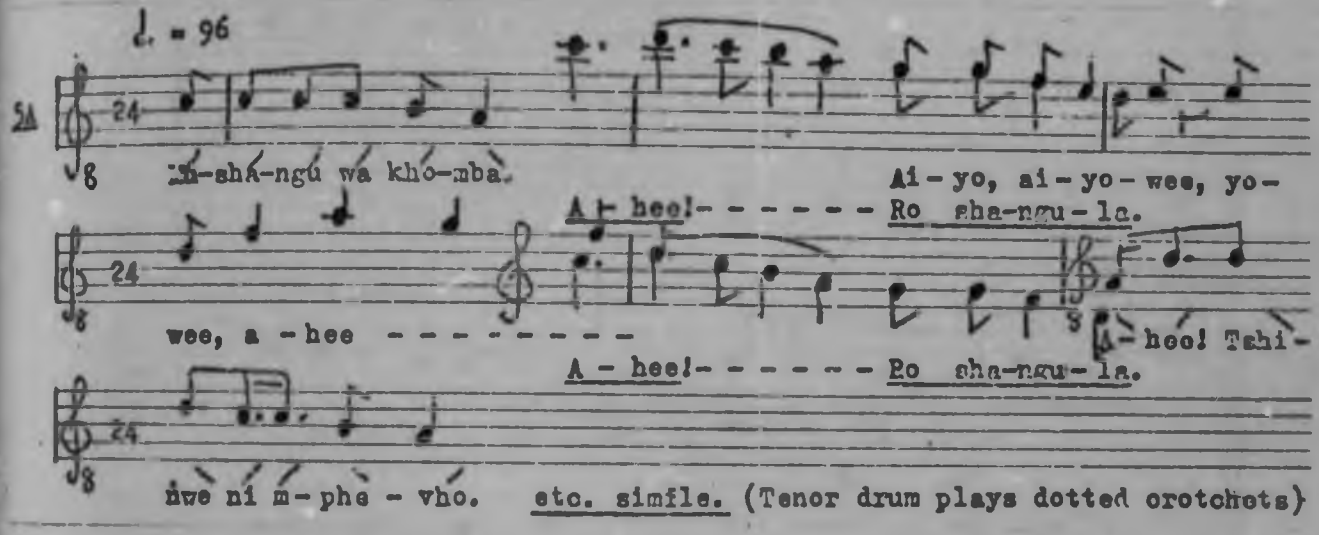


Khomba Song Transcription 7. Xangula!
(Prepare Her!)

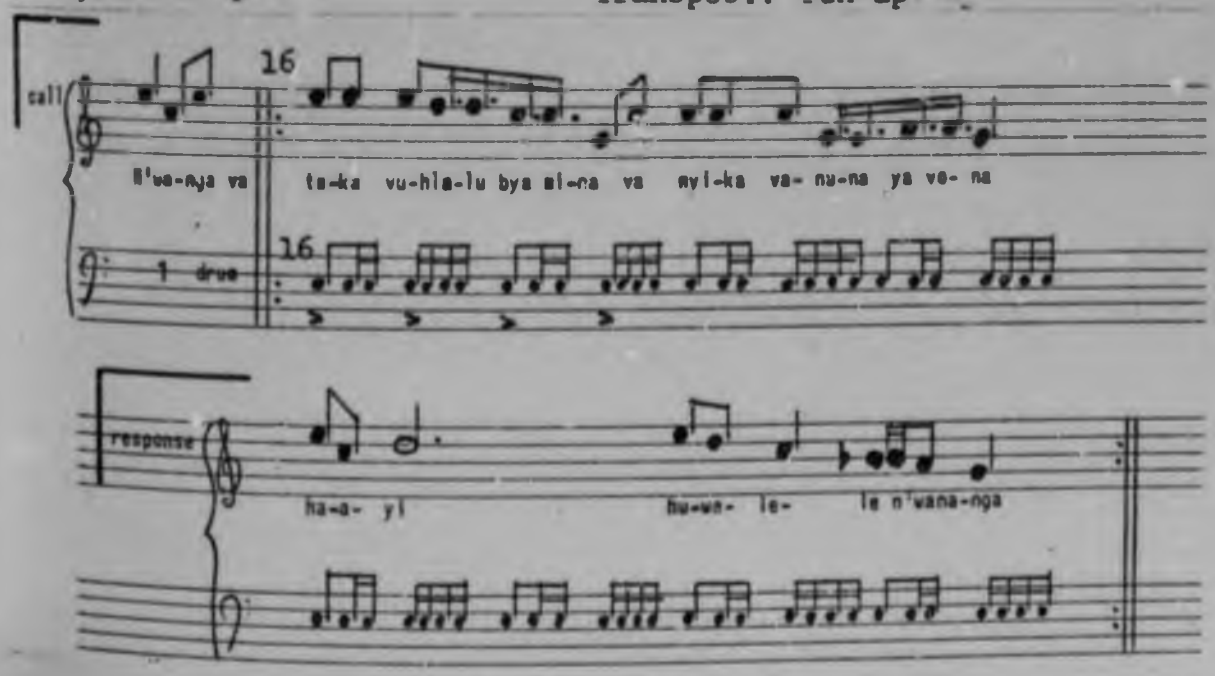
♩. = 106
Cycle: 24 ♩.
Transpos.: min 7th up



Khomba Song Transcription 7A. Mushangu Wa Khomba (Prepare Her!) Transcription of a Venda version collected by Blacking. Note that this Venda version 'commences' at the Tsonga version's 'end', and that the two versions have the following in common: a 24-unit pulse, dotted crotchet rhythm, a long C-to-D descent, and a short G-to-D descent.



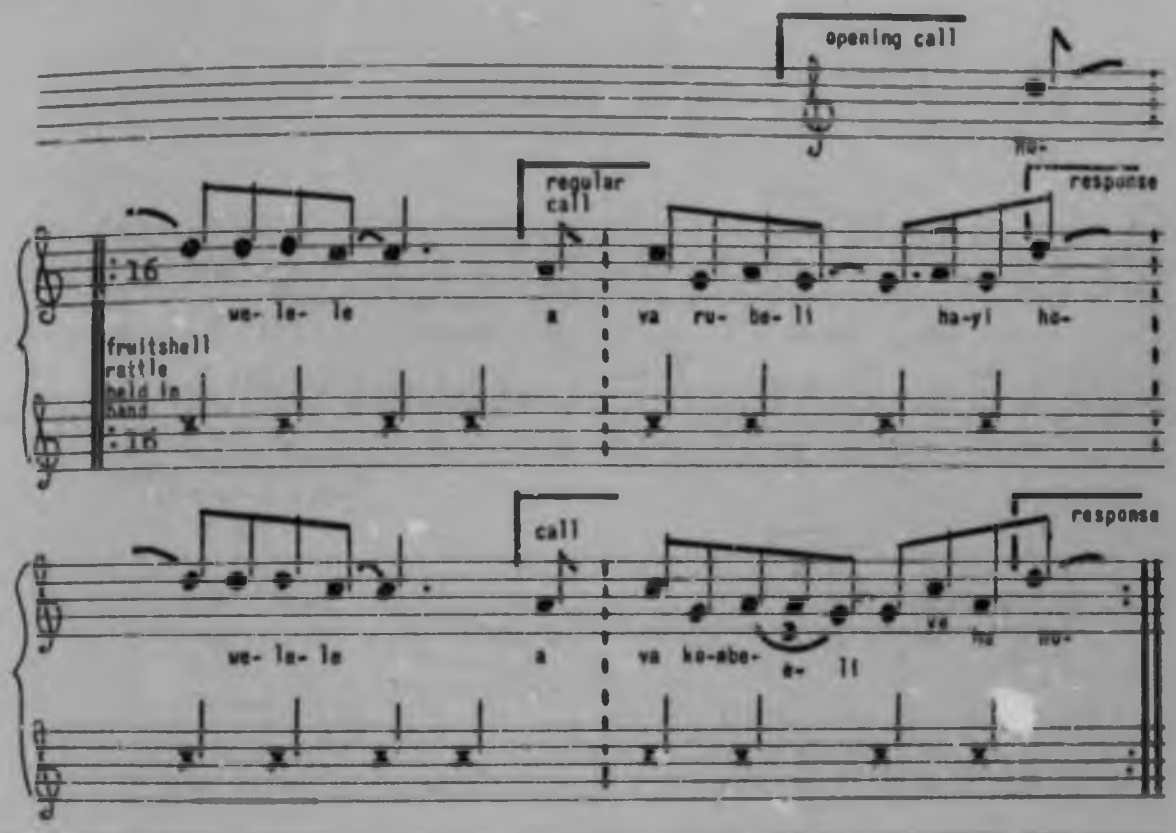
Khomba Song Transcription 8. Va Teka Vuhlalu Bya Mina (They Took My Beads)
♩ = 133
Cycle: 16 ♩
Transpos.: 5th up



Khomba Song Transcription 9. A Va Rubeli
(They Don't Beg)

