THE MBIRA CLASS OF AFRICAN INSTRUMENTS IN RHODESIA (1932) †

by

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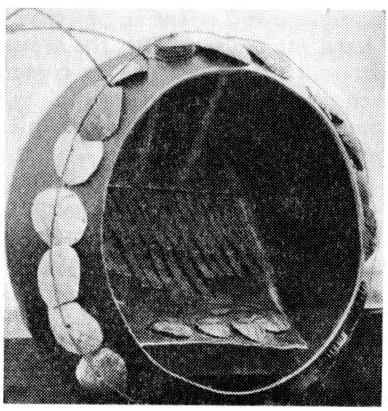


Njari inside its resonating gourd. *Deze* with vibrating snail shells — showing the method of holding in place by two reeds. From Chitsa's village, Rusape District, Rhodesia.

The Mbira

The mbira, in its several forms, occurs right through the country of the Shona speaking peoples, throughout Rhodesia and into Mozambique. Generally speaking it is a small instrument which is held in the two hands and played by plucking the metal reeds or lamellae, which produce the notes, with the thumb and first finger of each hand. These metal reeds, either of iron or brass, generally the former, are fixed onto a wooden sound board of convenient size, averaging about six inches broad by eight inches tall. The method of fixing varies with each district but as a rule the reeds are slightly 'S' shaped to give them spring, the lower end of the 'S' below the metal bridge giving the note, while the upper end gives the necessary resistance to a metal bar which holds them all in place. Variations in this method occur. The upper end of the reed may not be sprung at all, while the thickness and weight of the reeds may alter considerably, no doubt in accordance with the material available. This, in the old days, was hand-forged iron, made by the local craftsmen from ironstone dug out of the hills, while in more modern times hard drawn wire and nails have been found equally convenient by the makers.

The sound board, also, may or may not be hollowed out. When it is, it is often played without an additional gourd resonator, or "*ichese*"— clear. The greatest variations occur in the actual arrangement of the notes themselves which is distinctive of each type and of each sub-tribe.

The oldest known example of the instrument is called the *Mbira dzeMidzimu*, literally the "notes of the Ancients", while in the Mtoko district in the north-east, the oldest instrument is called the *Hera* or *Madebe dzaMondoro*, "the great notes of the Mondoro

† Part of a report prepared in 1933 for the Carnegie Corporation, the sponsors of my research, which was never published, and is now presented for the first time with minor additions and corrections — 1969.

spirits", which might be taken to mean the spirits of the prophets, the *mauyo* of the High God *Mwari* who controls the destinies of the tribe. The similarity between these two in function, though not necessarily in effect, is obvious.

Professor E. M. von Hornbostel[1] maintains that "ritual use is always an indication of great antiquity." On the other hand he says "objects which are indiscriminately used at any time and by any person may be suspected of dating from a later period, or having been imported from without". The ritualistic significance of both these instruments, the *Mbira dze Midzimu* and the *Madebe dzaMhondoro* is clearly demonstrated, but they are also used for secular amusement. The early Portuguese records of about 1560A.D. mention them as being "very sweet sounding". Every enquiry as to their origin has resulted in the answer that they have come from pre-memory times, in other words at least before 1500 A.D. To fix a date for the origin of this instrument would therefore need comparative ethnological study. Hornbostel again remarks in the same paragraph that "it would be hard to find a sound instrument which had not originally a ritual or magical significance, and which had not served for an indefinite period as a secular amusement for adults before being finally passed on to the children." As far as this tribe of Shona is concerned, I shall therefore assume that ritual significance indicates antiquity within the tribe whether or not the instrument is used at the present day in a secular connection, and that those instruments which are purely secular and have no known ritual connection may either be comparatively recent inventions or importations from other peoples. Toy *mbira* are made and 'played' by Shona children.

On the other hand, the *Njari*, the next variation of the *Mbira* which is by far the most widely spread variety in this country, is acknowledged to have been imported from the Nyungwe tribe of the Zambesi Valley approximately 200 to 250 years ago, and yet it has ritualistic significance, sometimes in connection with the *Midzimu*, the ancestral spirits, and sometimes with the *Mashavi* souls.[2]

It seems, therefore, that new magical or religious concepts create new significances in the instrument concerned, for the *Mashavi* concept is believed to be of much later origin than that of *Midzimu*. It would hardly be extravagant to suggest that a comparative study of these instruments would throw light upon the religious growth of the people.

The fact that the only people that I have so far found still making and playing the *Mbira* variety are the Zezuru of the Salisbury area, would indicate that they were possibly the originators of the instrument, though not necessarily in their present geographical position. The other tribes appear only to play the instrument as a relic from the past, whose art is lost to all save the very old men. The instruments themselves are handed down from father to son with the inheritance, the *Nhaka*. The *Madebe dzaMhondoro* seem to have remained exclusively in the north-eastern area and are said to have originated amongst the Musengu sub-tribe, from the Mukorekore district of Nyombgwe, near the Mvuradona Mountains in the Darwin district, where they are called "*Hera*".

These three, the *Mbira dzeMidzimu*, the *Madebe dzaMhondoro* and the *Njari* are apparently the only varieties with local religious or ritual significance, though one must not necessarily conclude that the other varieties have not a direct or indirect magical significance. Before dealing with each one separately, let us enumerate the varieties to be found. Unless otherwise stated they are of general occurence:

1. *Mbira dzeMidzimu* .. .. (South and Central)
2. *Madebe dzaMhondoro* .. .. (North-east)

2a. *Hera* .. .. (North-east)

[1] '*Ethnology of African Sound-Instruments*', published in 'Africa'—April, 1933, p. 129. International African Institute'

[2] C. G. Jung in his "Contributions to Analytical Psychology", page 259, makes a clear distinction between "souls" and "spitits" in in primitive beliefs, "unconscious complexes which normally belong to the ego (*souls*) and certain others which normally do not belong to it (*spirits*)".

3. *Njari dzaManjanja* (this includes the *Njari Huru*, of Mtoko) .. .. (Central)
4. *Njari Duku* (Mtoko) .. .. (North-east)
5. *Mbira* (non-ritualistic, found amongst the Ndau and Tonga people) .. .. (South-east)
6. *Tulimba* (Hlengwe) .. .. (South)
7. *Kalimba* (Mtoko) .. .. (North-east)

On their borders, with occasional infiltrations, there are four Nyungwe types; (a) the *Njari*; (b) the *Nyonganyonga*; (c) the *Nsansi*; (d) the *Kalimba*. A fifth, the *Matepe* (the Nyungwe equivalent to the local *Mbira dza Midzimu* and the *Madabe dzaMondoro*) does not appear ever to have left that part of the Zambesi Valley.

