

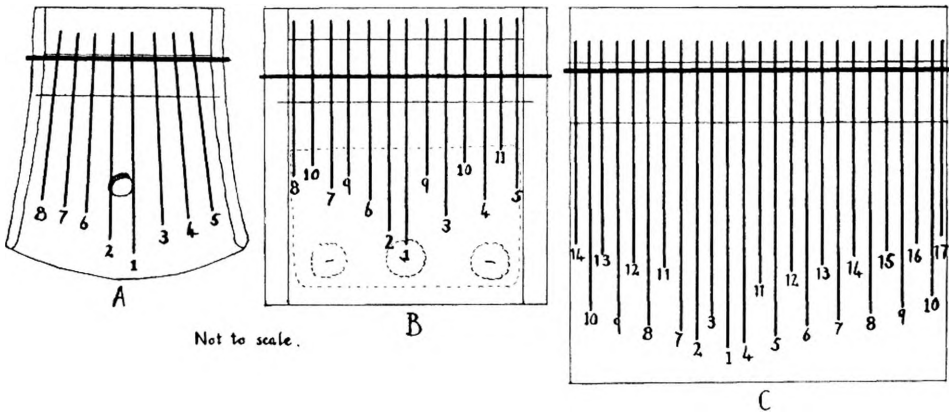
MBIRA MUSIC OF JEJE A. TAPERA

by

ANDREW TRACEY

Jeje A. Tapera, when I knew him in 1961, was a clothing factory worker in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, but, first and foremost, he held himself to be a *muridzi wembira*, an mbira player. The African inhabitants of the Bulawayo area belong mostly to the Ndebele tribe who do not possess the mbira, but there is also a considerable number of Shona-speaking people resident in Bulawayo itself. Among these, only a very few players of the mbira are to be found, perhaps because Bulawayo is well outside Mashonaland; only two were well-known—Matheu Zvimba, a Zezuru *njari* player from the Zvimba reserve near Salisbury, and Tapera, who is of the Nohwe clan of the Zezuru tribe of the Shona peoples. He was born in about 1905 in the Mangwendi reserve, fifty miles east of Salisbury in the Mrewa district of Southern Rhodesia, of a Rozvi father and a Zezuru mother.

When he was a young man of about twenty-five he made a journey from his home in Mangwendi some 200 miles down to the town of Tete on the Zambezi river in Portuguese East Africa, and there he heard being played the type of mbira known by the local Sena/Nyungwe people as *chisansi* or *kasansi* (i.e. the diminutive form of the word *sansi*). The *sansi* is one of the larger forms of traditional mbiras that are played by the Sena/Nyungwe). From the evidence of the basic layout of its keyboard, this *chisansi* is in fact fundamentally the same instrument as that known throughout a large part of the Zambezi area of Northern Rhodesia and in Nyasaland as *kalimba*. It is also found in the north eastern districts of Southern Rhodesia among those peoples who are adjacent to the Sena, the Korekore, Budjiga and Zezuru, and there it is known as *mbira*, and sometimes by the Northern Rhodesian name of *kalimba* or the Sena name of *chisansi* or *kasansi*. Hugh Tracey recorded several examples of it in this area in 1932-33.



A — 8-key Nyasaland *kalimba*; B — Tapera's 13-key "kalimba" mbira; C — 25-key Sena-Nyungwe *kalimba*. The keys are numbered in the order of their musical pitch from the bottom.

It is reasonably certain that the *chisansi* is an importation into Southern Rhodesia of relatively recent occurrence, from the evidence of the variety of names, the distribution of the instrument, and that which we have by comparison with other Shona-speaking

groups and from the Zezuru of north eastern Southern Rhodesia themselves, that the *mbira dzamidzimu* and *madebe dzaMbondoro* are their only original mbiras. The *chisansi* has not yet spread among the whole Zezuru tribe, being generally confined to the north eastern side of Salisbury. However, its popularity is still growing: Hugh Tracey has recently (1958) recorded it being played by a Karanga man and boy in Fort Victoria. These were samples that could be seen from their manner of construction to have come down from Northern Rhodesia or Nyasaland, and in this case were brought down by migrant Nyasa workers. However, it is evident from transcriptions that the music played on them, and their tuning, was distinctly Shona and not Northern Rhodesian. Unfortunately there is no space in the present article for an analysis of these transcriptions.