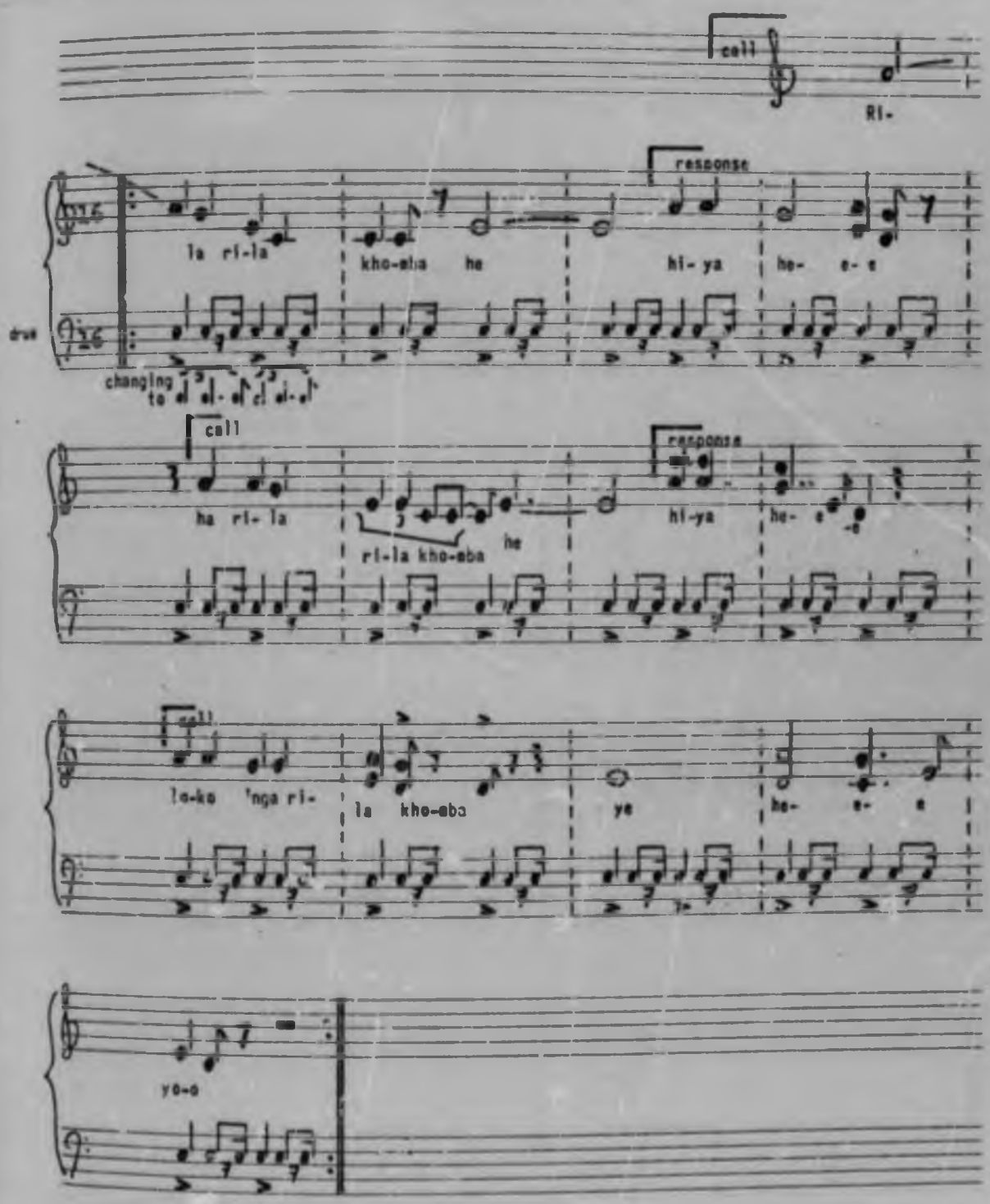
♩ = 102
Cycle: 16 ♩

Transpos.: min 2nd up



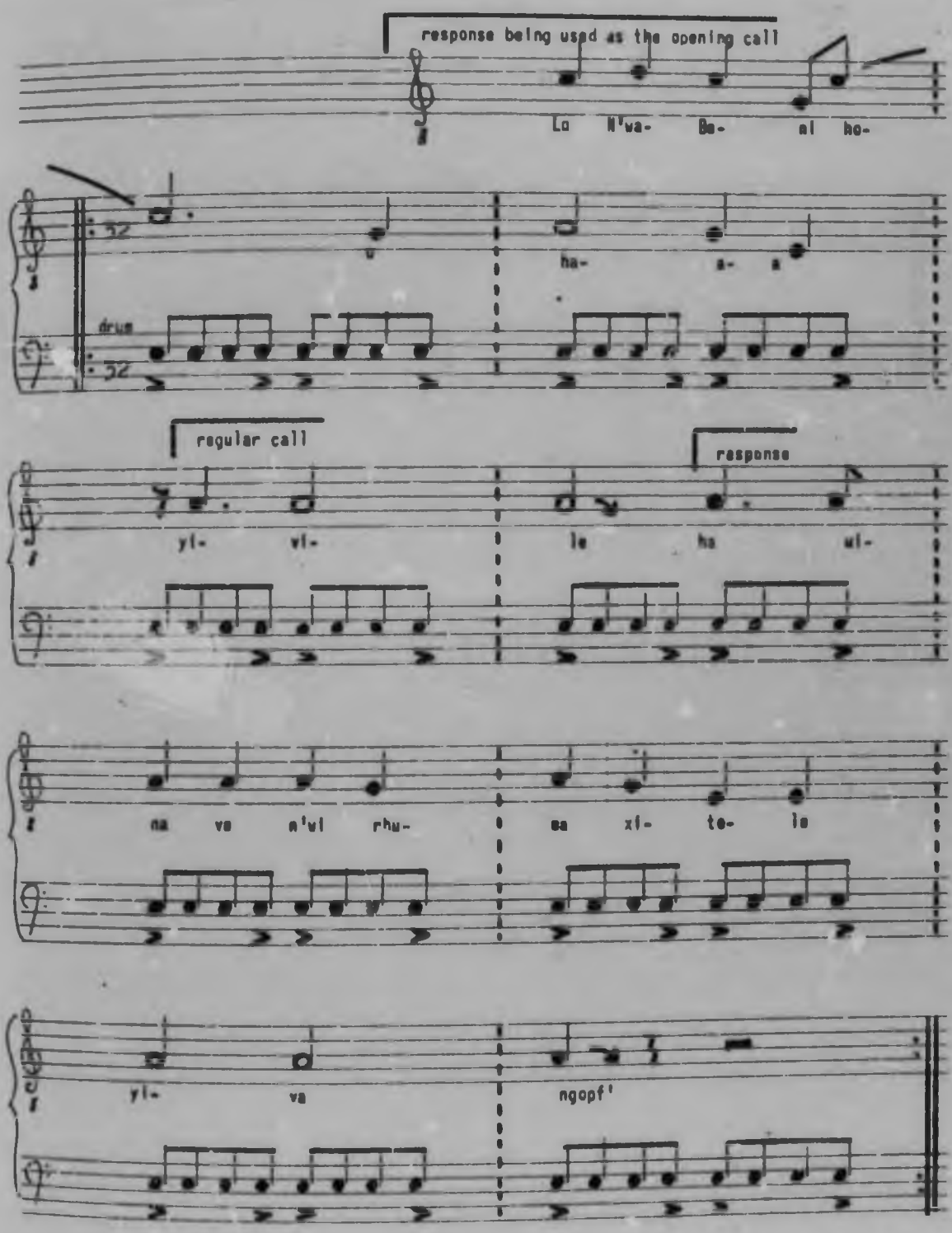
Khomba Song Transcription 10. Rila Rila Khomba
(Cry, Cry, Novice)

♩ = 216
Cycle: 16 ♩
Transpos.: min 3rd up



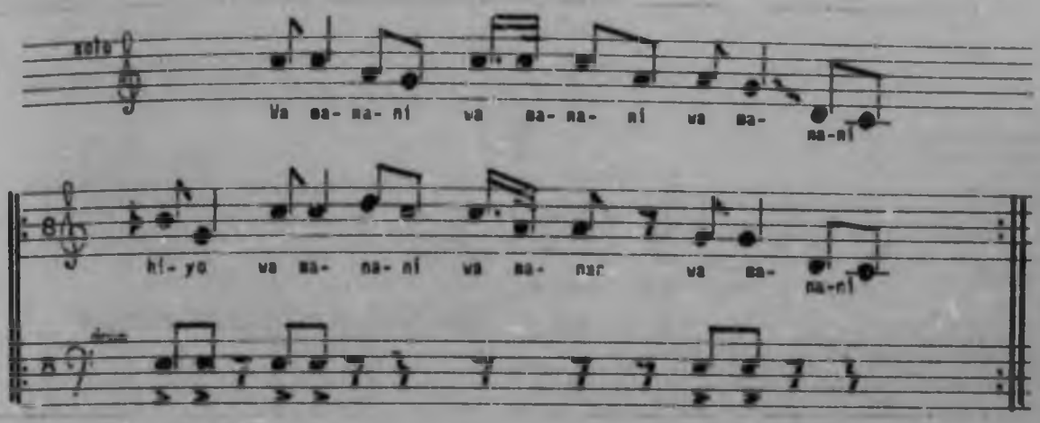
Khomba Song Transcription 11. I Yivile
(She Has Stolen)

♩ = 280
Cycle: 32 ♩
Transpos.: maj 3rd down



Khomba Song Transcription 12. Ni Deviti Wa Manana
(It Is David Of My Mother)