Each one of these types has its local or tribal variations in the matter of tuning and array of notes, but with certain similarities. At first sight they might be dismissed as environmental differences, but from the evidence before us cannot so easily be disposed of. The fact that a musician can leave his own country and live with strangers and tune his instrument at will to the tuning of his own people argues a sense of differentiation in modes and in the tuning of modes that is extraordinarily acute, and shows a preference for or a reflection of one environment, not every environment. Should he, on the other hand, attempt unaided to tune his instrument to the mode or modes of the foreigners amongst whom he resides, he will often show his hereditary traits which are almost invariably discernable to the locals; in much the same way, possibly, as in America the negro type of voice persists in spite of generations of western environment and their exclusive speaking of the English tongue.

This leads us on directly to the methods of determining what these modes are, their distribution, and their significance to the whole study of African music.

The initial difficulties are very great; firstly accurate information must be obtained in the presence of the player himself, who can check up by ear any inaccuracies of the observer; travelling with the instrument for any distance over rough roads may put the notes out of tune; the apparatus used to determine such intervals and pitches may be affected by weather, and may be limited in scope. (I myself use a set of tuning forks tuned to every four vibrations, 54 forks ranging from 212 vibrations per second, to its octave, 424 vibrations). It must also be borne in mind that the African musician may not have arrived at a 'perfect' tuning of the mode he desires, firstly from lack of skill and secondly from the limitations of the materials used. In either case inaccuracies will present themselves which may not be the fault of the observer. For instance, the overtones produced by striking any one note on these instruments, especially those in the lower ranges, say below 150 vibrations, may eclipse the fundamental note, and the tuning must be taken from this overtone. Unlike an harmonic, which will invariably bear some mathematical relationship to the fundamental, the overtone produced, arising from the peculiarities of the materials used, may have no simple relationship to the fundamental. I have come across this in several cases. For example, a reed with a fundamental note of 152 vs. gave an overtone of 164, which was the note used in the scale, not the fundamental. On the *Nsansi* played by Dumba, the two lowest notes have the same fundamental 134 vs., but give different overtones 268, the octave and 332 vs. The second note, although having the same fundamental as the first, is actually tuned to the overtone and is considered to represent the lower octave of 332, i.e. 166 vs. In another case the two lowest notes on the instrument which had weak fundamentals but strong overtones of high pitch, were definitely tuned, so I was informed, by their overtones in unison with the two top notes of the instrument. Perhaps the case of the tuning of Chiota's instrument, the *Hera* at Mount Darwin provides the most concrete example. The relative overtones and fundamentals were noted with care and the musician himself was aware of them. He called the overtone in each case the *Rukwangware*

which is the word used of the overtones in drums. The note to which he tuned, however, whether fundamental or overtone is called by him the *Murunga*, which he said meant the louder or more apparent note produced.

Note Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Desired Scale	82	92	102	112	126	134	150	164	vs.
Fundamental note in each case	74	92	90	108	126	124	126	164	vs.
Overtone in each case ..	164	184	408	224	252	268	300	—	vs.
	ov.		ov.	ov.		ov.	ov.		

The fundamentals in notes 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 are discarded; while in notes 1, 4, 6 and 7 the overtone an octave above the note required is considered to give the desired effect. *Notes 2, 5 and 8 are tuned to the fundamentals; and note 3 is tuned to the overtone two* octaves above the required pitch.

The eventual result is not so muddled as one might imagine at first sight, but it does account for some strange apparent out-of-tune effects when two instruments are playing together. This out-of-tune effect produced by unfortunate fundamentals, through the inefficiency of the materials used, is not a premeditated factor and would be eliminated by them if possible. I have upon several occasions noted the extreme accuracy which they have displayed in tuning their instruments, and also the certainty with which they chose the tuning fork in my set that corresponded to the note on their instrument. The forks are tuned to every four vibrations, and admit of very accurate discrimination. Unfortunately I have not been present at a manufactory so I have been unable to determine whether or not they have a knowledge of tuning overtones, as in the organ reed, by adjusting the weight of the various segments of the tongue. In some cases I have come across, the evidence suggests a rudimentary knowledge of this science.

It thus appears that either a fundamental or an overtone may be ignored, generally in favour of the louder of the two, even though it may be an octave higher than the note aimed at. In many instances it is impossible to determine the pitch of a note without playing its octave with it to reinforce its essential pitch. The native musician will often be seen doing this when tuning his instrument, and the result I have queried in several cases, for to me the fundamental was the more obvious, though in fact the native ear preferred the overtone. It will be seen then, that not only is it necessary to exercise the greatest care when determining the tuning of any instrument, but also desirable to refer continually to the player himself. He may often admit that his instrument is not in perfect tune, and I have made it a practice to ask the player to run over his instrument to make certain that it is in tune before starting to measure the pitches of the notes. Wherever the octaves do not perfectly agree, it may often be assumed that some other element such as overtones has entered into the field and distorted the essentials.

To what degree one is justified in allowing for such physical and psycho-physical *discrepancies must remain for the present in question. At least, one must note them and* be prepared to allow for errors. Possibly the only really satisfactory method would be to get a representative group of musicians from any one sub-tribe to meet and tune with the observer some more scientifically made instrument which would not be hampered by overtones, to the tuning that was acceptable to the majority present. In my experience there is always this absolute tuning which will be recognized by the local people as being "perfect", but it does not necessarily mean that every tuner of an African instrument has the skill to attain it.

That this tuning is not of one mode only is fully recognised by the musician, who can often discourse lucidly upon the various tunings as used by people of another tribe. The minstrel Chigogo was a case in point. He informed me, using his own instrument to demonstrate on, what tone centres were used by the minstrels of Gutu, Chilimanzi and Chibi, and upon reference to my notes on the instruments of these districts I found that he was correct in each case. One player of the Rusapi district informed me that he had noticed that the pitch of his instrument varied with the temperature, rising in pitch with the cold weather and falling in warm weather. This indicates a very accurate sense of absolute pitch, though he had no knowledge of the physical properties of metals.

