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Author(s): John Blacking

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DEEP AND SURFACE STRUCTURES IN VENDA MUSIC

by John Blacking

The Problem of Musical Description

The central issue in musical theory is the problem of description. Neither musicologists nor ethnomusicologists have yet devised a system of analysis which is sufficiently powerful to explain what we can know intuitively as a result of experience in culture, namely, the *essential* differences between the music of Haydn and Mozart, or of the Flathead and the Sioux Indians.

Some of the works of a well-known composer may be difficult to place at first hearing; but the best are generally the most characteristic of his style and may be immediately recognized because of certain distinctive cognitive processes. From his first piano sonata to his last quartet there is something unique about Beethoven's music which remains essentially the same throughout his working life. What he says with consummate mastery in the Piano Sonatas Op. 106, 109 and 111, and again in the Quartets Op. 131, 132, and 135, is really an elaboration and extension of feelings and cognitive processes which were apparent in Op. 2 No. 1. It is because of this cognitive consistency that a person who knows some of Beethoven's music is able to recognize a piece that is unfamiliar.

Although the recognition of a composer's style is a common experience, I do not know of any system of musical analysis which can explain exactly how and why Beethoven is Beethoven, Mozart is Mozart, and Haydn is Haydn. It is not enough to describe the characteristics of Mozart's Piano Concertos or of Beethoven's orchestration, because these features may be generated by a more basic system which distinguishes all the major works of a single composer, regardless of the ensembles for which they were written.

What we recognize, and what may or may not 'send' us in a piece of music, is 'in the notes' and particularly in the tonal and rhythmic *patterns* of the notes. These patterns are generated by processes that are in the mind of the composer, so that in the last analysis listeners respond to cognitive processes which the notes crystallize and which their own minds receive. A composer who finds that he is able to express these processes most effectively in a single medium, such as songs or operas, or piano soli, does not necessarily restrict the full flowering of his genius, though by reducing the number of occasions on which his music can be heard, he may limit the number of listeners who can appreciate his message. The music of Byrd, Gesualdo or Chopin, who wrote almost exclusively for one medium, cannot be compared adversely to the output of a man like Hindemith, who wrote for almost every available ensemble. Conversely, I suspect that some potentially great composers have

failed to realize their potential because social, personal and other pressures have forced them to dissipate their energy by composing in a variety of media, instead of discovering what was most appropriate for their own cognitive set.

I suggest that an accurate and comprehensive description of a composer's cognitive system will provide the most fundamental and powerful explanation of the patterns that his music takes. His cognitive system includes, of course, all cerebral activity involved in his motor coordination, feelings and cultural experiences, as well as his social, intellectual and musical activities. Even if we regard them solely as 'sonic objects', the notes of a piece of music are the products of cognitive processes. Descriptions of the notes alone as patterns of sound will not necessarily reveal the cognitive processes which were used (or *not*), but a complete description of the underlying cognitive system must account for all possible combinations of tones. The problem of musical description is not unlike that in linguistic analysis: a particular grammar should account for the processes by which all existing and all possible sentences in the language are generated.

Similarly, in much the same way that a context-sensitive grammar is a more powerful analytical tool than one which is context-free, so the cognitive systems underlying different styles of music will be better understood if music is not detached from its context and regarded as 'sonic objects', but treated as *humanly organized sound* whose patterns are related to the social and cognitive processes of a particular society and culture. Although an important aim of a science of music must be to isolate a distinctive *and limited* field of human behaviour that can be described as "musical," this will not be achieved unless it is recognized that music is often the incidental product of non-musical processes. Sonic order may be created as a result of principles of organization which are non-musical, such as the selection of equidistantly spaced holes on a flute, just as apparent lack of sonic order may express ordered arrangements of numbers, people, mathematical formulae, or any elements which can be transformed into sound.

The structures of tonal relationships are expressions of processes which may be seen to operate in the formation of other structures. The answers to many important questions about musical structure may not be musical. For example, why are certain scales, modes and intervals preferred? The explanation may be historical, political, philosophical, or rational in terms of acoustical laws. What comes next when a certain pattern has been played? Is the next tone determined by the logic of the melodic pattern, or by a more general rule relating melody to patterns of speech-tone? Why should a pattern be repeated at a certain point? Why should it be repeated at all? It is because musicology and ethnomusicology must be able to answer such questions that I have advocated what I call Cultural Analysis in *Venda Children's Songs* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1967). I consider an approach such as this to be the logical methodological result of a trend in ethnomusicology which has been most consistently pressed by Alan

Merriam, and in “The value of music in human experience” (*Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council for 1969, 1971*) I tried to explain why it should be possible to apply the method to the music of Beethoven and Mahler, as well as to the music of the Venda or the Zulu.