♪ = 166
Cycle: 8 ♩
Transpos.: dim 5th up



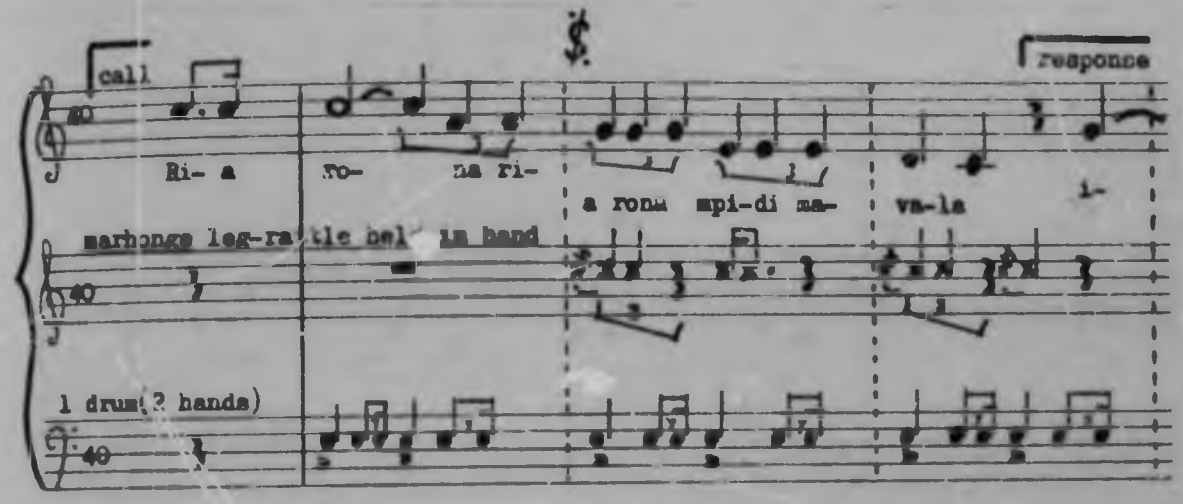
Khomba Song Transcription 13. Mavala!

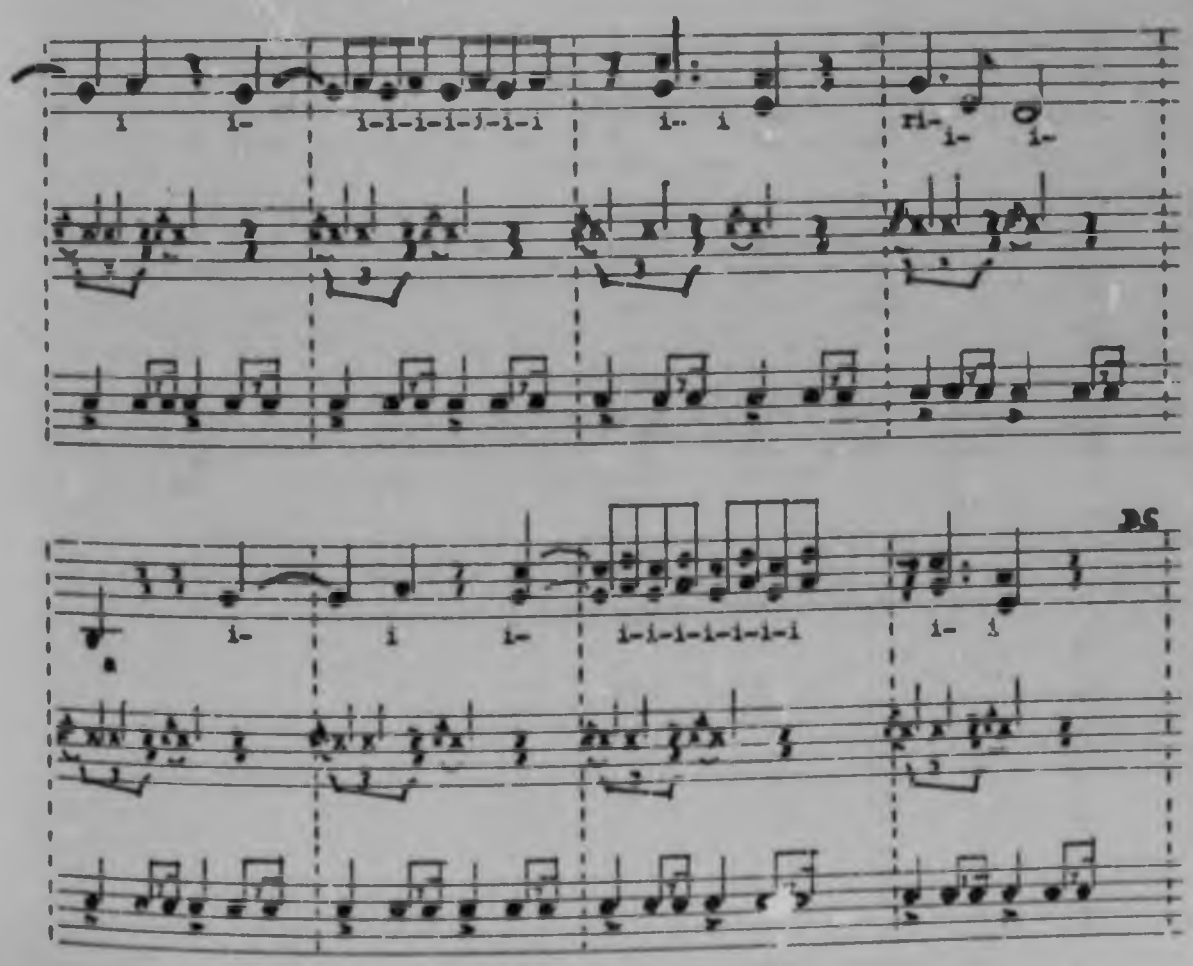
♩ = 208

Cycle: 40 ♩

(Colour!)