It is commonly held by some scientists that there can be no sense of absolute pitch without some constant norm to which all the musicians refer. Reference to my list of tunings noted will at least show that there is some constant standard or mode, which is followed by the musicians of any one tribe or sub-tribe, but investigations have failed to show any norm other than the psycho-physical one of tone sense. It must be admitted that a musician will often get another to help him tune his instrument, but one continually comes across players who boast that they do not need outside help and that their tuning represents their tribal mode. For instance, a Nyungwe who had lived and worked at Domboshawa, near Salisbury for some years, amongst the Zezuru people, and with little or no contact with ihs own folk some 200 miles away in the Zambesi Valley, was found to have his instrument in almost perfect tune with one I obtained from another minstrel of his district whom I met on the road in the far east of the country. The figures read:

Ruia..	**208**	228	260	284	316	344	392	**416**	vs.
Ndowa	**210**	232	260	288	316	352	388	**420**	vs.

In only one interval are they as much as eight vibrations apart, which at that pitch represents less than a quarter tone (40 cents). They did not know each other, and they both claimed to tune their instruments independently without assistance. Examples such as this can be quoted at length.

Wider effects are also noticeable. For instance, the *mbira* as tuned by Masamu, a Hongwe musician of the Buhera district, is like that of the *Nsansi* played by Ruwo, a Nyungwe of the Zambesi Valley, Portuguese East Africa. The figures read:

Masamu	**164**	176	194	216	238	264	296	**328**	vs.
Ruwo	**166**	180	196	215	240	264	204 v	**332**	vs.

It is of interest to note that although Masamu is a Hongwe on his father's side, his mother's people are Njanja. The Njanja were originally a small group of Nyungwe who intruded into this country, and intermarried with the local Hera and the Hongwe, some 200 or more years ago. It is scarcely likely that instruments such as the *mbira*, which is subject to rust and other natural decays should have retained an exact tuning over such a period of years in a country whose local mode was not similar. It again points to some psycho-physical element. The *Mbira*, as already stated, is the 'ancestral' instrument of this country and, as they say, did not originate from outside, as did the *njari*. The two conclusions that may be deduced from this are either (*a*) a definite hereditary psycho-physical sense, or (*b*) some Nyungwe influence at a remote date.

In this respect it is pertinent to note that wherever I found people of mixed parentage, such as with the Ndau of the south-east of the country, their tunings varied most remarkably and bore little or no resemblance to each other. Men that were true to type on both sides of the family appeared to have strong similarities to their relations, whether living amongst their own people or amongst strangers. The theory of some constant physical norm therefore, so far as this country is concerned, cannot be considered as a likely solution. With such instruments as transverse flutes, however, their dependence upon chance with regard to the spacing of holes and the possibility of

manipulation by the player himself, do not allow as accurate a comparison as does the *mbira* type of instrument.

It will be noted therefore, to sum up our initial difficulties in the study of the modes of these instruments, that the following elements all enter into the field and sooner or ater must be accounted for:

1. Insufficient accuracy of the observer.
2. Limitations of apparatus available.
3. Lack of skill in the player resulting in inferior tuning.
4. Presence of loud harmonics.
5. Presence of loud overtones, both due to the materials used.
6. The temperature, which can be considerable if the instrument is left in the sun.

When the foregoing have been successfully negotiated there still remains the question of environment and the heredity of the player, before we can be assured at arriving at a satisfactory understanding of this intricate subject. So far as the last two are concerned, it would appear that heredity had the stronger case, and the onus of proof remains with those who prefer the environmental theory, though no doubt both elements exert their influences upon the tuning of any tribe.

Up to the moment of writing (1933) I must admit that I have not as yet arrived at any definite conclusion with regard to the cause of the varying modes, and must therefore be content to note their effect together with any similarities that would lead one to postulate the nature of the modes used by these Shona people.

The distinct modes found in use may be said to correspond exactly with the linguistic sub-tribes as classified by Professor Doke. The *Mbira dzeMidzimu* are now so rare that it is impossible to determine with any accuracy their modes except to note that wherever found they follow a mode of their own according to their district though not necessarily, in fact never in my experience in tune with the *njari* of the district. So we find the musicians speaking of the *Mbira* mode of the Gowera, and also of the *Njari* mode of the Gowera, and so also of the various modes used by other instruments. So far as I have investigated, it may be taken that the various musical modes used amongst the Shona people correspond directly to their linguistic dialects. This fact the musicians fully acknowledge.

It is of great interest to note that the modes of the ancient Greeks, so I am told by Professor P. R. Kirby, appear to have been named after the city-states. Here they may be said to be named after the sub-tribes, or shall we say 'family' or 'village-states'.

It now remains to quote the actual figures of the modes in question. Here again, figures which represent vibrational differences may lead one astray, for mathematical accuracy in determining pitch may be far more accurate than oral methods, and after all, it is the emotion conveyed by the sequence of notes that produces the essential effects of music, and not just the isolated fact of the pitch of any one note. Thus an inaccuracy of a few vibrations may not be detected by the ear, but on paper might mean the difference between a ratio of 9:8 and a ratio of 11:10 interval (204 and 165 cents). So although in each case I will mention the apparent interval used between any two adjacent notes of the scale, I believe it would be more accurate in most cases to study the actual pitches used. For instance a small difference of four vibrations in one note would alter both intervals on either side of it. Thus with two instruments tuned to:

(*a*) 160 180 198 vs.
and (*b*) 160 176 198 vs.

the intervals read:

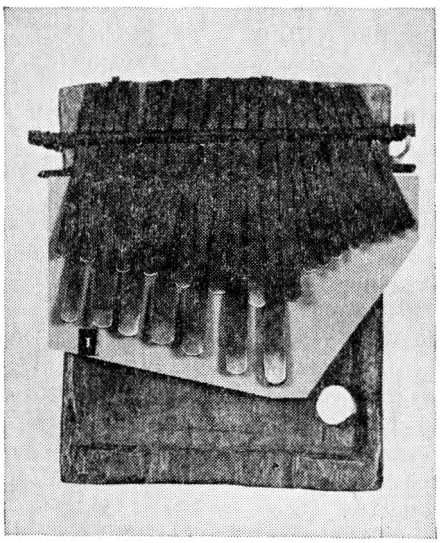
(*a*) 160-180 vs. 9:8 (204 cents); 180-198 vs. 11:10 (165 cents)
(*b*) 160-176 vs. 11:10 (165 cents); 176-198 vs. 9:8 (204 cents)

The constant repetition of the use of certain intervals may justify our postulating a

possible basis of tuning for any particular district, but only after comparative study and with the general acceptance of the musicians concerned.

These members of the *Mbira* family of instruments are to be found in Rhodesia at the present time (1933):

1. *The Mbira dzeMidzimu:*



1. *Mbira dzeMidzimu*

The oldest known type of Mbira in Rhodesia. Many of them have hand-forged iron reeds. Board resonator, tray-shaped, with right 4th finger hole.