We need a unitary method of musical analysis which can not only be applied to *all* music, but can explain both the form, the social and emotional content, and the effects of music, as systems of relationships between an infinite number of variables. All these relationships are ‘in the notes,’ and music stands or falls by virtue of what is heard and how people respond to what they hear; but a context-sensitive analysis will reveal that the surface relationships between tones which can be perceived as ‘sonic objects’ are only part of deeper systems of relationships which can be described when music is regarded as humanly organized sound.

In a review of *Venda Children’s Songs* (*IFMC Yearbook*, op. cit., p. 247), David Rycroft is sceptical about the value of Cultural Analysis: “Why must authors nowadays feel they have to tell us they are studying ‘music in culture’ and insist that this is such a bright new technique?” He cites Henri Junod’s *Les Chants du BaRonga* (Lausanne, 1897) as an example of adequate contextualization of African music. Now it is precisely this kind of contextualization that I consider *inadequate* for thorough musical analysis. Junod’s comments on the songs are merely programme notes, which do not help us to understand the *structures* of the music. The Cultural Analysis of music has yet to become a standard practice in musicology and ethnomusicology. The purpose of the technique is not simply to describe the cultural background of the music as human behaviour, *and then* to analyze peculiarities of style in terms of rhythm, tonality, timbre, instrumentation, frequency of ascending and descending intervals, and other essentially musical terminology, but to describe *both* the music *and* its cultural background as interrelated parts of a total system. Because music is humanly organized sound, there ought to be relationships between patterns of human organization and the patterns of sound produced in the course of organized interaction.

The purpose of my analysis of Venda children’s songs was to show that certain four-, five-, and six-tone melodies could not be understood out of context as ‘sonic objects’: their melodic patterns became intelligible only in the context of other pentatonic and heptatonic patterns of humanly organized sound within Venda culture, and the relationships between the musical patterns corresponded to relationships between situations in which the music is performed and between the status of the performers. It was for these reasons that “exact pitch values” and comparisons with the music of “some neighbouring southern African people” were not included in the study. Rycroft objects to these omissions, but I claim that they were not a necessary part of the description of the cognitive processes involved in the generation of the songs.

Although most ethnomusicologists seem to agree that music should be

studied as human behaviour, some emphasize the social background to musical performance, and others the performance itself. Unless these two approaches can be effectively interrelated, I do not see how ethnomusicology can really become an independent discipline: it will remain little more than a meeting ground for those interested in the anthropology of music and in the music of different cultures. Moreover there will be little hope of developing a unitary theory of music and a system of analysis that can be applied to all societies and all composers. This is essential if we are to discover what features of human behaviour are peculiar to making music, and to what extent such features are common to all men. We talk freely of musical genius, but we do not know what qualities of genius are restricted to music and whether or not they might find expression in another medium. It may be that the social and cultural inhibitions which prevent the flowering of musical genius are more significant than any individual ability which may seem to promote it, and that it is only because of his particular social circumstances that a person shows genius in music, rather than in painting or politics, in medicine or mathematics, or in billiards or business.

The Venda of the Northern Transvaal consider that anyone who is not totally deaf ought to be able to recognize and understand different patterns of sound, and to perform music. They learn techniques of composition and performance without any stated theories, and adult members of the society are expected to make knowledgeable musical judgements. In making these judgements and in learning their musical tradition, the Venda assess what is right and wrong, or good and bad in music, according to a system of musical behaviour whose principles are acquired in society by processes which are not always directly related to the production of music. It is not like the open system of a game, in which people interact within the limits of a known range of arbitrary rules. It is an open system, in that no two performances of communal music are exactly alike, but the rules of creativity are neither recognized nor apparent at the surface level, and they are not arbitrary. That is, although Venda music is systematic and could be taught according to a set of rules, like the grammar of a foreign language, it is not learned as such and its most important creative principles can be acquired only by growing up in Venda society. Even if it is learned behaviour that could be described in terms of stimulus-response theory (which I doubt), it is certainly not always consciously learned and it is not learned *musical* behaviour, because many of its rules are hidden and non-musical. The surface structures of Venda music reflect not only musical conventions of Venda culture which are transmitted from one generation to another, but also cognitive and social processes which are endemic in all aspects of their culture and particularly present in musical activity. The basic problem of analysis is to describe how this happens, and what these processes are.