The *chisansi* is certainly not the only mbira to have been introduced into Southern Rhodesia from the Zambezi valley. Hugh Tracey has discovered that the *njari*, now widely established among all the Shona peoples (with the exception of the Ndau), and generally considered to be the traditional mbira of the people, was in fact brought into the Buhera district of Southern Rhodesia in about the middle of the eighteenth century by the Njanja sub-tribe of the Shona. The two men responsible were Masama and Gotori, sons of Muroro Gambiza, a half-caste Portuguese trader who had visited and settled in the area. His two sons went down into the Zambezi valley, to the Nyungwe district of Tete, and there they found, and learnt the art of, the *njari*, whose keyboard offered certain distinct advantages over that of the original Shona *mbira dzaMidzimu*. They returned with it to Buhera. It is said that the clan name 'Njanja' is a nickname indicating the peculiar sound of the *njari*. Thus the instrument is often known as the '*njari dza-Manjanja*'.

By 1900, the instrument had spread outwards about a hundred miles in all directions from Buhera, having reached Mrewa, Rusapi, Bikita, Victoria, Chibi, Chilimanzi and Salisbury. It did not, however, reach Mtoko in the north east until about 1935, and has not yet arrived in other Shona areas such as the Darwin area further north, the country east of the Sabi river, or the country south of the Lundi river and the line 20 degrees south latitude.

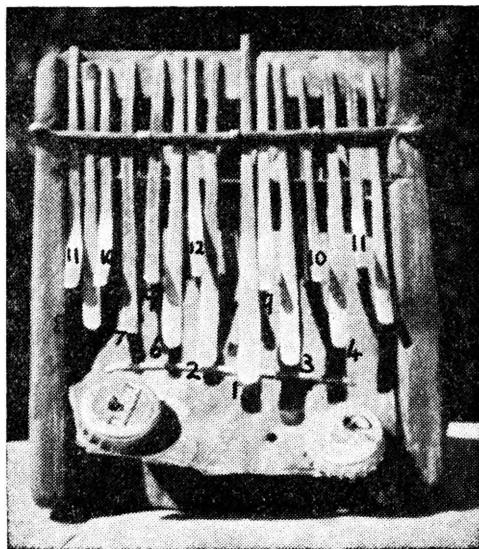
Tapera, like others before him, bought his new instrument at Tete, and brought it back to the Rhodesian highlands. This type of mbira was probably not completely unknown to him, from the evidence of the several recorded examples of the *Kalimba* in the north eastern quarter of Southern Rhodesia, but it was then, and still remains a young man's instrument, the *njari* and *madebe dzaMbondoro* being the ancient and established instruments in his home district.

Before leaving Tete, Tapera was given the correct medicinal charms for successful mbira playing, and he also learned two local tunes for the instrument ("Chikunda" Nos. 1 and 2). He did not learn the Sena names of these tunes, and their lyrics, being in a foreign language, he still does not know.

Eventually he went to work in Salisbury for a number of years, subsequently going to Bulawayo on the death of his wife in 1949. He has recently returned to live in Salisbury. Thus most of his musical inspiration has been drawn from his home area of Mrewa, tempered perhaps by other mbira players he has heard, and whom he frequently mimicks humorously. The Valley Tonga of the Zambezi valley above Kariba, the Nsenga of Petauke, Northern Rhodesia, and the Shona/Karanga of Fort Victoria, Southern Rhodesia are his favourite victims for musical parody.

Tapera's instrument. (See illustration).

