

A SHORT STUDY ON ZULU MUSIC.

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*Reprinted from 'Annals of the Natal Government Museum,' Vol. I,
Part 3, May, 1908.*





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With Plates XLIII and XLIV.

THE Zulus have a great liking and a certain natural ability for music, which rejoices the hearts of old and young alike of both sexes.

In spite, however, of the good musical ear which most Zulus possess, and their great fondness for playing musical instruments and for singing, it cannot be said that they have reached any proficiency in either instrumental or vocal music.

At the end of this article there will be given some eight examples of Zulu songs. These have been taken down with care, and may be regarded as fairly accurate transcriptions; they will clearly show the absence of art, or at least what Europeans would call art. Nevertheless, the study of native music should prove of interest, and it discloses a considerable variety of strange airs and rhythms, especially in the direction of dances. It is certainly high time for such a study, as European music is rapidly penetrating into every part of the country, and harmonicas, concertinas, etc., are taking the place of the original primitive instruments.

I. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.

The native musical instruments will now be described.

(1) Umqangala, or stringed bow (Pl. XLIII, figs. 1-3). It is made of a bent stick or reed with a string of ox-tendon stretched tightly across. The bows vary considerably in size,

and sometimes they may be ornamented; in the specimen shown in fig. 3 the surface of the reed is covered with engravings. In using the instrument, one end of the bow is held by the lips of the player, and the other end with the left hand. The string is twanged with the thumb of the right hand, and notes of different pitch are produced by means of the fingers of the left hand pressing on the string. It would appear that the mouth of the performer acts as a resonator (vide Pl. XLIV).

(2) Ugubu, or ugumbu, is a stringed bow with a calabash attached towards one end (fig. 10). A small portion of the calabash is cut off square at the free end. The bow is held vertically, and the opening of the calabash is pressed against the chest with the left hand, while with the right hand the string is struck with a small stick. The pitch is altered by the fingers of the left hand pressing on the string, while the tone is varied by the varying pressure of the calabash against the chest.

(3) Uqwabe is a stringed bow with the string tied down at the middle towards the bow, and at this place a large calabash is fixed (fig. 11). The opening of the calabash is slightly pressed against the chest of the player as in the ugubu, but the bow is sometimes held horizontally instead of upright. With a small stick the player strikes the string alternately on each side of the calabash, and the pitch is changed by pressing the string with the first finger of the left hand.

(4) Ugwala is in form and size like the umqangala, except that at one end the string of ox-tendon is attached to the split quill of a feather. The other end of the quill is either bound down to the end of the bow by a thin strip of skin, with a piece of quill projecting freely beyond, or it is passed through a hole in the wood, in which it is tightly wedged by a peg of wood. Figs. 4 and 5 give side and front view of this instrument; the split quill is seen at the bottom of the string.

The instrument appears to be a difficult one to use, and women are the chief performers. The mouth is placed over

the split quill and a whistling sound is produced by the breath; the pitch is varied by pressing the string at the opposite end with the fingers of the left hand.

(5) *Isitontolo*. This instrument has been adopted from the Basutos. It is illustrated in figs. 6 and 7. It often consists of a reed (fig. 7) through which a flexible stick is passed, and a string of ox-tendon is stretched tightly across. The string is tied down in the middle towards the bow. The reed may be replaced by a curved stick, into the ends of which are fixed short flexible sticks (fig. 6). In playing the instrument one end of the middle thicker portion is placed against the mouth, as in the case of the *umqangala*, while the string is twanged with the right hand. The mouth acts as a resonator, while the pitch can be altered by the fingers of the left hand pressing on the string.

(6) *Umtshingo*, or reed-pipe whistle. The end placed to the mouth is cut obliquely (fig. 9), the other end is cut transversely. The lower end is more or less closed with a finger, and the pitch can be regulated. As a rule, two whistles are played together by two players, one taking the lead and the other responding.