Some Non-Musical Processes in the Generation of Venda Music

In a number of publications I have described the social sources of different types of Venda music. I have shown that the choice of scales, modes, instruments and vocal ensembles, and the recruitment of performers, has been generated by the social function and/or history of the associated institutions, as in the music of different initiation schools and the possession cult, and the pentatonic and heptatonic reed-pipe music (see references in *IFMC Yearbook, op. cit.*). The results of these social processes have become cultural conventions which are parts of the Venda musical tradition. They are the surface structures of Venda music which can be heard and learned by any human being who can perceive and reproduce patterns of sound.


But there are other aspects of the Venda musical tradition which are for ever changing and which cannot be learned except by total participation in Venda society and by unconscious assimilation of the social and cognitive processes on which the culture is founded. These are the deep structures of Venda music, which determine what comes next in a melody and how a new idea may be expressed in music, how many times a pattern will be repeated on a given occasion and why. They are structures in a dynamic sense, in that they include the potential for growth and development, and so they might better be described as processes. They use cultural conventions to enhance human experience, and they transform human experience into modifications of cultural convention. They are the source of creativity in Venda music.

Analyses of music are essentially descriptions of sequences of different kinds of creative act. At the surface level, creativity in music is expressed in organizing new relationships between sounds or new ways of producing them, that is, in musical composition and in performance. The two aspects of musical creativity cannot be separated, and both seem to be present in all societies; whether the emphasis is on humanly organized *sound* or soundly organized *humanity*, on a tonal experience related to people or a shared experience related to tones, the function of the music is to reinforce, or relate people more closely to, certain experiences which have come to have meaning in their social life.

Venda music is concerned with the organization both of sound and of humanity. It is overtly political in that it is performed in a variety of political contexts and often for specific political purposes. It is also political in the sense that it involves people in a powerful *shared experience* within the framework of their cultural experience, and thereby makes them more aware of themselves and of their responsibilities towards each other. *Muthu ndi muthu nga vhaḵwe* the Venda say: "man is man because of his associations with men". Venda music is not an escape from reality: it is an adventure *into* reality, the reality of the world of the spirit. It is an experience of becoming, in which individual consciousness is nurtured within the collective consciousness of the community, and hence becomes the source of richer cultural forms.

For example, if two drummers play exactly the same surface rhythm but maintain an individual, inner difference of tempo or beat, they produce something more than their individual efforts. Thus a combination of a straightforward beat if played by two people at different tempi produces:



A combination of the pattern  with different main beat can produce:



and a combination of the same pattern with a straight beat at different tempo produces:



These three combined patterns alone can assume a variety of new forms when different parts of a drumskin are beaten and/or the tones are muffled or clear. The three surface structures could also be produced by any one player or by two players in unison, with accents at the points where the two Venda players coincide: thus,

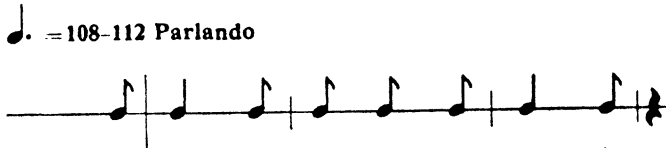


To describe such differently organized patterns of sound as the same 'sonic objects', simply because they *sound* the same would be grossly misleading. Even to recognize the way in which the sounds are produced and to describe some of them as examples of polyrhythm would be inadequate in the context of Venda music. They must be described first in terms of cognitive and social processes which belong to the patterns of Venda culture.

A Cultural Analysis of such rhythms is not one which points out that they are used in such and such a way on a stated variety of occasions. It is not intended to be a programme note which outlines the context of the music, but an analytical device which describes its structure in context. Thus performances by combinations of two or more players of rhythms which can in fact be played by one, are not musical gimmicks: they express concepts of individuality in community, and of social, temporal and spatial balance,

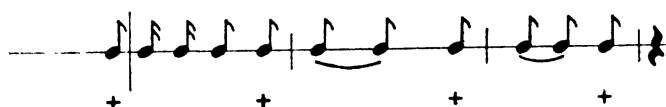
which are found in other features of Venda culture and other types of Venda music. Rhythms such as these cannot be performed correctly unless the players are their own conductors and yet at the same time submit to the rhythm of an invisible conductor.

Similarly in the children's song *Tshiḡula tsha Musingaḡi* (see Figure 1), one

 = 108-112 Parlando

1. Tshi - ḡu - la tsha Mu - si - nga - ḡi!

2. Vha - ko - ma vha tshi ya Dza - ḡa,



3. Vha fhi-ri-sa mu - ḡi - n - ḡa pha-n-ḡa.

Figure 1

 = 126 - 144

(a) Ma-e-le-le! Vhó - né Vhó - Mú - tshí - nyē!