There are very few of these instruments left in the country, in fact I have only come across six, of which I took the tuning of five. They are highly ritualistic instruments, being connected with the *Midzimu* and *Mhondoro* spirits, but are also used for secular amusement. Many of these are very old, having been handed down from father to son for generations. They may be distinguished from other types by the fact that the resounding board is dug out from above but has closed ends like a tray, unlike the *njari* resonator board which is open on the lower end. The owners will not be persuaded to sell this instrument because of its ancestral significance. The only place where they are still made appears to be in the Shiota Reserve, Salisbury district. This fact, as mentioned before, might be considered by those who claim that the Zezuru are the head tribe of the Shona people, as an additional claim to that position.

Modes Noted (in v.p.s.)

Player: Charuwadza. *Tribe:* Karanga-Duma. *Locality:* Bikita.

110	134	148	168	176	194	**210**	224	248	292
324	352	364	**420**	480	512	592	648	736	808
944	(21 reeds)								

(Mode 210-420)

Intervals	210:224	224:248	248:292	292:324	324:352	352:364	364:420
Approx. Ratio ..	16:15	10:9	7:6	10:9	13:12	30:29	7:6
Cents	112	177	282	180	144	58	247

Player: Musika. *Tribe:* Manyika-Hongwe. *Locality:* Musapi.

103	128	138	154	164	188	**206**	256	276	308	328
376	396	**412**	440	480	512	560	640	696	728	992

(22 Reeds)

(Mode 206-412)

Intervals	206:256	256:276	276:308	308:328	328:376	376:396	396:412
Approx. Ratio ..	5:4	14:13	10:9	16:15	8:7	20:19	26:25
Cents	376	130	190	109	237	89	69

Player: Musamu. *Tribe:* Manyika-Hongwe-Njanja. *Locality:* Buhera.

88	164	176	194	**216**	238	264	296	328	364	396
432	496	536	600	656	704	776	864	952	1072	
1184	1312	(23 reeds)								

(Mode 216-432)

Intervals	216:238	238:264	264:296	296:328	328:364	364:396	396-432
Approx. Ratio ..	11:10	10:9	9:8	10:9	10:9	12:11	12:11
Cents	168	179	199	177	181	145	151

Player: Shoniwa. *Tribe:* Muzezuru-Harawa. *Locality:* Shiota.

104	110	124	176	188	204	**220**	252	276	308	352
376	410	**440**	504	552	616	680	752			

(Mode 220-440)

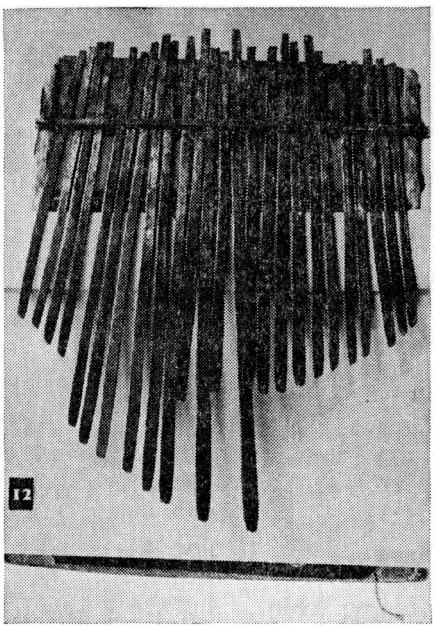
Intervals	220:252	252:276	276:308	308:352	352:376	376:410	410:440
Approx. Ratio ..	8:7	11:10	10:9	8:7	16:15	12:11	14:13
Cents	235	157	190	232	114	150	122

Player: Chinyowa. *Tribe:* Muzezuru. *Locality:* Shiota.

100	126	148	156	166	**200**	220	252	268	296	332
364	**400**	440	504	536	592	664	728	800	952	

(Mode 200-400)

Intervals	200:220	220:252	252:268	268:296	296:332	332:364	364:400
Approx. Ratio ..	11:10	8:7	16:15	10:9	9:8	11:10	11:10
Cents	165	235	107	172	198	160	163



11. *Madebe dza Mbondoro*

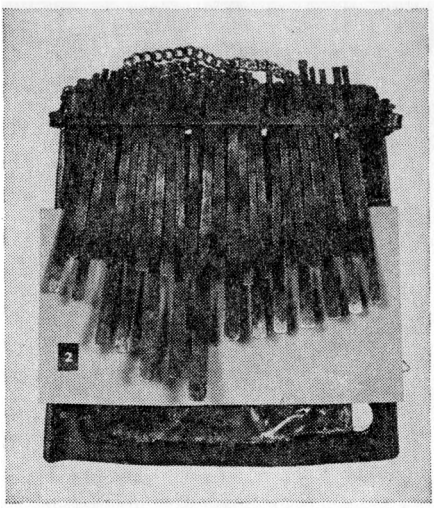
Property of Kadori, Mtoko District. Bell resonator. This is one of the deep toned instruments.

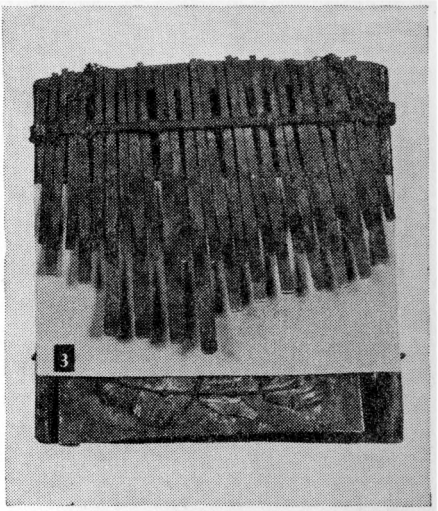
12. *Hera*

Property of Jarari, Chigwea Village, Chikoa District, Mozambique. (Chikunda). Bell resonator. Tuning and names of reeds . . . 66 *Kuru*; 70, 77, 86 *Mbare weKuru*; 95, 106, 118, 132 *Nango*; 132 *Tangarara*; 190, 212, 236, 264 *Mpiningo*; 140, 154, 172 *Jenya*; 190, 212, 236, 264, 280, 308, 344 *Wasikana*. *Kuru* is the longest reed; *Mbare we Kuru* are the three to the left of it. The next three are *Nango*; and the outside one of that manual is *Tangarara*. The three longest in the upper manual are also *Tangarara* and are in unison with the three shortest reeds of the lower manual. The four on the left are *Mpiningo*; and of the remaining ten reeds on the right, the three lowest are *Jenya* and the rest *Wasikana*.