Transpos.: min 7th up

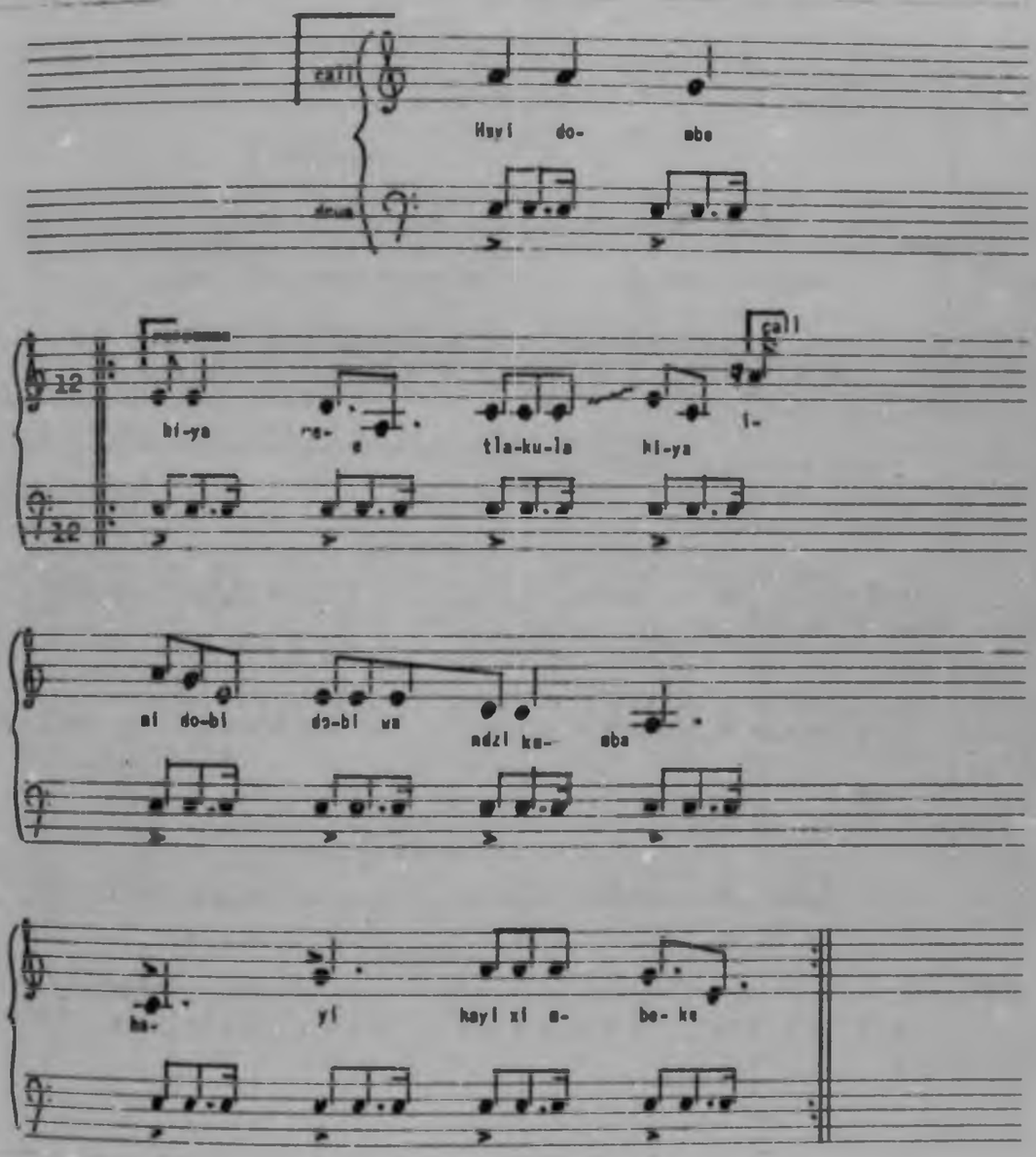




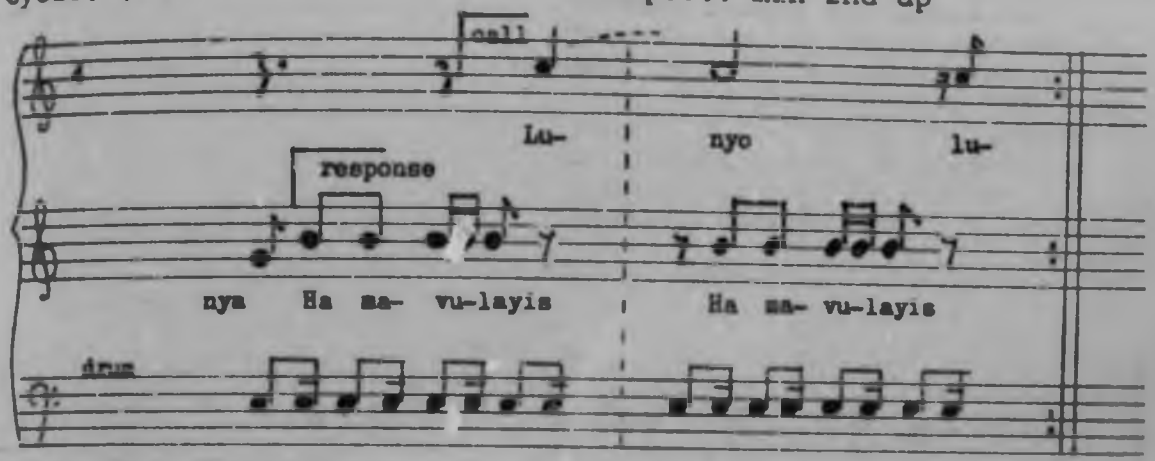
Khomba Song Transcription 14. Doba, Doba
(Pick Up, Pick Up)

♩. = 107
Cycle: 12 ♩.

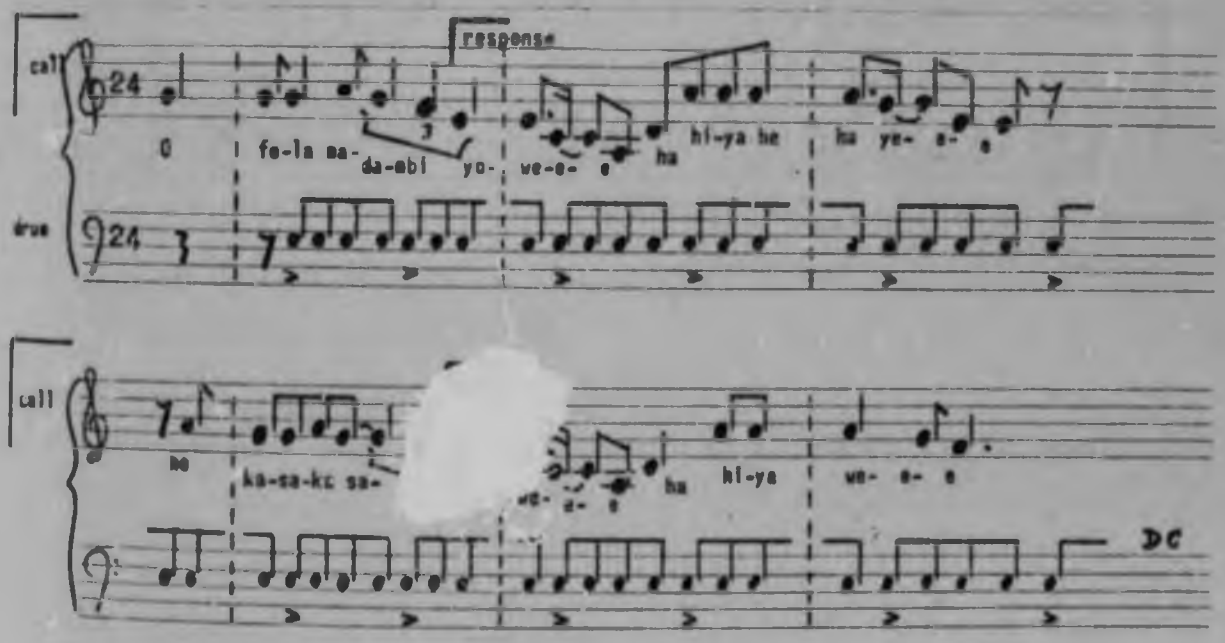
Transpos.: maj 2nd up



Khomba Song Transcription 15. Lunyo, Lunya
(Cheek, Cheek)
♩ = 172
Cycle: 4 ♩
Transpos.: min 2nd up



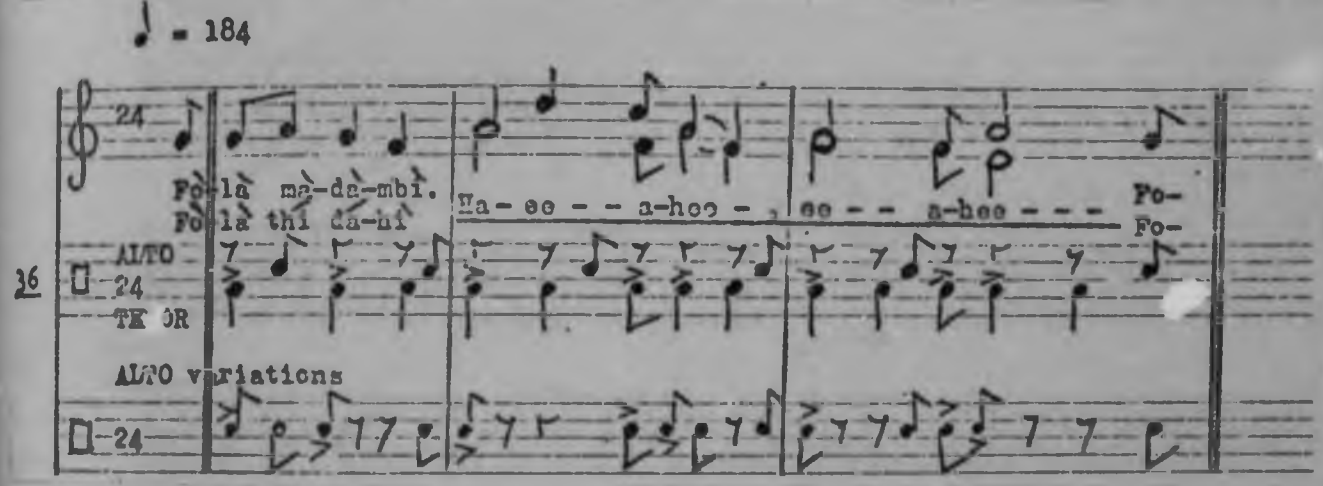
Khomba Song Transcription 16. Fela Madambi
(We Die From Witchcraft)
♩ = 164
Cycle: 24 ♩
Transpos.: min 3rd up