Ma-e-le-le! Vhá n - tsé - mé - lá - 'ní

Ma-e-le-le! Ndí tshí tā - mbā zwā - ngá

Ma-e-le-le! Ngé - í Lú - vū - - - vhú?



Ma-e-le-le! Ná mú - ḡá - vhū wā - ngá.



Ma-e-le-le! Ngé - í bā - mbè - ló - ni.

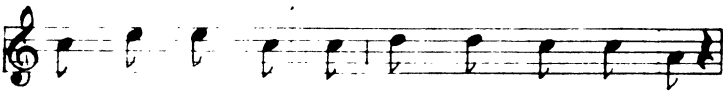
♩ = 100-112



1. ĩ - nwí há - ēē Nyá - mú - dzù - ngá há - èè!



2. Ni ná n̄wá - ná wā - n̄ū wā mù - tù - kà,



3. À nó gó - nyà mù - rí ngá tshí - tí - kò.



4. Phá-n̄dā - ú shá - vhā - 'ní, Mù - li - bà - (nà)?

5. Úshá-vhá mú - tó - tó - yá, Mù - li - bà - (nà).



6. Tshá-n̄dā vhi - lí - vhi - lí ngá shé - dō - (nì).

would expect the metrical beat to fall on the syllables *-du-*, *tsha*, and *-nga-*, which are stressed in performance. But if people clap to the song, they clap on the syllables *Tshi-*, *-la*, *-si-*, and *-di*, so that there is not a rest on the fourth beat but a *total* pattern of four beats which can be repeated any number of times, but never less than once if it is to qualify as "song" (*u imba*) and not "speech" (*u amba*). Venda music is not founded on melody but on a rhythmical stirring of the whole body, of which singing is but one extension. Therefore, when we seem to hear a rest between two drum beats, we must realize that for the player it is not a rest: each drum beat is the part of a total body movement in which the hand or a stick strikes the drum skin. The importance of body movement in Venda music reflects the fundamental relationship between music and dancing, and between the emotional impact of music and the social and physical experiences which are associated with its performance. Moreover, Venda children are generally introduced to communal music performance through dancing: they begin by watching others sing and dance; then they 'dance' at the side of the

performers; then they join the tail of the dancing file. Then in succession they learn to sing with the group, dance 'solo' with one or two others, play a subsidiary drum part, and then play the leading drum part and/or sing the call part of a song.

The basis of these skills can be learned by imitation of others. But the continuity of Venda music depends on more than the imitation of cultural forms in the shared experience of performance. Soloists are expected to add new words to songs, and this means creating new patterns of melody according to a system which must be learned, but cannot be learned by imitation or instruction. Figure 2a shows a Venda children's song in which small variations in the melody are generated by changes of speech-tone. When I first learned to sing it, the Venda told me that I was doing well, but that I sang like a Tsonga (the Tsonga are their neighbours, and many live in Vendaland). I sang all 'lines' to the melody of the first 'line', and I thought that my fault lay in the pitch of my intervals. Eventually, when I realized that the melody should vary, I found that they accepted my performance as truly Venda even if I deliberately sang out of tune. The sequence of descending or ascending intervals is considered more important than their exact pitch, because in certain parts of a melody they are expected to reflect changes in speech-tone. The principle is generally that word-changes, and hence melodic variations, occur in the Call section of a melody which is sung by a soloist, while the Response, which is sung by the chorus, does not change. The children's songs condense this 'communal' form in melodies for solo singers, or for groups in unison, and in Figure 2b the linguistic process can be seen to generate rhythmic, as well as melodic, changes in the Call section of the melody. Figure 2a illustrates an inversion of this process, in which the variations are found in the second part of the melody.

Thus variations in melody may be generated by the speech-tone patterns of words, which in turn are generated by the 'story' of the song, which is generated by responses to social experiences. There is a corpus of variations which can be learned as cultural conventions; new, topical variations can only be created when Venda have learned, *unconsciously*, the principles of the system by which existing melodies have been created. Similarly, variations in the overall form of music depend on basically non-musical principles which cannot be learned by imitation.