2. The *Madebe dza Mondoro* and the *Hera:*

These two types, which are very similar and are said to have originated in the Nyombgwe area of the Darwin district, are only to be found in the north-eastern part of the country. They are the equivalent of the *Mbira dzeMidzimu* in the south and central parts of the country, but are much more numerous. This may be partly accounted for by the fact that the *njari* has not yet (1932) intruded into this area. They are particularly pleasant in tone, with notes down as low as 71, that is about Bass D. Their range covers about three octaves. They are used ritualistically in connection with the rites of ancestor worship, the *Midzimu* spirits, but never with those of the *Mashavi* souls. They are also used as a secular intrument and are played with a technique that is amongst the best in the country. In fact, some of the songs sung to this instrument show advanced musical skill and artistic appreciation, that only the *njari* at its best can equal. They are distinct from other types in that the sound board is hollowed (Bell resonator), and is made of a soft wood called *Mupepe*. It is, however, generally played inside a gourd resonator as well, which is common to all types.





2. *Njari*

Property of Kwaramba of the Mrewa District (Zezuru). The longest reed in the centre of the instrument is called *Dobi*. The four reeds to the left of *Dobi* are *Madewera a Dobi*. The tone centres *Wambiso* are the left hand reeds on both the upper and lower right hand manual, and the adjacent reeds to *Wambiso* in those manuals are called *Dawera*. The reamainder of the lower right manual are called *Mindimbi*, and the upper manual reeds are all *Netete*. Central scale . . . **190**, 208, 234, 260, 280, 308, 344, **380** vs. Board resonator with right 4th finger hole.

3. *Njari*

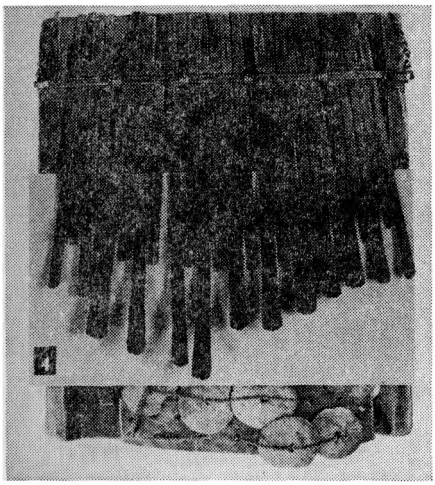
Property of Goze of the Mtoko District (Mutoko). Board resonator, no finger hole.

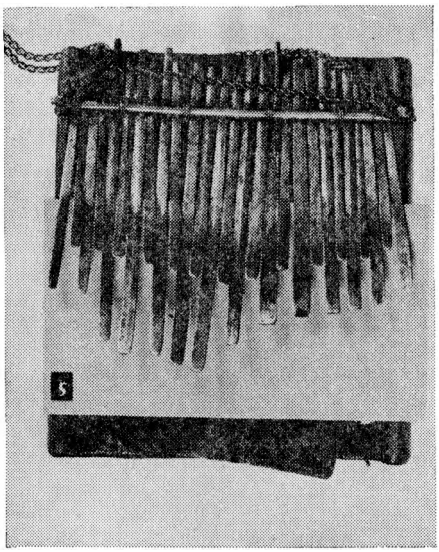
3. The *Njari:*

This form of *mbira* is by far the most common throughout the country, in many places having completely ousted the older instrument. It is of particular interest for its history can be traced with a fair amount of certainty, and also the progress of its distribution. It has one or two advantages over the older *mbira*, such as a more convenient spacing of the notes. Whereas the old *mbira* had all the lower notes in the left hand and all the high ones on the right, the *njari* has the lowest and the highest in the left and the main octave in the right. The right hand takes the air in a compass which is suited to most of their tunes and the left hand accompanies, one might say in two manuals. Another advantage is that it is slightly lighter than the *mbira* though made of the same woods, usually *mukurambira*, or blood wood (Pterocarpus Anglolensis).

The history of the *njari* is bound up with the origin of the Njanja sub-tribe. It is briefly as follows:

Between 150 and 250 years ago, a party of traders came through this country, coming from the Portuguese country of the Zambesi Valley. Amongst them was a Portuguese-Munyungwe man called Muroro. When they arrived in the district of Chief Chirgwa, in what is now called the Buhera district, Muroro fell sick, and was left to his fate with a few of his trading goods by his companions, who returned presumably to the Zambesi Valley in Portuguese territory. The daughter of the Chief, however, took pity on him and nursed him back to health. Whereupon he married her.





4. *Njari*

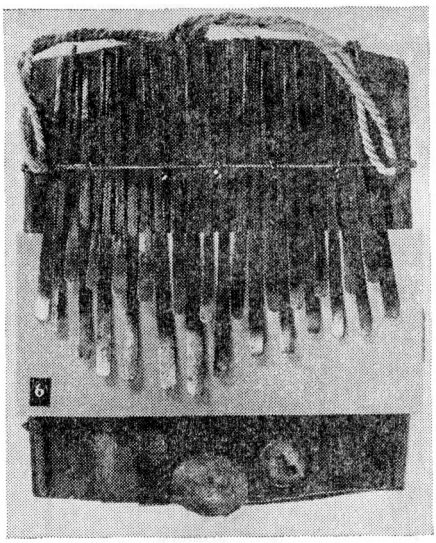
Property of Gapure, Takawarasha's village, Chibi District (Karanga). The tone centres, 166 and 332 vs. are the longest reeds on the upper and lower right-hand manuals. Scale . . . **166**, 180, 194, 220, 236, 268, 300, **332** vs. Board resonator with right 4th finger hole and iron loop for left 4th finger.

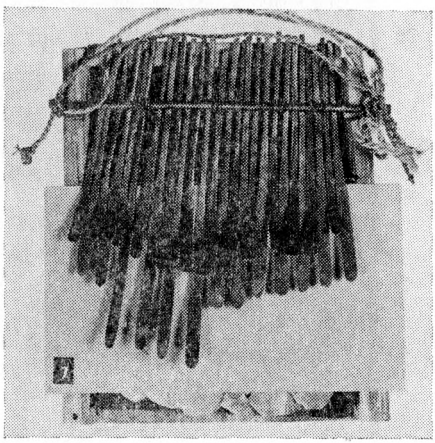
5. *Njari*

Property of Mundiwa, Mrewa District (Zezuru). This instrument was played in unison with the Njari of Kwaramba (No. 2) and the reeds are named the same. Board resonator with right 4th finger hole.