Khomba Song Transcription 16A. Fola Madambi

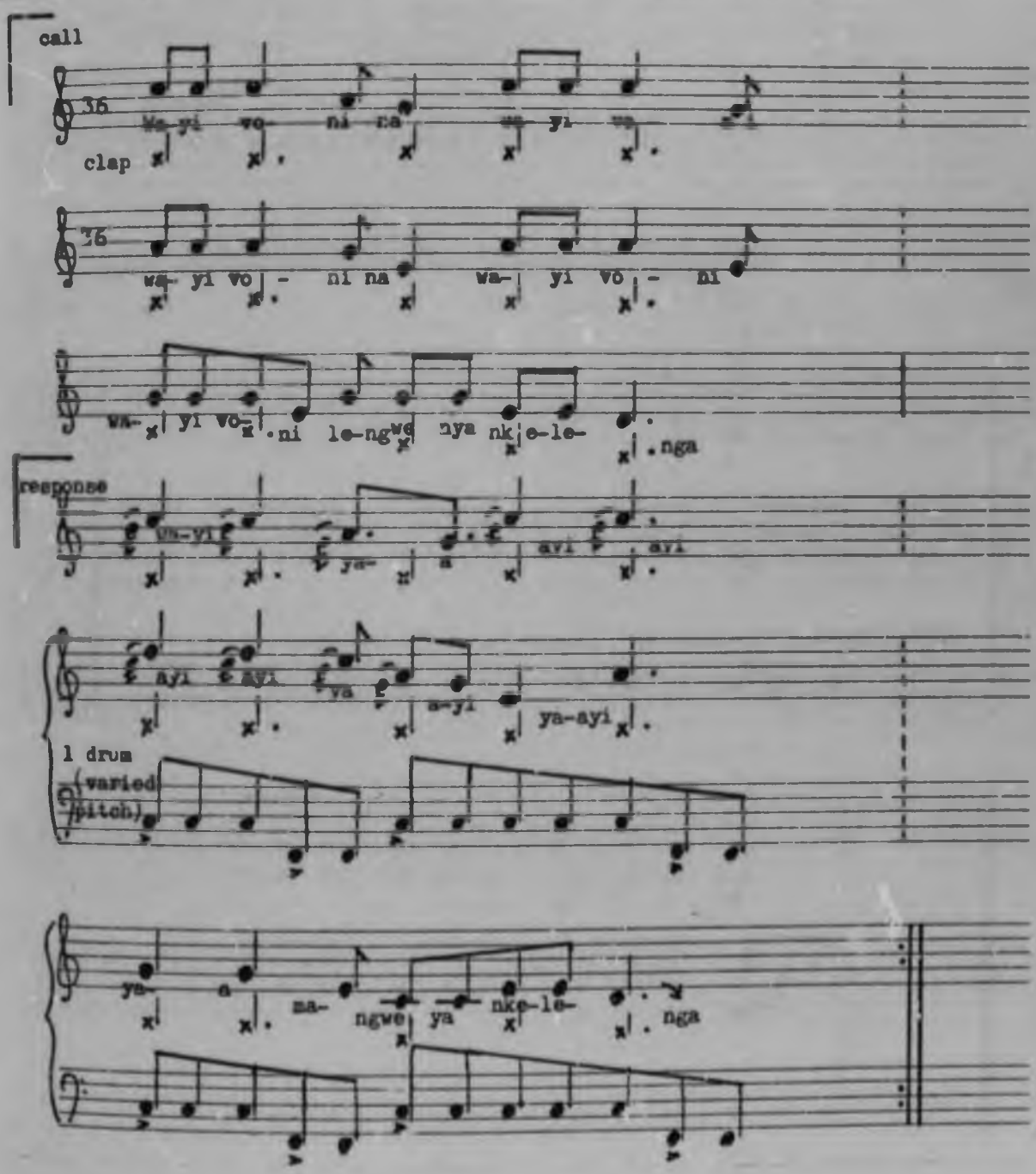
♩ = 184

(Snuff That Has Been Bewitched)
Venda version collected by Blacking. Note the 'equivalating' of the Tsonga version's AGEC descent by the Venda version's DCAF descent a 4th higher. Note also that the two versions have the following in common: a 24-unit pulse, a step-by-step descent GFE; a step-by-step descent AGF.

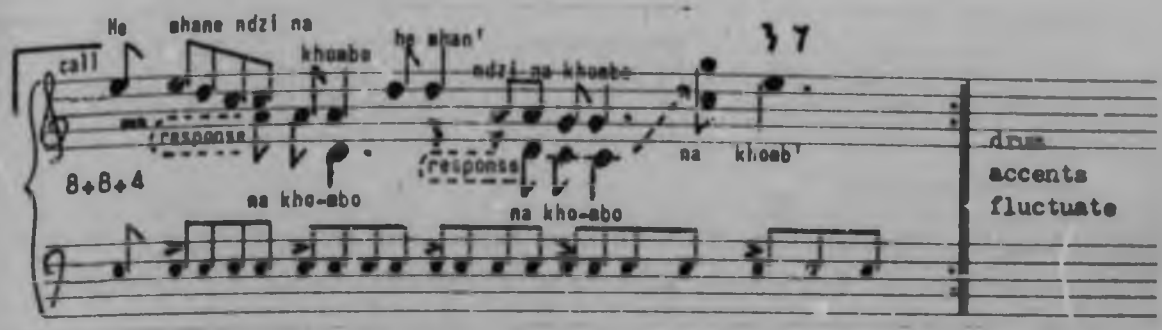


Khomba Song Transcription 17. Wa Yi Vona Ngwenya?
(You See The Crocodile)
Note the interesting clap-pattern.
Transpos.: nil

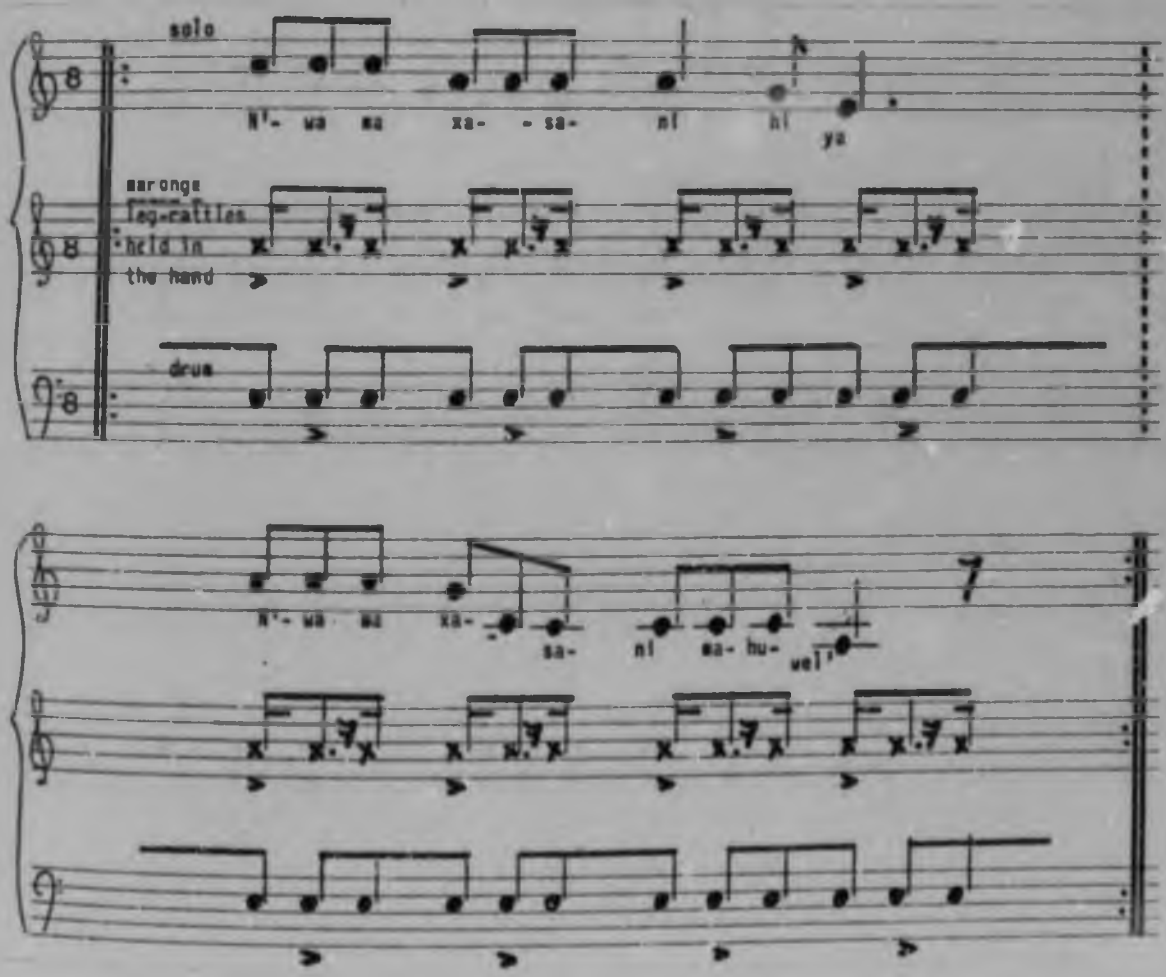
♩ = 152
Cycle: 36 ♩



Khomba Song Transcription 18. Ku Tswala Hi Vambirhi!
(To Conceive Twins!)
♩ = 160
Cycle: 8 ♪ + 8 ♪ + 4 ♪
Transpos.: dim 5th up

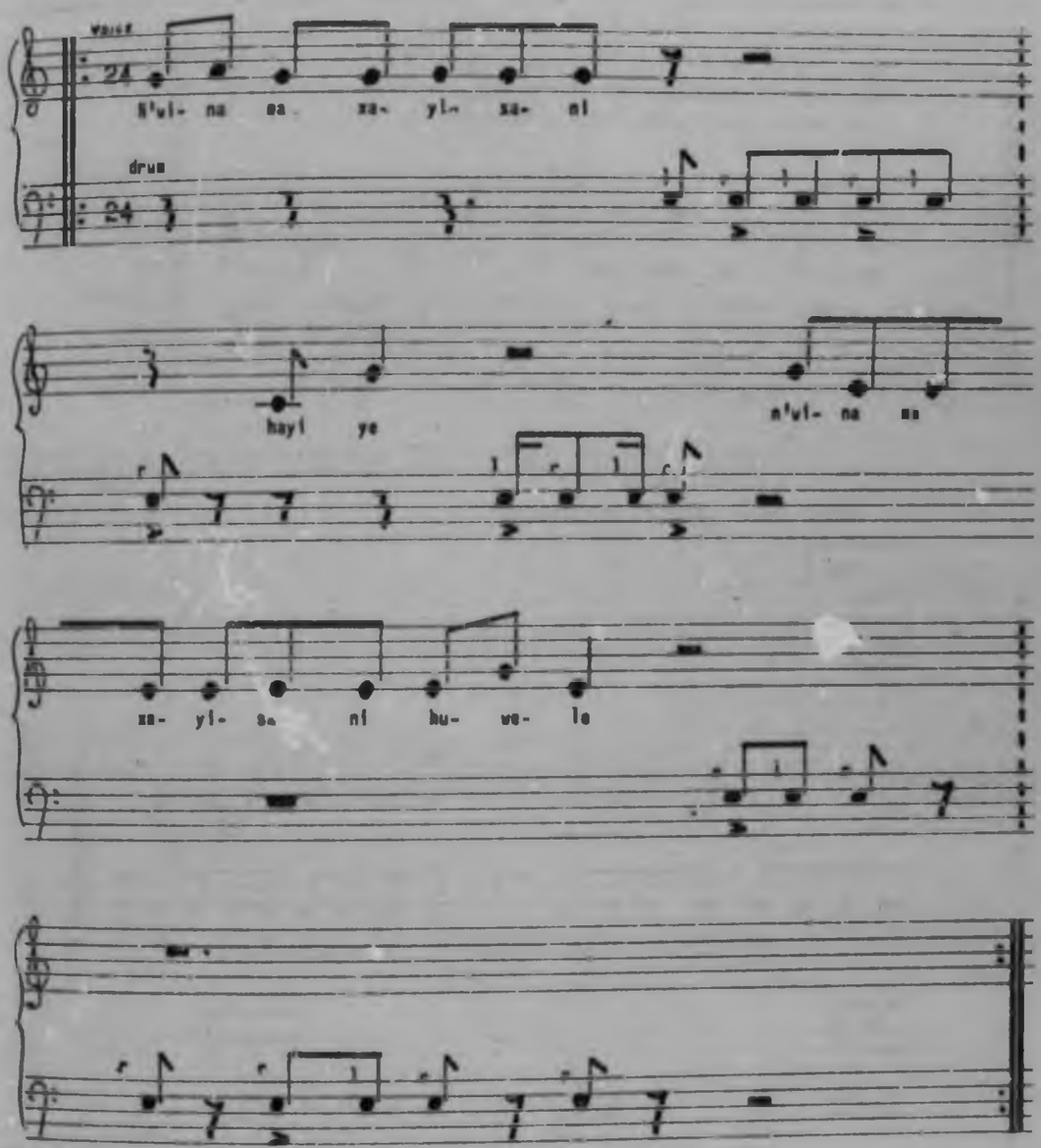


Khomba Song Transcription 19. Ndza Bela Mina Mama
(Suck As A Baby)
♩. = 104
Cycle: 8 ♩.
Transpos.: dim 5th up