A Cultural Analysis of the music of the girls' dance *tshigombela* might begin with the sort of programme notes that I have provided in "Musical expeditions of the Venda" (in *African Music*, III(1), 1962, 54-78): these would be equivalent to what Junod provides in *Les Chants du BaRonga*. It must then continue with a description of the form of the music in terms of accompanying social processes. The music and the dance are in two continuous sections, which are united by the regular beat of the tenor drum and the use of one song. First, all dance in a circle counter-clockwise round the tenor and two or three alto drums and sing a song, whose basic form is responsorial. Rhythmic variations are provided by different dance-steps,

Figure 2


(a)

1. Po - ti - lo, 2. Ha - nga - la, 3. Ha - nga - la, 4. Nda⁺ te - ma,

5. Te⁺ - mi - so; 6. Tshi⁺ - ŋo - ni 7. Tsha⁺ ga - la 8. Mu⁺ - ta - nda.

9. Ma⁺ - ndu - le. 10. Gu⁺ - ni - wee!

The fingers are counted from the left, little finger to the right, fourth finger on each beat marked +. On the tenth, the hands are capped together.

 = 112-120

(b)

1. Ndé⁺ ndí⁺ ngē - i thā⁺ - vhā⁺ - ni,

2. Ndá⁺ pfa⁺ mú - kō⁺ - si ú⁺ tshí⁺ lí - lá⁺,

3. Ndá⁺ ta⁺ - nga - ná⁺ ná⁺ Má⁺ - ra⁺ - bè⁺ - bè⁺ - dá⁺.

4. Mbé⁺ - bé⁺ - - dá⁺ ò hwa⁺ - lá⁺ pa⁺ - 'ma⁺,

$\text{♩} = 100-112$



1. Thá - thá - thá! Thá - ngá dzí á swá, Ndè' dzí á swá:



2. Dzi á swá ná Vhó - Má - rā - mbā ná Vhó - Nyú - ndó.



3. Vhó - Nyú - ndó vhe' Rí yá 'fhi? Rí yá shó - ndó - ni;

$\text{♩} = 300-336$

SOLO

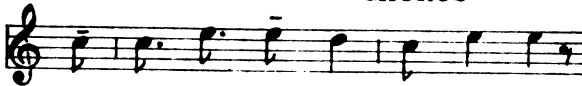
CHORUS



1. Ndó bvá - ná tshi - dó - ngò tshá ná - má.

SOLO

CHORUS



2. Ndi yò já ná nnyí? Nà Sé - sé.

SOLO

CHORUS



3. Sé - sé á tshi bvā - 'fhi? Vhù - twá - ná - mbā.



4. Fhá - já há Mú - kwá - l vho kwá - yá vha vhu - yá.



5. Vhá vhu - yá vho já - 'ni? Vho já mú - tshè - nzhè.

which are emphasized by rattles which the girls bind on their legs. The number of variations depends on the skill of the girls present and the enterprise of the dance-leader, who is usually one of the oldest girls and a member of a noble clan. Further factors are the kind of audience and whether it is a rehearsal or an official performance. In the second section of the performance the alto drums are taken some distance from the tenor drum, and groups of two, three, or four girls come out to dance to a variety of rhythms. Again, variation depends on social factors, and in addition there are short breaks between each solo dance in which only the tenor drum accompanies the song. A performance may last from ten to forty minutes, and very shortly after the beginning the straightforward Call and Response is elaborated into a quasi-contrapuntal sequence. A variety of melodies come out 'on top,' because in the excitement of the dance the pitch of the girls' voices rises, and when they cannot reach a tone they transpose it down a fifth or an octave.

The Interaction of Musical and Non-Musical Processes in Creating Sonic Order

The development of *tshigombela* melodies during performance illustrates a common tendency of Venda music to become more *musical* and less 'culture-bound' whenever possible, and so to transcend the ordinary world of time. Just as shared, social experiences may generate musical experiences, so musical experiences may generate a new kind of social experience. By substituting for words various combinations of phonemes such as *ee, ahee, huwelele wee, yowee*, performers give themselves greater freedom of essentially musical expression: they are no longer tied to the rules which govern relationships between patterns of melody and the speech-tone patterns of the accompanying words, or to the rhythmic restriction that each syllable of a word must be accompanied by only one tone.

The respective power of musical and non-musical factors is dramatically demonstrated by the effects of the Venda possession dance, *ngoma dza midzimu*, its rhythms are exciting even to one who is not familiar with Venda culture. And yet the music does not send any Venda into a trance: it sends only members of the possession cult, and then only when they are dancing at their own homes, with which the spirits of the ancestors who possess them are familiar. The effectiveness of the music therefore depends on the context in which it is both performed and heard; but ultimately it depends on the music itself, as I found out once when I was playing the *dumbula* drum. Dancers take it in turns to come into the 'arena,' and at first there were no complaints about my efforts. Very soon a senior lady began dancing, and she was expected to go into a trance because the music was being played in her own home. However, after a few minutes she stopped and insisted that another drummer should replace me. She claimed that I was ruining the effect of the music by "hurrying" the tempo just enough to inhibit the onset of trance.