This was not looked upon with sympathy by her father Chirgwa, and he would have had the foreigner put to death had he not been stopped by the Mambo, the "King" or Paramount Chief, who lived at Zimbabwe, Fort Victoria district. When the old Chief died, Muroro, who was trading in the vicinity, informed the Mambo before the sons of Chirgwa did so. This was a grave breach of custom on the part of the Chief's sons, who should have seen to it that they themselves brought the news of their father's death. The Mambo was so incensed that he gave the inheritance of the Chieftainship of Chirgwa to Muroro, who then took the name of Gambiza, and the *mutupo* or surname of *Senhor*, now called *Sinyoro*, as he had no African family name, from his mother's family. There were two sons born to this man by his wife, the daughter of Chirgwa, Mesama and Gotowi.

When these boys grew up their father sent them to visit his relations in Portuguese territory. There they met with men playing on an instrument called the *Njari*, and were so pleased with it that they both learnt the art and on returning to Buhera brought it with them. The people of the Buhera district had long been noted for their black-smithing, and they soon manufactured numbers of these instruments and began to hawk them round the countryside. The tone was new to the people and the skill of the two sons of Gambiza considerable, and so they earned for themsvles the nick-name of *Manjanja*, a word indicating the sound of the *njari*. Thus, the *njari* was christened the *Njari dzaManjanja*. Its success was immediate and the whole district took it up, often





6. *Njari*

Property of Dambaza, Mrewa District (Zezuru). Scale . . . **170**, 178, 200, 220, 248, 276, 308, **340** vs. Board resonator, no finger holes.

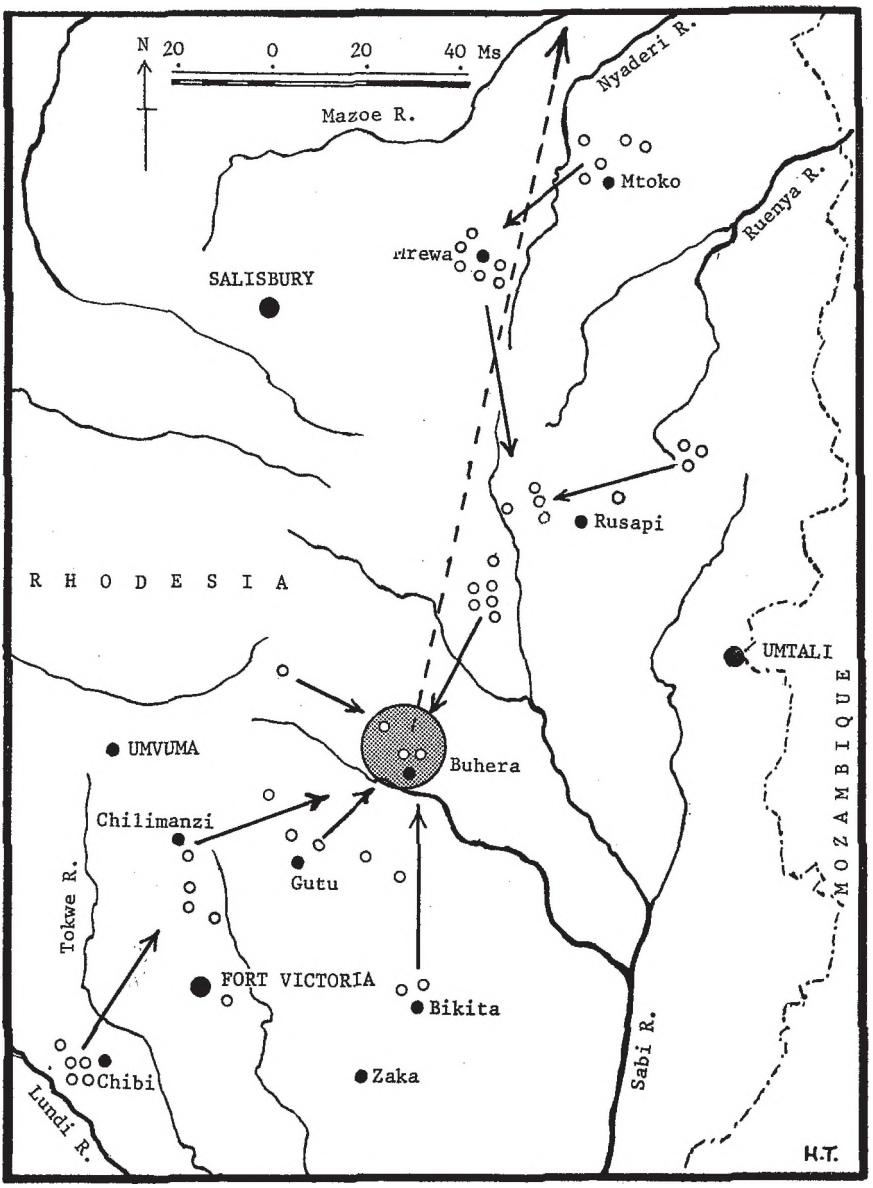
7. *Njari*

Property of Zenze, Mtoko District (Mtoko). The four longest reeds are called *Madada*; the lower right manual are *Mbira*, the two outside reeds on both right and left hand are *Whenero*, and the upper manual *Mitudza*. Scale . . . **178**, 194, 216, 240, 264, 292, 320, **356** vs. Board resonator, no finger holes.

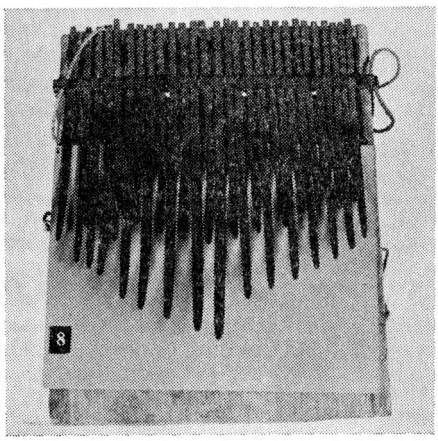
playing tunes that were brought in by Mesama and Gotowi from the Zambesi Valley. By 1900 A.D. the instrument had spread about 100 miles in all directions from Buhera, having reached the Mrewa, Rusapi, Bikita, 'Victoria', Chibi, Chilimanzi and 'Salisbury' districts. It did not, however, get to Mtoko until about 1910 A.D. and has not yet (1932) arrived in the Darwin area, nor on the east side of the Sabi River or apparently further south than the Lundi River or the line 20 degrees South Latitude.