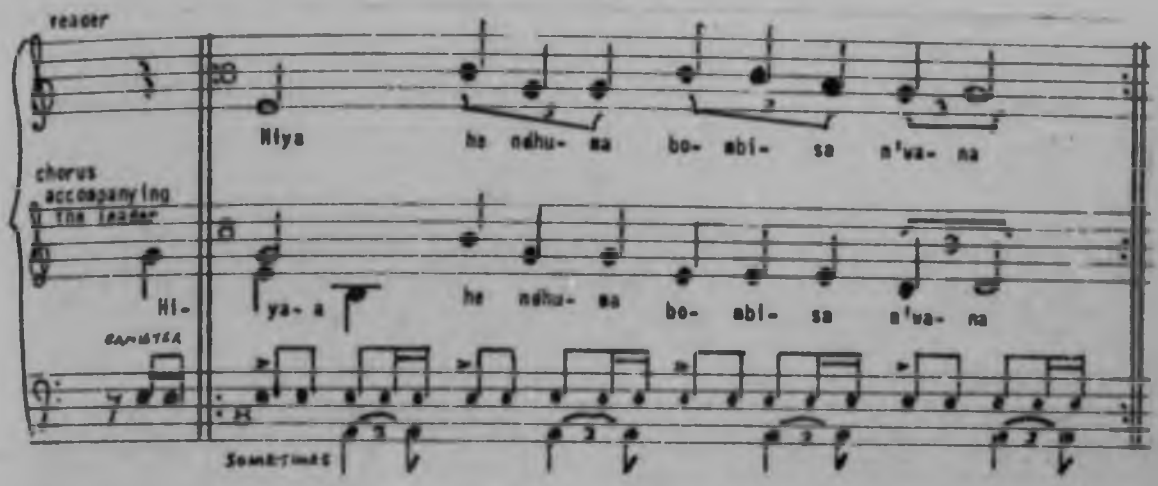
Khomba Song Transcription 19A. Voice-and-Drum Conversation
♩ = 120
Cycle: 24 ♩

Version of the Above
Trarspos.: maj 3rd down



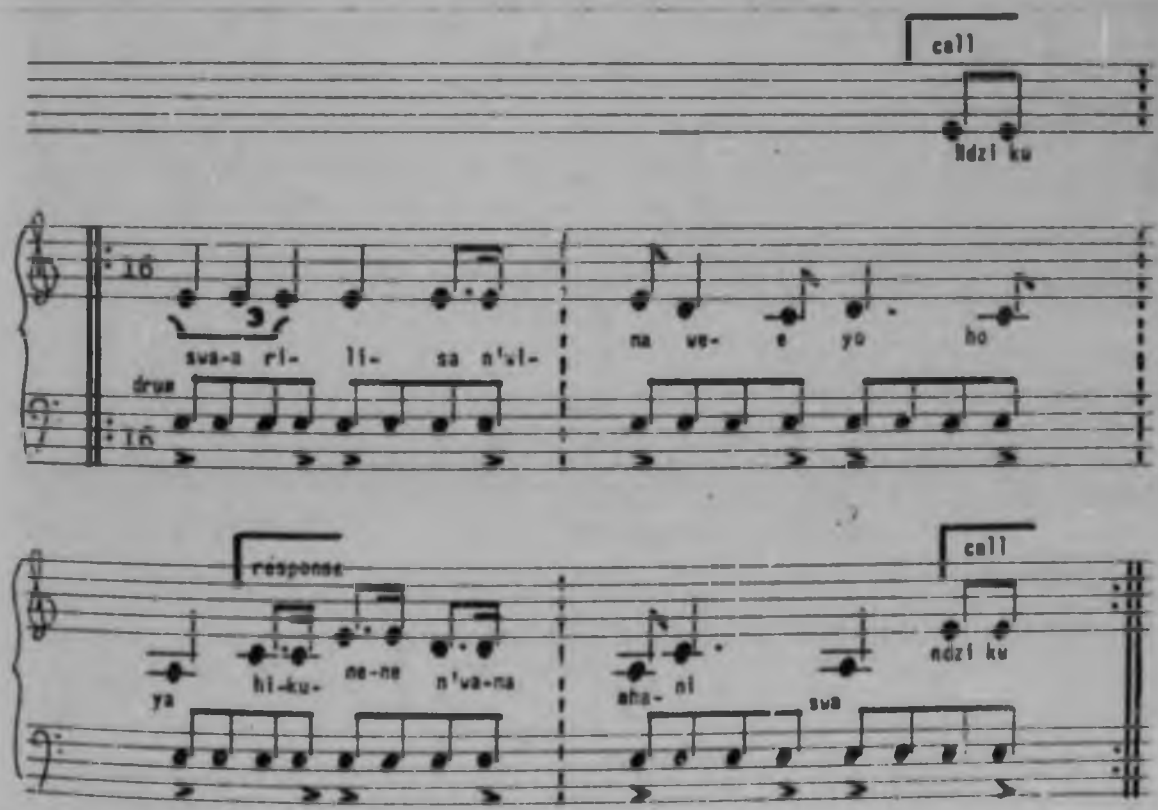
Khomba Song Transcription 20. Hiya Cinela N'wana
(We Are Dancing For The Child)

♩. = 150
Cycle: 8 ♩
Transpos.: maj 3rd up



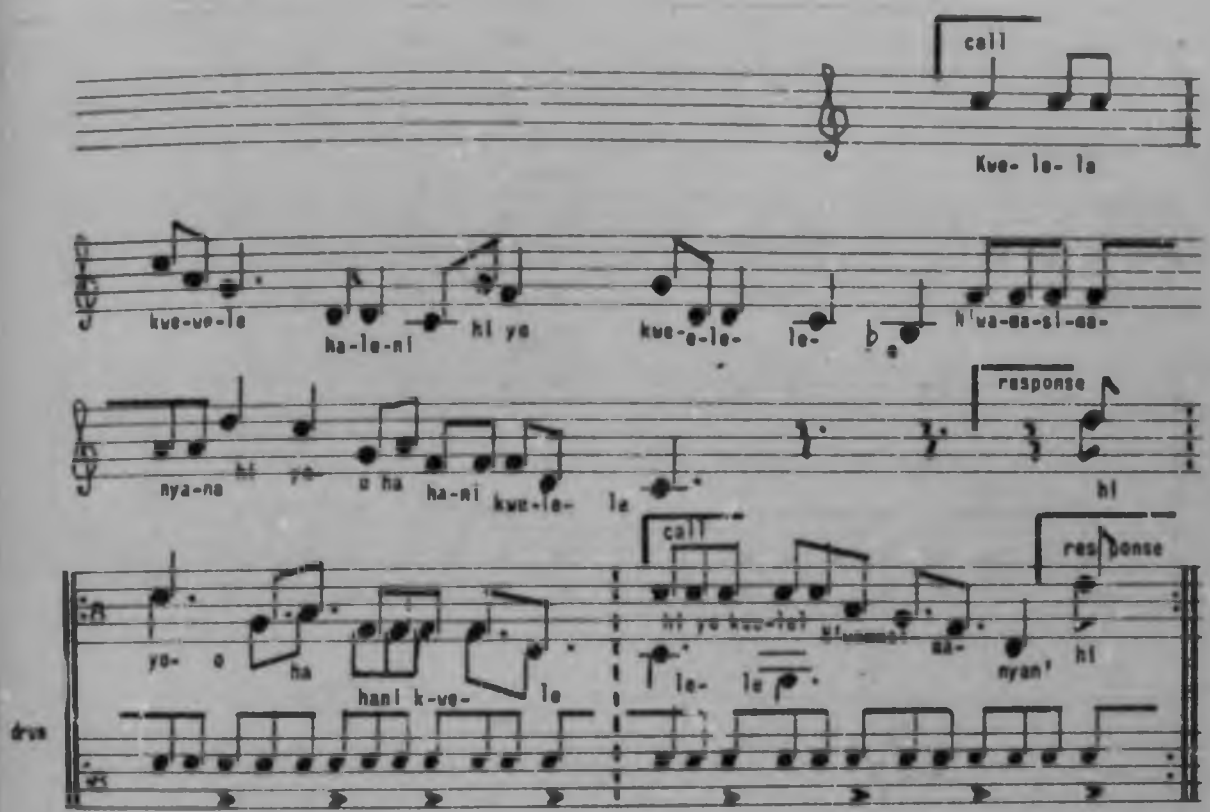
Khomba Song Transcription 21. Ndzi Ku Swa Ririsa
(It Is Lamentable)