Since both a shared social experience and a tendency to move towards more and more *musical* expression are important in Venda music, it is not surprising that the most highly valued communal music combines with an instrumental medium a shared experience which requires a high degree of individuality in community. The Venda national dance, *tshikona*, consists of a repeated pattern of sound which is played in hocket fashion by men on at least twenty differently tuned pipes, while four women play a set of drums in polyrhythmic harmony. *Tshikona* is connected with ancestor-worship and state occasions, incorporates the living and the dead, and is the most universal of Venda music. The social occasion, the virtual time of the music, and the experience of performing it are sufficient to induce an expansion of consciousness. From my own experiences of *tshikona* and of living in Vendaland, I am sure that it really is the *music* of *tshikona*, and not merely its psycho-social associations, which 'sends' people.

And yet there is a paradox which requires explanation. Although the music of *tshikona* synthesizes many of the basic rules of Venda music and is without exception everybody's favourite music, it is in a sense less open to creative *musical* expression than the girls' dance, *tshigombela*. Although the dance-steps and their accompanying drum rhythms vary, the reed-pipe pattern remains the same: there are not different tunes, as there are for the less important boys' reed-pipe dances. Again, those Venda who are commonly judged to be outstanding musicians are very often men and women whose specific ability does not seem on the surface to be musical. The woman who knows or composes numerous different sentences of *words* when she sings pounding songs, the man who composes new and witty patter-songs which he accompanies with an elementary figure on a *dende* musical bow, the man who composes a topical beer-song which may be a re-hash of a well-known tune; these are considered to be the outstanding musicians, although their creative ability is manifested in a field which seems inappropriate according to the logic of Venda music. That is, since the general tendency is to move *away from* cultural restrictions towards greater freedom of purely musical expression, it is significant that the most universally popular Venda music is some of the most restricted in expression, although it is predominantly instrumental and not tied to words, and the most outstanding musicians are generally those whose freedom of expression is exhibited in words and not music.

This kind of paradox can be resolved when both music and its associated social and cultural situations are understood as expressions of cognitive processes which are contained in the physiology of the body and the central nervous system, but developed and modified in an infinite variety of ways in the course of shared experiences in society. Thus the use of the term Call and Response is not sufficiently general, because it implies a socially derived musical form rather than seeks a basic structure from which both responsorial form *and* solo/chorus or leader/follower social situations may be derived. In the Venda context, some general structural principle would be more

appropriate, so that in different contexts the following structures might be generated: tone/companion tone, tonic/counter-tonic, call/response, individual/community, theme/variation, chief/subjects, etc. I have described elsewhere (in *Ethnomusicology*, XIV, No. 1, January 1970, p. 20 ff.) how the moving tonality of Call and Response in Venda music may be based on either vocal or instrumental models, but I now consider that the analysis must go deeper. (In Figure 2, 2a reflects an instrumental model, and 2b a vocal model). What I said then was in effect that structures might be either Call and Response or Response and Call, which is sociological nonsense. Instead of giving sociological explanations of musical forms, it should be more satisfactory to find structural explanations of both sociological and musical forms. Such explanations ought to show the structural consistency which lies behind the apparent paradox which I described above.