(7) *Igemfe* is another form of whistle. It is made of a large reed fitting over one of smaller diameter (fig. 8). It is played like the *umtshingo*.

(8) *Isigubu*, or drum (fig. 12). A piece of the trunk of a tree, about eighteen inches long and one to two feet in diameter, is hollowed out into a cylinder. The *Umsenge*, or Cabbage Tree (*Cussonia spicata*), or the *Umhlonhlo* (*Euphorbia grandidens*) are often selected on account of the softness of the wood. Calf or goat skin is stretched across the two ends and tied tightly together by strips of skin or tendon. The drum is beaten with small drum-sticks.

These eight instruments are still in use to a small extent; but the music elicited from them by the untutored Zulu could seldom please a European, for in most cases Zulu instrumental music is extremely monotonous, and with very little value in

melody or rhythm. Except in the case of the drum, the volume of sound produced is very small, and practically the performer himself is the only person who derives any enjoyment from the music.

II. VOCAL MUSIC.

Zulu songs may be either of a public or private character. Among the natives anyone may invent a song, text and air; and most of them have their own private songs, made at some important moment of their lives, or after some event. Children when playing invent nursery rhymes and songs; so also do boys when herding their father's goats or cattle, and girls when occupied in their homes or at field work, or when sitting round the fire in the evening hours.

Special songs are composed when young people reach puberty, and particularly when marriage arrangements begin.

A Zulu will invent a mournful song in remembrance of the death of a near relative. A witch-doctor has his or her own lamentations to the spirits of the dead—*amadhlozi*.

The arrival of a European neighbour, the opening of a railway, a war, famine, a plague of locusts, a disease, etc., etc., may become subjects for semi-public songs, which may attain a circulation, more or less wide, among the people.

Songs of a specific public character are those which are used at the public functions of chiefs (e. g. at the feast of the first fruits—*ukwetshwama*, or at royal marriages), war songs and the tribal songs which are possessed by every chief and tribe.

At marriages and other public ceremonies it is a Zulu custom for not only the songs of the living chief to be rendered, but also those of his father and grandfather. It is for this reason that songs used at the time of Tshaka and Dingane are known by the present generation.

Songs among the Zulus are composed more or less in the following manner: Anyone who feels able and inclined to compose a song invents one or more sentences appropriate to

some event or feeling which occupies his mind and heart. He continually hums the sentences to himself, and changes and improves the air until it pleases him. Soon after, on meeting a friend, he may inform him as to his composition, who in his turn may suggest some alteration in the air, or he may add another sentence. In this way the song travels from one to another, and is passed on at beer-drinks or dances, and ultimately it may become the property of the tribe, while the originator is in most cases forgotten.

Their method of rendering their songs is very lax. One and the same song may be rendered in quite different ways, both as regards the repetition of words and the sequence of the musical sentences. Great freedom is allowed, and thus scope is given for the individual feeling or the genius of the singer. Even the same person will make considerable alterations in singing the same song at different times; but the general meaning of the text and the main notes of the air are retained.

The time is very much "tempo rubato." When there is only one singer the text is sung with or without action, and in a feigned or loud voice. If there are several singers, one will take the lead, and the others will accompany in different parts, or the text may be divided among the singers and sung in turn.

The Zulu chants are endless, with a constant repetition of the same text and air.

Rhythm is marked by action, such as stamping the feet, clapping hands, brandishing a dancing-stick, or by other movements of the body.

In singing a war-song—*igama lempi*—the men stand in a single row, or, if numerous, in many rows, one behind the other, and the chief stands in the centre of the front row. On both sides stand the women and children, who keep time to the chant by clapping their hands. The strong, deep voices of the men cause a roar like distant thunder, and the stamping of the feet makes the earth to resound. All enter thoroughly into the spirit of the song, and the whole is grand

on account of the great noise and the weird gesticulations of the performers.