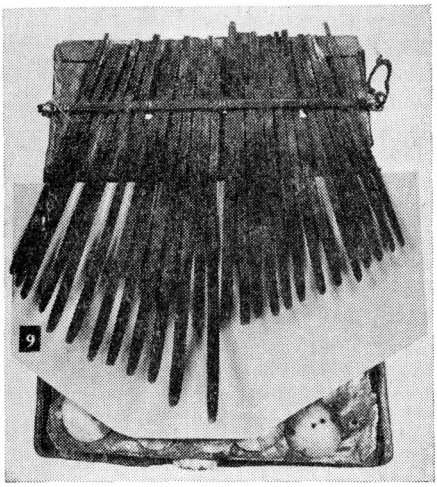
The exact position of its origin in Mozambique was not known, but it was said to have come from the Nyungwe area of Tete. The name Tete is popularly given to the whole of the district between Tete itself and Chikoa, further up the Zambesi Valley. It was not until my last week in the field that I met a man from this country, playing an *njari* from the Valley, in fact, playing one of the tunes with which I was already familiar in the Njanja country, though I had previously met several Nyungwe *njari* musicians playing quite a different class of tune. This musician, Kabango, is a Mutawara, and he informed me that the *njari* he thinks originated with the Wadema people who lived up in the hills near Dzunsha, a day's march east of Chikoa, under their chief Songo, near chief Nyampandu. Unfortunately I have been unable to verify this data, but am prepared to believe, both from the shape of his instrument and the tune he played, that the real home of the *njari* from which the sons of Gambiza brought it must have been in this vicinity.

My informant as to the history of this instrument was old Chief Chabkanya, called Machakairi (who was, he said, the son of Chabkanya—the son of Makumbi—the son of



Map of the eastern part of Rhodesia showing the distribution of the *Njari* in 1932. The arrows indicate the direction from which each player said the instrument had come to his region. Each circle represents one *Njari* noted by the author.





8. *Njari*

Property of Ndowa, Tete District, Mozambique (Nyungwe). Bell resonator. This instrument is likely to have been similar to the prototype *Njari* of the Nyungwe from whom the Manjanja took their design. The reeds are set in the same array. Scale . . . **176**, 190, 216, 244, 264, 296, 320, **352** vs.

9. *Njari Huru*

Property of Katango (Mutawara) from the Chikoa District of the Zambezi Valley. Bell resonator. This 26 reed instrument may also have influenced the evolution of the Njari dza Manjanja.

Neshangwe—the son of Masoka—the son of Mesama—the son of Muroro Gambiza (six generations)). He himself is now about 75 years old. This would make the probable date for the introduction of the *njari* not later than 1755 A.D., and possibly as early as 1680 A.D.

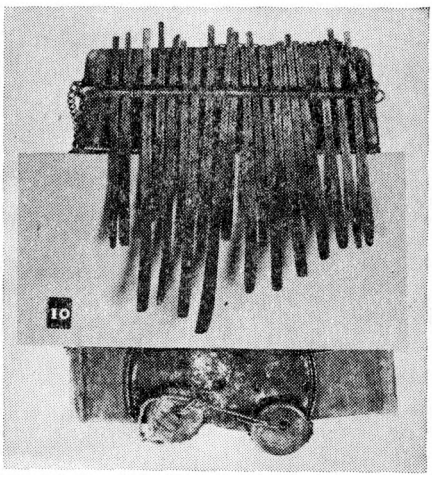
In the light of Professor Hornbostel's theory, it is interesting to note that this instrument has ritualistic significance, both with *Mashavi* and *Midzimu*. Its association with the Mashavi concept being of later date is not surprising, but its introduction into the cult of Ancestor worship along with the ancient *Mbira dzeMidzimu* can only be accounted for by mental association and the fact that it is often called by the general term "*Mbira*", the notes.

This instrument, although it may have originally been introduced with the Tawara or Nyungwe scale has not kept to that tuning, but has followed the local preferences of each sub-tribe. It may be that each sub-tribe was attempting to attain the mode of the Manjanja, but their consistent failure to do so, coupled with the fact that it is never in the same mode as the *Mbira dzeMidzimu* throws considerable light upon the whole subject of tribal modes, and the foundations of Shona music.

(Examples of tunes on the *njari* are to be found in the set of Columbia records which I recorded in 1933 and are housed in the archive of the African Music Society).

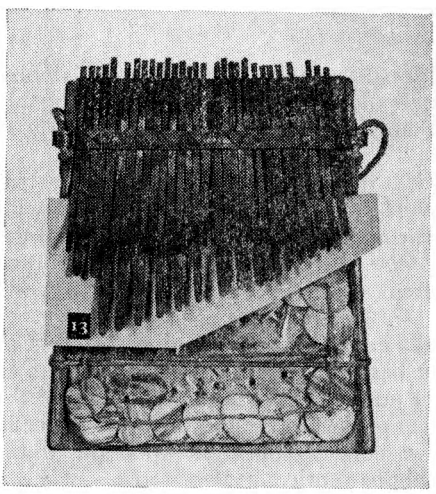
4. The *Njari duku:*

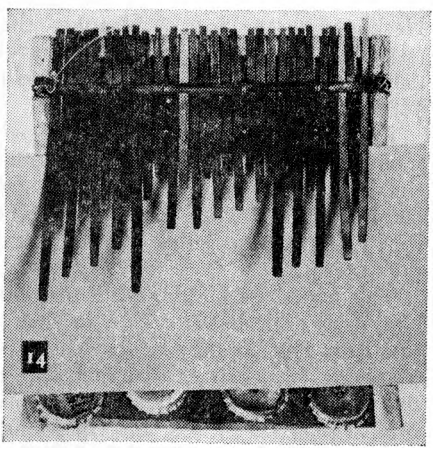
This instrument occurs in the Mtoko district, and is a small version of the *njari*. It, however, is not tuned the same and appears to be a direct intrusion from the neighbouring Nyungwe people, and a relation of the Nyungwe *Kambira*.



10. *Njari Duku*
Property of Chisike, Kokomweko Village, Mtoko District (Mutoko). Bell resonator. The tuning of this instrument was not certain as certain intervals in the scale were missing. The names of the reeds in the lower manual were: the four reeds on the left, *Makuru*; the next four towards the right, *Whenero*; and those three on the far right, *Mbira dzapasi*. In the upper manual: on the far left the two reeds were *Whenero dzeManzere*; the next four, *Ukande dzapamusoro*; and the other three reeds, *Iduku*.