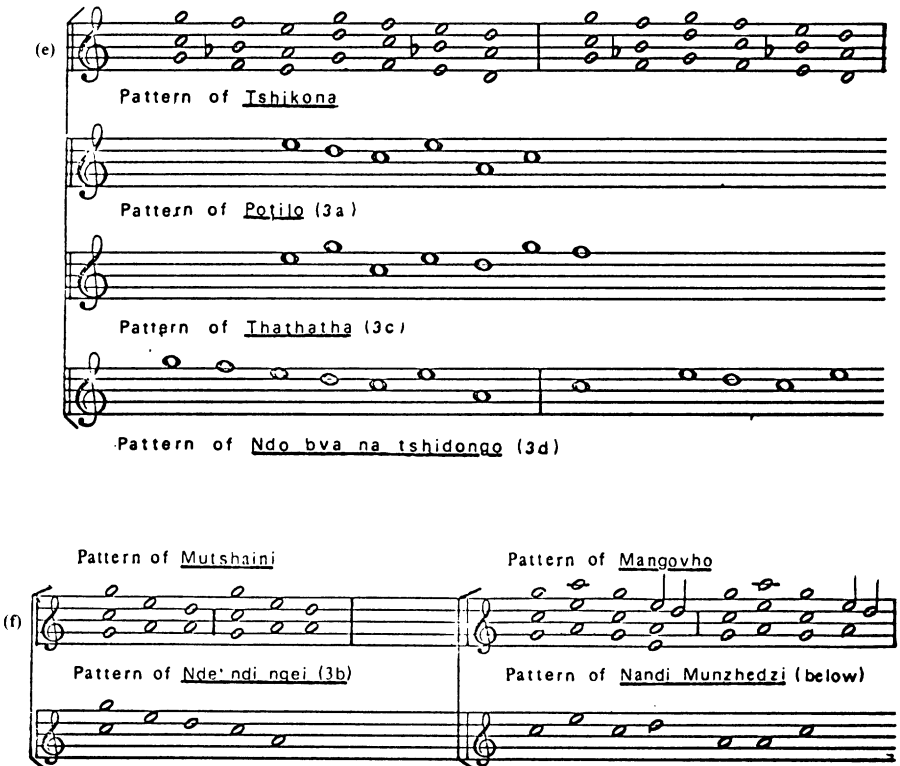
Venda music is distinguished from non-music by the creation of a special world of time, and its function is to involve people in shared experiences within the framework of their cultural experience. Because the principles governing the form of music are secondary to those which govern its function, the common formal tendency of Venda music to become more musical and less culture-bound may be checked or reversed in accordance with its required function. Thus the egalitarian situation of the national dance checks fissiparous tendencies in social organization, and the 'anti-musical' compositions of outstanding musicians jolt and expand the consciousness of Venda audiences by both reflecting and contradicting the spirit of the time. By contradicting musical conventions they warn against political stagnation. The same kind of analysis of musical form and function might be applied in other contexts: I would not consider it an exaggeration to say that Beethoven achieved his extraordinary musical power by being *anti*-musical in the context of his society. His contemporaries may have been more musical in their treatment of melody, but their musicality was less relevant to current problems although it was a logical consequence of contemporary cognitive processes.

To analyse the composition and appreciation of music in terms of cognitive processes which may be applied in other fields of human activity does not in any way diminish the importance of the music itself, and it is in line with the common custom of interrelating a series of human activities and calling them The Arts. However, at this early stage of investigation we should be careful not to assume that music is always created by the same processes, or that its processes are specially related to those employed in the other arts. The processes which in one culture are applied to language or music may in another be applied to kinship or economic organization. I am suggesting a system of analysis which goes deeper than the notes of music, but which initially does not extend beyond the culture. Even if it is known or suspected that a particular scale or musical style may have been borrowed from outside, this knowledge is not relevant except in so far as it is recognized as a significant factor by the people themselves. Moreover, methods of analysis which are

used by other disciplines such as linguistics or systematic musicology, should not be applied to the Cultural Analysis of a musical tradition, since they may impose on the data a structural bias which distorts its intrinsic patterns.

There will always be the bias of the investigator's own culture and cognitive set, but this can be reduced by a context-sensitive analysis in depth which seeks for structural relationships between the patterns of music and other patterns of thought and social activity that are present in the lives of the makers of the music. After three attempts at an objective analysis of Venda children's songs, I found a certain order in their musical structure which corresponded better with the Venda classifications and with their function in society. I cannot be sure that this analysis is correct, in that it explains exactly what happened in the process of the songs' creation; but I do know that it sprang out of the ethnographic material and took me somewhat by surprise, and that it was only later that I appreciated its structural consistency. Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between four children's songs and other items of Venda music, and shows why two songs with the same four-tone row should not be grouped together in any analysis, although the surface structures of their tone-rows suggests that they should.

Figure 3*



♩ = 100-112

(g)



1. Ná - ndí Mù - nzhě - dzi hà - eè - to!

2. To - 'Dá - ní ngè - nó ri tà - mbè - to!

6. To - Ná - ndí khwà - lí dzi dzù - ndè - ni - to!

3. To - Nḡé thí tá mbí nà dī - thù - to,

4. To - Ḑi - thù jí ná má - bē - sú - to.

5. To - Ná - ndí Nḡ - tshí - vhú - ngū - lù - lù - to!

7. To - Ná - ndí dzi pá - lá mi - tò - mbà - to!

* Relationship of four Venda children's songs (Fig. 2a-d) to *tshikona* (3e), which is played on a set of twenty-four pipes tuned to a heptatonic scale, and to *Mutshaini* (3f), which is played on a differently tuned pentatonic set of pipes. In both cases, each player blows one note of the total pattern. Only part of the reed-pipe patterns is given. A second pentatonic pattern (*Mangovho* in 3f) is related to a children's song (3g) which has the same tone-row as 3a, but whose pattern betrays its different musical origin.