At marriages the grown-up girls, with the bride hidden among them, sing the first songs on their arrival at the kraal of the bridegroom. These introductory songs and dances, performed by the bride's party, are called *isingeniso*, *umcanguzo*, and *inkondhlo*. The action in these dances consists of gradual slow movements forward and backward without clapping the hands. Then the bridegroom's party (*iketo*) follows, and the dances become more and more excited, and after a time complete confusion reigns, and everyone, both male and female, is trying to make the greatest possible noise.

The regulation time for Zulu marriages is from about 1 or 2 p.m. to sunset, when the eating and drinking begins. Late in the evening another noisy dance—*umkahlelo*—is performed by the young people, accompanied by the beating of a drum—*isigubu*. The personal friends of the bride and bridegroom are not satisfied with one day's feasting, and they may remain for a second or even third day. The dances on these days are more private in character, and the bride mostly takes the lead—*isimekezo*. By the way of taking leave from her parting friends, the bride distributes small presents of bead-work among those of her own age.

Returning to our subject, Music, it must be said that the texts of Zulu songs are mostly without much meaning, and of no poetical value. Like the official court-praisers—*izimbongi*—the Zulu poets are fond of exaggeration; thus they may speak of a small chief as the conqueror of heaven and earth, who has destroyed great tribes, he is like heaven itself, he is king of kings.

The melodies have, as a rule, a descending tendency, each musical sentence beginning at a high pitch and descending towards its end. Fourths are intervals very frequently used, also minor keys and mournful cadences, which are strange, difficult and barbarous to ears accustomed to modern music. The harmony of the native tunes, in correspondence with the

melody, is equally mournful. Without effort the Zulus fall into a second or third vocal part for accompanying the tune, and the absence of discords is notable.

I will now give some specimens of Zulu songs; and in adapting them to modern musical notation I had to resist the temptation of doctoring the native music, lest it should appear more artistic than it really is. Dr. Alan Miller has very kindly rendered me much assistance in this matter, and my hearty thanks are due to him for his valuable aid.

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|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Hayiza ma Pondo, | Shout ye Pundos! |
| Helele ma Pondo, | Alas, Pundos! |
| Vumani ma Pondo, | Reply Pundos! |
| Ayeza ma Pondo, | They come the Pundos, |
| Vumani ma Pondo. | Reply Pundos! |



This song was sung by two native girls in a spirited manner. It is a children's ditty—indhlamu—and was probably composed by a young Zulu man. It has been taken up by children in their play, and refers to fights with the Pundos.

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|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2. Anongilondolozani, | Keep me safe ye, [heroes, |
| Uye watint'a-o-Nqakamatshe,* | He went and attacked the |
| Anongilondolozani, | Will you protect me, |
| Zinyane lendhlovu, | Young one of the elephant, |
| Zinyane lendhlangamandhla.† | Young of the great heroes. |

* Name of one of Cetshwayo's regiments.

† Praise-name for chiefs.

Moderato

A-nongilondoloya..... ni Uye watint! a-o-Nga-kamatshé A

-nongilondolo-ya-- ni Zinyane lendhlangamsandhla
Zinyane elendhlovu

This song comes from Cetshwayo's time, and is widely used as the isingeniso, or first song at a marriage, when the bride makes her first appearance with her friends at the place for dancing—isicawu. The bride takes the lead, and the whole song and dance are rendered slowly.

3. Yek uMajozi katandwa ndawo, Poor Majozi is not loved,
Wayiwa le, He was rejected far away,
Uyimbule, He is a lion,
Wayiwa le, He was rejected far away,
Sigudhl'unde lolo, We pass this long range,*
Wayiwa le. He was rejected far away.