♩ = 200
Cycle: 16 ♩
Transpos.: maj 2nd down



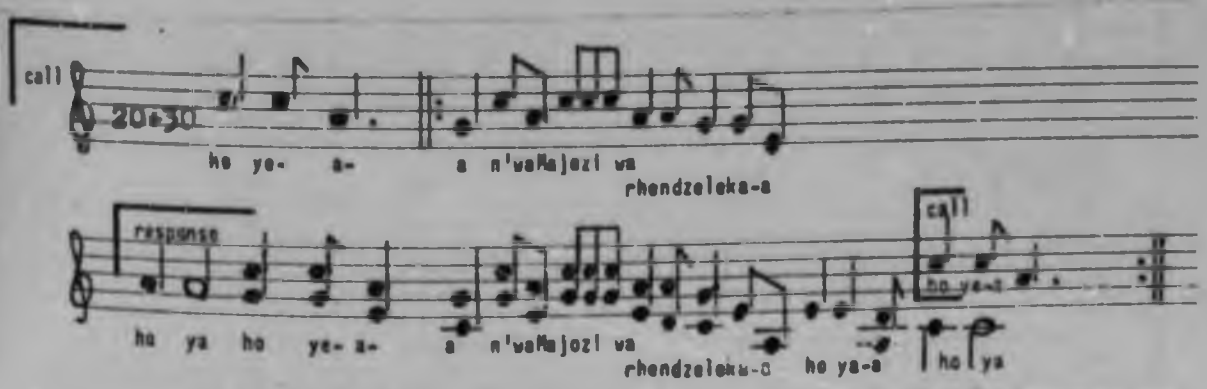
Khomba Song Transcription 22. A Ni Cin' No Rengelela
(I Am Not Dancing But Singing)

♩. = 116
Cycle: 6 ♩.
Transpos.: dim 5th up



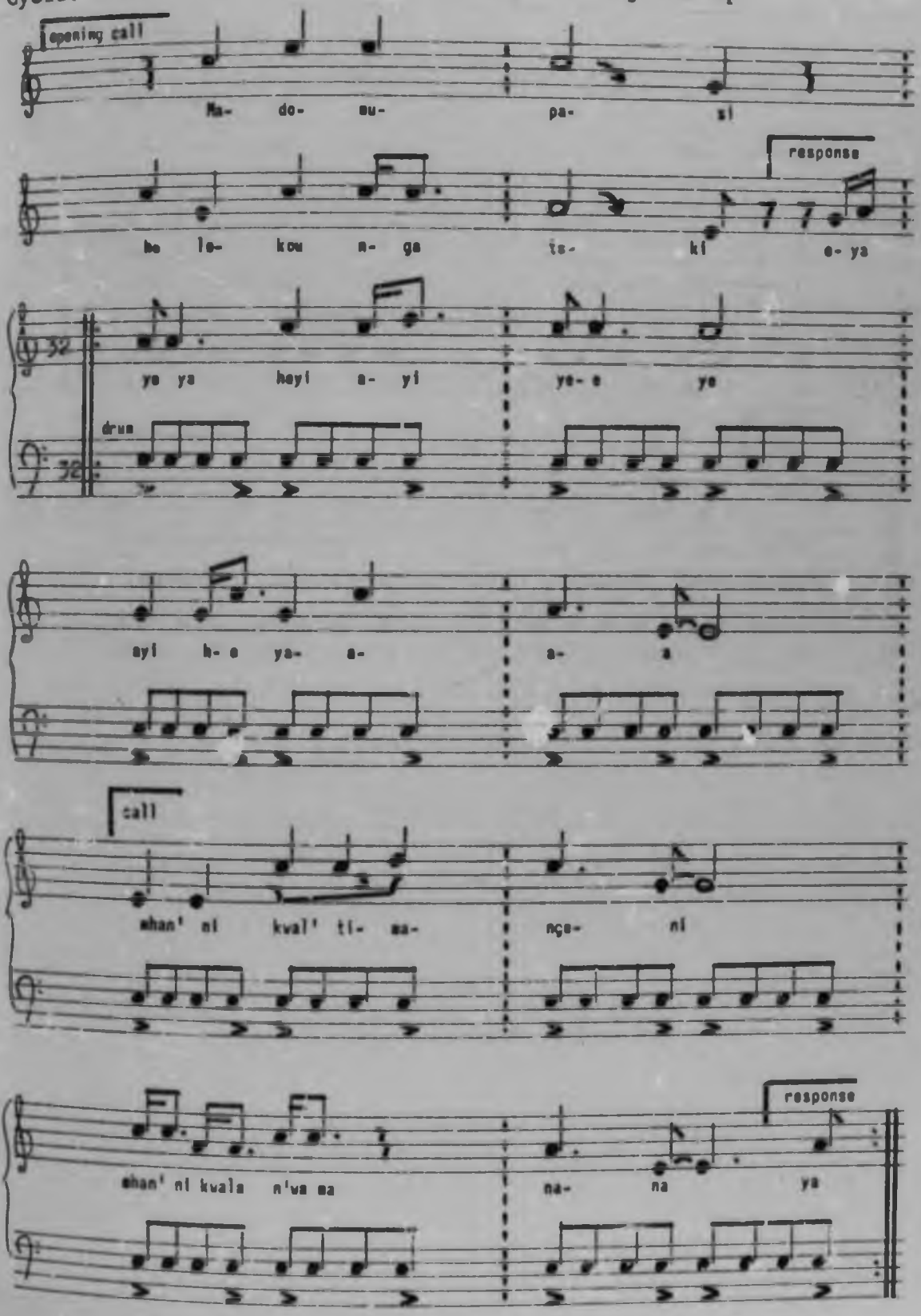
Khomba Song Transcription 23. N'wa-Majozi Wa Rhendzeleka
(Child-of-Majozi Is Turning Round)

♪ = 308
Cycle: 20 ♪ + 30 ♪
Transpos.: 4th up

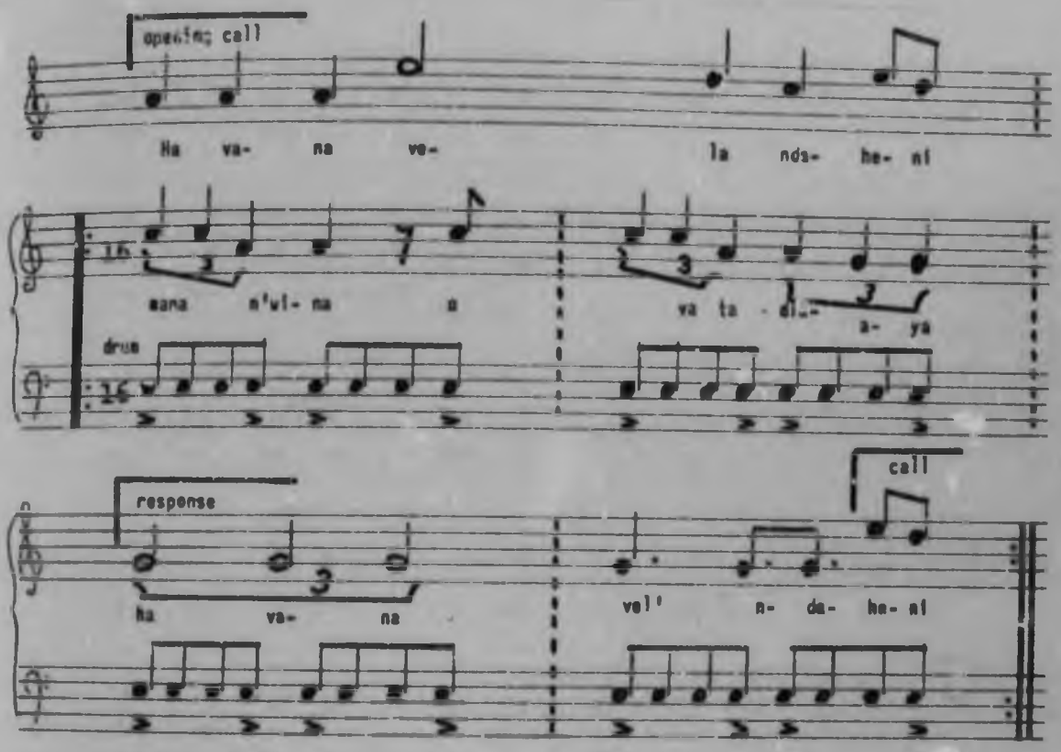


Khomba Song Transcription 24. Va Ta Mi Khomba
(Coming To Arrest You)