5. The *Mbira* (non-ritualistic):



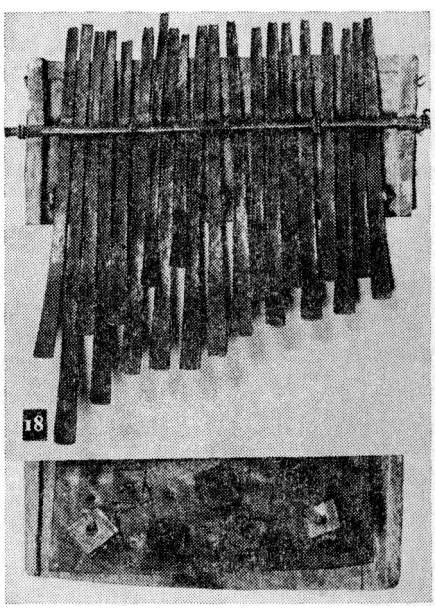


13. *Mbira dza Watonga*
Bell resonator. A beautifully made and decorated instrument, in the regular order of right to left, treble to bass.

14. *Mbira dza Wandau*
From Melsetter District. In three manuals right to left, treble to bass sequence. Bell

This instrument occurs in all the bordering districts of the Mashona people to the south and east. There are varieties in the Mtoko and Inyanga districts, of the Barwe and Tonga *mbira*; in Chipinga district east of the Sabi River it is the Ndau *Mbira*, while south of the Lundi River it is the *Mbira dzaBahlengwe* (or *Timbila*). In no case have I found this instrument being played by the central Shona people. In appearance they are similar to each other insofar as the spacing of the notes is in one line from bass to treble (left to right). The tunings again are localised. In the case of the Ndau people, who are much intermarried with the Shangaan raiders, the hexatonic tunings of individual instruments are so dissimilar as to offer no apparent common foundation. Here the admixture of foreign blood (Shangaan) seems to have completely upset local musical standards. Hereditary theories thus gain a point over environmental, for had the local musicians depended upon each other for a norm of tuning, they would surely have achieved a far greater measure of uniformity, at least during the last forty years under peaceful Rhodesian rule. Missionary activity, which has been of long standing in this district, has not, it appears, influenced the tuning of the *mbira* in the least. In no area I have visited has the European scale in the least affected the local instruments.

6. The *Tulimba* or *Timbila:*

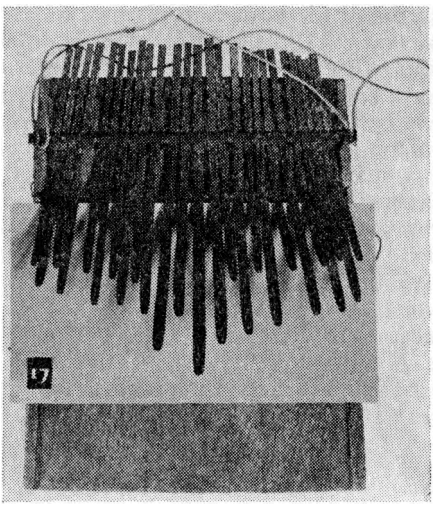


18. *Timbila*

Property of Maraneli (Hlengwe), from Chitanga's village, Chibi District. Bell resonator. This instrument is one of the most southerly to be found in Rhodesia and follows the general pattern of the *Mbira dza WaTonga*. Hexatonic scale. Upper left reeds . . . 552, 488, 284, 196. Upper right . . . 600, 464, 432, 400. Lower manual 352, 328, 288, 244, 216, 192, 180, 168, 140, 128, 98 vs.

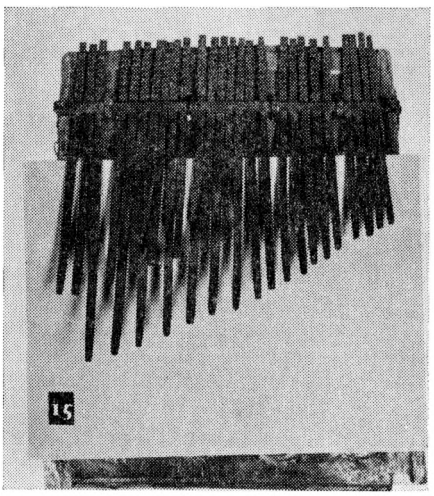
This instrument played by the Hlengwe people is possibly a variation of the *mbira*, and they say it comes from the Shangaan tribe, but this is unlikely, and is more probably from the people further north in Mozambique.

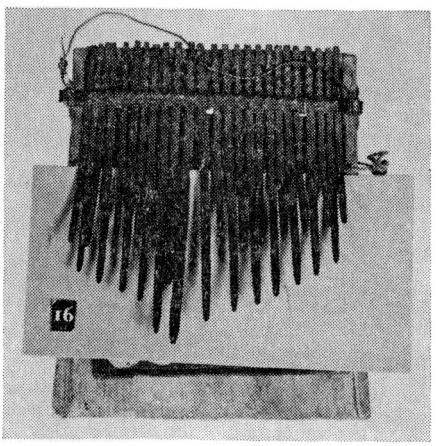
7. The *Karimba:*



17. *Karimba*
(Or *Kalimba*) (Nyungwe), Ruenia River region, Mozambique. Bell resonated. A similar instrument to the *Kalimba*, No. 16.

This small instrument is similar to the *Njari iduku*, and is a direct introduction in recent years from the Senga people of Nyasaland, having been brought down by men seeking work in Southern Rhodesia. I have only found two examples of it amongst the Makorekore tribe.





15. *Nsansi*
Property of Njazi (Nyungwe), Mozambique. Bell resonated. In common with the Mbira dza WaTonga this instrument has a two manual right and left array.

16. *Kalimba*
Property of Ruwa (Nyungwe), Mozambique. Bell resonator. Similar to the *Njari iduku* as its name implies 'small' mbira.

It will be seen that the most important varieties are the *Njari*, the *Madebe* and *Hera*, and the old *Mbira dzeMidzimu* which, unfortunately, appears to be dying out. The best music of the Shona people may be said to be connected with the first two varieties, an art that is worthy of all encouragement, for it requires considerable skill and musical ability to become a first-class player, and the music produced is extremely pleasing, both tonally and rhymically, and is capable of great range and variety. Another point in its favour is that it is a purely African instrument, upon which can be played all the finest tunes of the minstrels.