Moderato

Yek'u Ma-jo-zi katandwa ndawo U-yi-mbule

wa--yi... wa-le

Sigudhl'unde lolo D.C.

wa...yi...wa-le wa...yi...wa-le

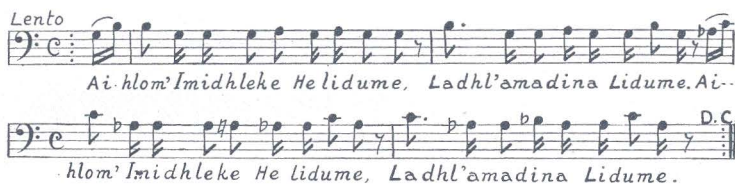
Majozi is the surname of chief Ngoza, and the song may be called iketo lenkosi, chief's song. It is sung by men

* Drakensberg Mountains.

only, and sounds impressive on account of the rude, powerful rendering and the strange action.

The composers of chiefs' songs are invariably men, not women; in fact, very few songs originate from women.

4. Aihlom' Imidhleke,* Let the Imidhleke prepare for war,
 He lidume, Let the thunder of war roll,
 Ladh'l'amadina, The dinner has been eaten,
 Lidume. Let the thunder of war roll.



This is an ihubo lempi, war-song, of Hennhemu, father of Mveli, the present chief of the Mafunzi tribe, in the Zwaartkop location, near Pietermaritzburg.

5. Inqa buqili See the crafty hiding themselves,
 Siyausilanda, We will fetch their cattle,
 Nang'u Zulu. Here we are (we Zulus).



War song used in some parts of Zululand, which was composed after a fight with the Swazis at the beginning of Pande's reign.

6. Hlasela le, Prepare for war,
 Wayiwa le, Far, far away,
 Ikon'inkosi yezwe, There is the chief of the land,
 Sibuz'inkosi ezaukufa. We ask which chief is going to die.

* The name of a regiment.

Hla-se-la-le Hla-se-la-le.
Wa-yi-wa-le Ik-oninkosi
Hla-se-la-le Hla-se-la-le.
yezwe Sibuyinkosi eyau-kufa, Hla-se-la-le. D.C.

Chief Mveli's song—ihubo lenkosi. Note the transition from one key to another without the least warning. Absence of modulation is very marked, and this is the main reason why native songs sound so barbarous, strange, and harsh to our ears.

7. Badabula kwa Hlongwa, They went through the Hlongwa
Yi-ya yi-yo ye maye, Alas, alas! [district,
Badabula ezizweni, They went through many tribes,
Yi-ya yi-yo, ye maye. Alas, alas!

Bada bula kwa Hlongwa, Yiyayiyoyo ye maye, ye maye,
Badabula ezizweni, Yiyayiyoyo, ye maye, ye maye

Hlongwa was the name of an Ama Lala tribe in Alexandra county at Dingane's time. The name of the chief was Joli. The above song is used at marriages in Zululand.

8. Ye he ubaba wangikolisa, Well my father gave me satisfaction,
Kodwa au yek'amadhlozi But, alas, the spirits (of the
Angibulala. Kill me. [dead]
O, kodwa ngiyazisa, And yet I praise them,
Amadhlozi angilaya, The spirits inform me,
Yek ubaba epansi, Oh! my father is dead,