♩ = 252
Cycle: 32 ♩
Transpos.: maj 6th up

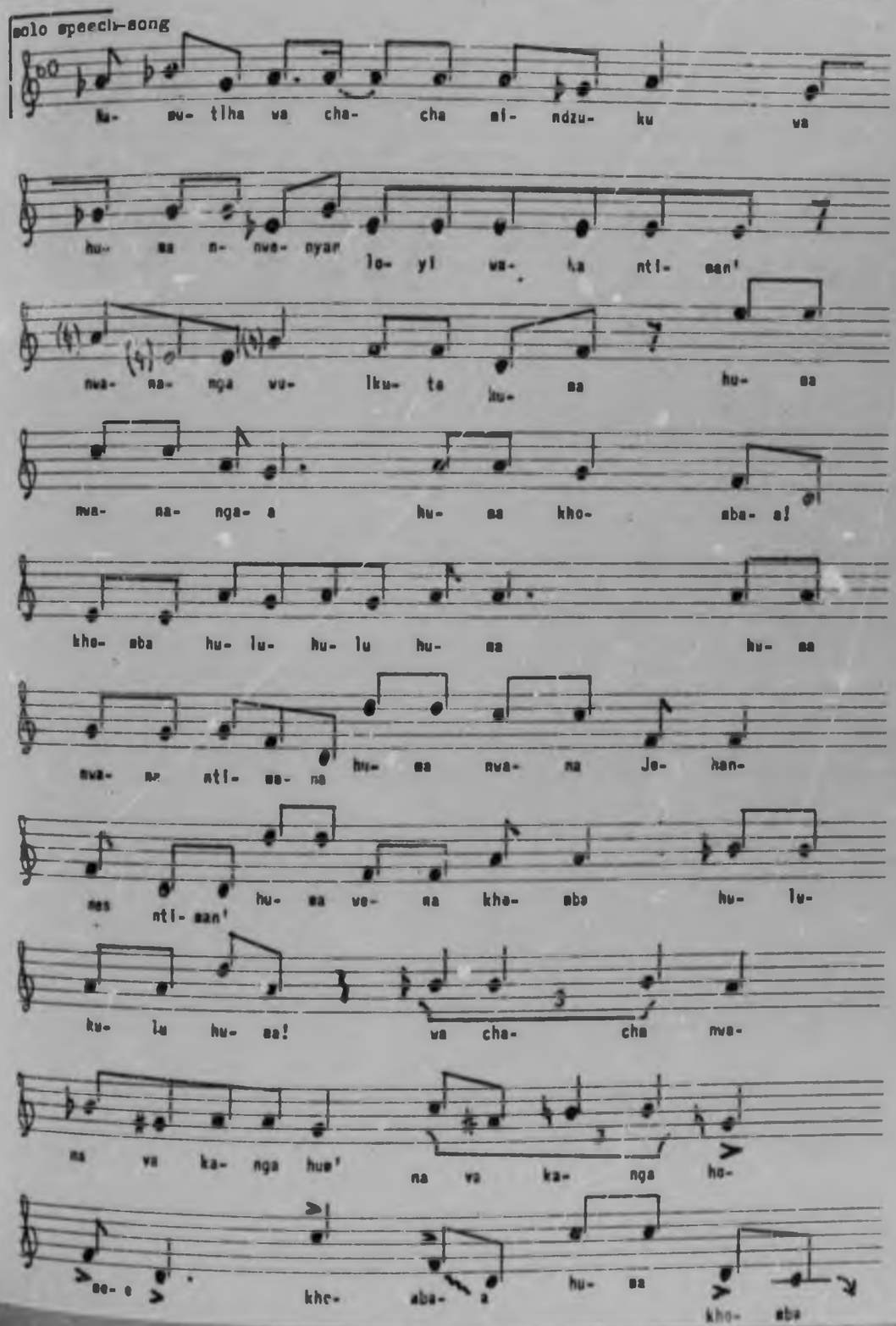


Khomba Song Transcription 25. Va Ta Dlaya Ndaheni
(They will Kill Ndaheni)
♩ = 280
Cycle: 16 ♩
Transpos.: 5th up



Khomba Song Transcription 26. Namuntlha Wa Xaxa
(Today They Are Dancing)

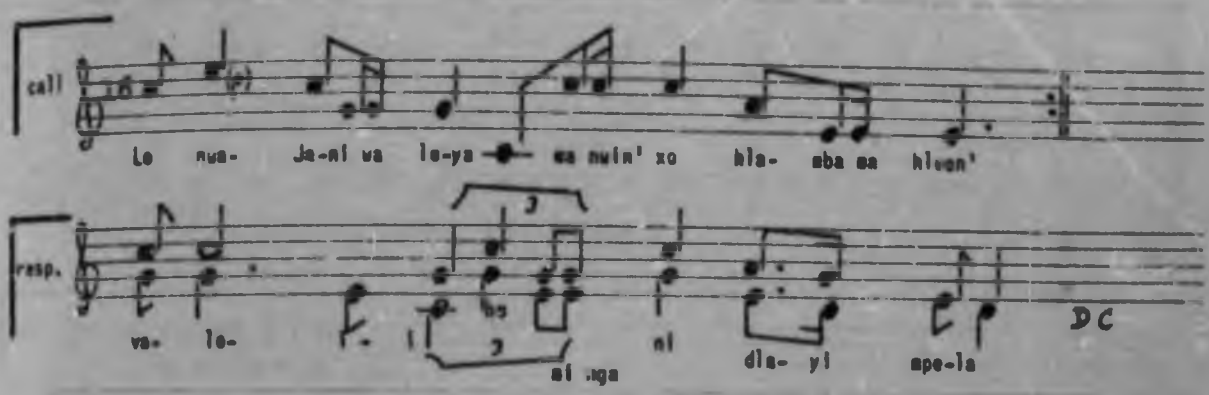
♩ = 180
Cycle: 60 ♩ (but possibly free) Transpos.: nil



Khomba Song Transcription 27. Ma Rhumbini Ya Vona Va Siva Xikhova Na Swona (They Have Left An Owl At Their Ruins)

♩ = 108
Cycle: 16 ♩

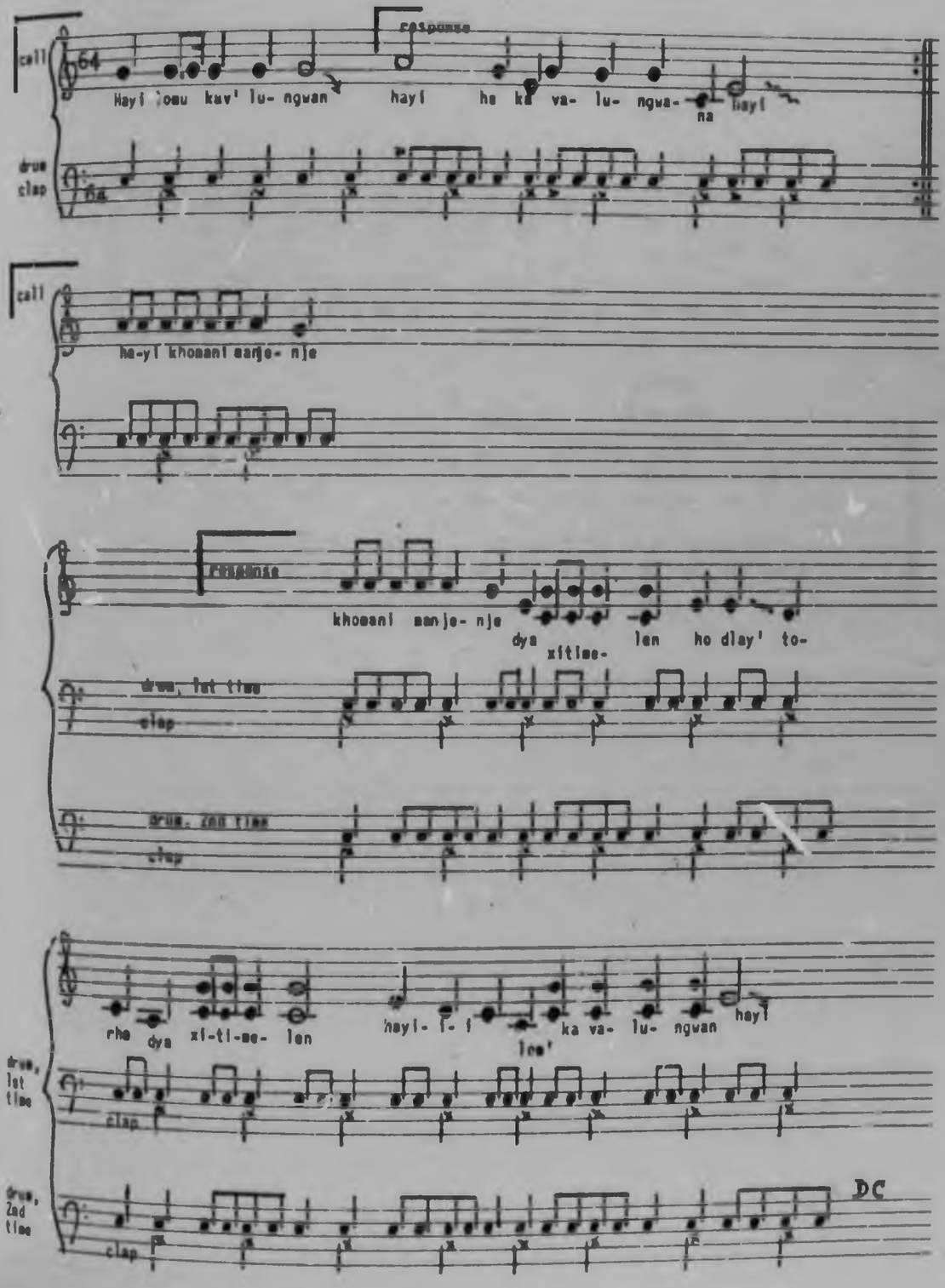
Transpos.: dim 5th up



Khomba Song Transcription 28. Dlayani Swikhova
(Kill The Owls)

♩ = 212
Cycle: 64 ♩

Transpos.: 4th down



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