My attempts to understand the music of the ritual dance of the Venda Girls' initiation school, *domba*, were likewise unsuccessful until I considered the form of the music and dance in relation to the expressive content of the school and its esoteric symbolism, and asked why the girls should consistently start moving on a particular phrase of the song and stop on another. The Venda were not able to explain the meaning of the music to me, but a detailed analysis of the musical and non-musical deep structures goes a long way towards explaining its surface structure. As in the analysis of the children's songs, the analysis emerged from a coordination of different kinds of ethnographic material. I have given a detailed score and analysis of the song in "The great *domba* song", Part 4 of "Songs, dances, mimes and symbolism of Venda girls' initiation schools", in *African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1969, pp. 215-266.

The music and dance of the great song of *domba* reflect and symbolize the central themes of the initiation. Each performance of the dance symbolizes sexual intercourse, and successive performances symbolize the building up of the foetus, for which regular intercourse is said to be necessary. The music and the dance are not meant to be sexy: they symbolize the mystical act of sexual communion, conception, the growth of the foetus, and childbirth. It seems that the processes of creation are largely unconscious, and that the meaning of the music is dimly understood by most of the people who regularly re-create it. And yet no one has any doubt about its importance, its beauty, and its relevance to the subject of pre-marital initiation which its regular performance enhances. What is even more remarkable is the close musical relationship which exists between *domba* and the national dance, *tshikona*, and the evidence that it is a *transformation process, and not simply a matter of musical transposition*, which relates what the men play on their pipes to what the girls sing with their voices. I have described this in detail in the analysis of the *domba* song (op. cit., 1969) and in an analysis of initiation music (op. cit., 1970). I therefore give here only the final diagram, which illustrates the kind of relationship between social and cognitive processes which may be expected in context-sensitive, Cultural Analyses of music (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

Illustration of the transformation process by which *khulo* is related to *tshikona*, and summary of modes and basic chord sequence.

Figure 4 consists of six parts of musical notation:

- a) TSHIKONA**: A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It shows a sequence of chords and notes, primarily using a hocket technique.
- b) KHULO**: A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It shows a sequence of chords and notes, similar to Tshikona but transposed down a semitone.
- c)**: A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It shows a sequence of chords and notes, similar to Tshikona but transposed down a semitone.
- d)**: A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It shows a sequence of chords and notes, similar to Tshikona but transposed down a semitone.
- e) Modes**: A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It shows a sequence of notes with fingerings (1, 2, 2, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2) and chord symbols A, B, and C.
- f) Harmonic Progression**: A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It shows a sequence of chords and notes.

- (a) Part of the music of *tshikona*, transposed down a semitone.
- (b) *Khulo*, sung by girl novices with the same hocket technique that men use with tuned pipes for *tshikona*.

- (c) Transposition of *tshikona* to the same pitch as *khulo*. Note the *f* natural and the position of the tritone.
- (d) Transformation of *tshikona*, rewriting *d''* as *phala* (keynote) instead of *a''*. Note how the position of the tritone differs from *tshikona* in 4c, but agrees with *khulo* in 4b.
- (e) The three modes used in *tshikona* and *khulo*, rewritten without accidentals.
- (f) The harmonic basis of *khulo*. The sequence of chords also fits the *tshikona* pattern, regardless of the different modes used.

Note: the figures indicate the number of semitones in the intervals of the modes.

Musical relationships may reflect social relationships, and both may be generated by cognitive processes which are used in other fields of human behaviour. The secret of tonal relationships lies 'in the notes'; but the notes are more than patterns of sound. They are not sonic objects which can be analyzed without reference to the deep, and often non-musical, structures which generate them. They are signs and symbols of the interaction of human beings and of the workings of human minds, and as such they cannot be adequately understood unless they are subjected to context-sensitive, Cultural Analysis. Cross-cultural comparisons of different musical styles cannot be made until we know what we are comparing: if similar surface structures have been generated by entirely different processes, they cannot be compared simply because they *sound* alike. On the other hand, when we know the deep structures of different musical traditions, we may be able to compare styles which had previously seemed incomparably different.

More important to me than the possibility of comparing different styles of music is the prospect of knowing what music really *is* as an expression of human behaviour, and to what extent its generating processes are musical and specific to the human species. When the Venda say that all normal human beings are born with the potential to appreciate and perform music, they may be making a valid statement about the species, although there are some societies in which musical ability is thought to be the privilege of a chosen few. At any rate, we shall not be able to investigate these problems until analyses of music include the deep, as well as the surface structures, and we pay as much attention to man the music-maker as we do to the music man makes.