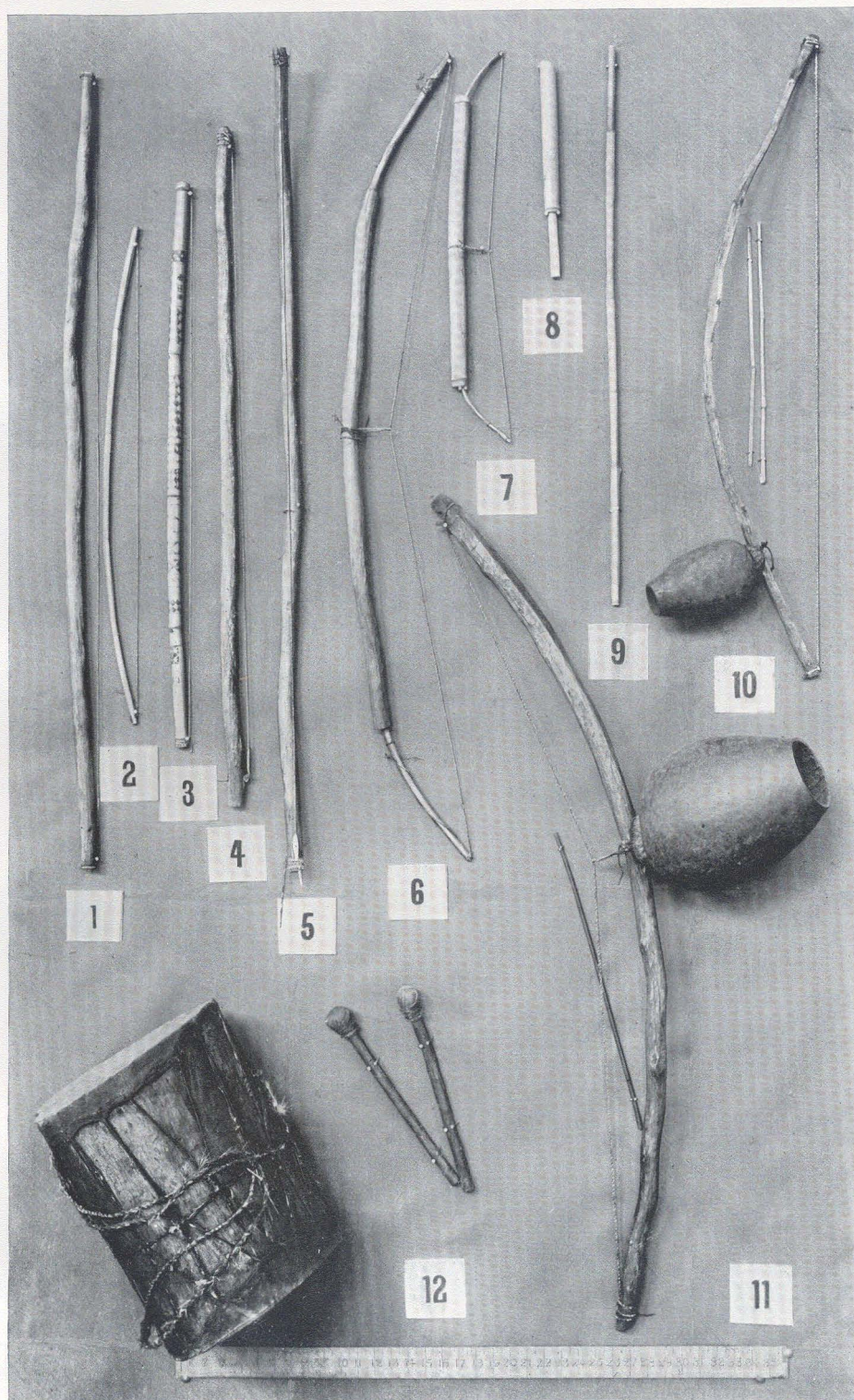
Wo zintandane zakwetu, Poor orphan children,
 Ning'azise ukuti nakolwa. Tell me do you believe (that
 the spirits inform me).



This is an isililo, or lamentation of a witch-doctor. It is sung without rhythm or action.

The literal translation gives some idea of the general significance of the text; but a great deal of explanation would be required to make the meaning clearer, and this would carry us beyond the limits of the present article. My intention was to give a few samples of Zulu songs of different kinds, in order to illustrate the general character of native music. It may be added that with the kind assistance of Dr. Alan Miller the songs were carefully taken down, partly from the lips of the singers, and partly from phonograph records.

A study of the specimens given will show that the Zulu is not able to attain to much art without outside assistance, although he has great natural ability for music, and can very readily be trained in this direction.





NATIVE MUSICIANS.

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