The primary keys of a *kalimba*-type mbira are those numbered one to eight in the illustration, i.e. three consecutive high notes and a low note in each hand. Instruments in this form are found in Nyasaland and several parts of Northern Rhodesia, and are usually small, with fan-shaped bodies, and are played over a small gourd. Instruments of varying degree of complexity are found in the lower Zambezi valley from the borders



Tapera's "kalimba" mbira.

of Northern Rhodesia and throughout the north eastern corner of Southern Rhodesia, the additional notes being in most cases an upward continuation of the scale, the keys being shorter and placed in an upper rank or manual. From one to six keys may be added, where the principal eight keys of the lower rank have not been increased. Many Sena/Nyungwe examples of the instrument, however, use more than double the number of keys in both ranks, the result being as illustrated in Fig. 1, one of the more complex examples recorded by Hugh Tracey in 1932/33.

The construction of Tapera's mbira follows the usual pattern of the Sena/Shona board-resonated type of mbira, and not the Northern Rhodesian type, i.e. rectangular in shape, a separate piece of wood being used for the backrest, and a thick soundboard with straight sidewalls. The keys are large and rather more roughly made than the Northern Rhodesian *kalimba*. A thin metal plate is secured between the keys and the soundboard to which rattles are attached, in this case metal bottle tops, which vibrate in sympathy with the keys. The whole instrument is resonated inside a large *mpudzzi* calabash, and is propped in by means of a short stick between the straining bar and the inside of the calabash.

There seem to be certain well-understood principles behind the layout of the keys of Sena and Shona mbiras of all types. 1. Most notable is that of duplicated notes on either side of the centre of the fingerboard. 2. Related to this is the practice of duplicating the few top notes of one section of the layout with the bottom notes of the next higher section. The two advantages of this principle are firstly that it allows a rhythmic rippling or tremolo device, which is a notable feature of Sena/Shona mbira playing, and secondly that it permits the duplicated notes to be played in harmony with any other note on the fingerboard, left or right. 3. There are at least eight distinct types of mbira in use among the Sena and Shona, the *mbira dzaMidzimu*, *madebe dzaMbondoro*, *njari*, *njari huru*, *nyonganyonga*, *nsansi*, *mbira dzawaNdau* and *kalimba (chisansi)*, and on all of these but the *nsansi* and its related *mbira dzawaNdau*, the bass notes are central and all scales ascend in an outward direction from the centre of the fingerboard. On those two the bass notes are on the left, and the scale always ascends towards the right.

4. Adjacent keys in each section of the layout almost invariably produce adjacent notes of the scale. This may seem obvious, but the principle does not hold true of African mbiras from many other areas. 5. Notes in one rank are frequently arranged directly above their octave in a lower rank. The two keys may be played together to reinforce the sound of the particular note, either with thumb and first finger together, or with a sweep of the thumb from the upper onto the lower key. 6. The few outside keys on both left and right sides of the layout are usually set so that they can be played upwards with the tips of the index fingers. Alternatively, part of the upper right manual of some instruments such as some *kalimbas* and *mbira dzawaNdau* may be arranged for the right index to pluck downwards. A reason for this Sena/Shona insistence on more than the two thumbs alone to pluck the keys may perhaps be found in the great predominance of triple times in their music. The fact that man has two hands, and that much African music is in three time, undoubtedly accounts for much of the hemiola in African music and mbira playing, but if one has three or more separate means of plucking the keys one can more easily produce unreservedly triple music, as well as many more intricate counter-plays of rhythm and harmony.

Tapera's mbira has five extra keys in the upper rank, and of these two pairs are duplicated, in typical Sena/Shona fashion.¹ When he discovered that I too was capable of making mbira keys, he asked me to make him an extra key (G'), the upper octave of his keynote (G' Key 6). This I did for him, and it appears in the illustration as the fourth key from the left in the upper rank. I also made, with his approval, a duplicate key for his right outside key in the upper rank (F#¹), which appears as the left outside key of the instrument. He said that other players whom he knew used this top G' key, but that, not being a maker, he had never been able to make one for himself. He began to work out ways of using the new key as soon as it was made, but unfortunately most of the transcriptions were done before the key was in operation.

The tuning of Tapera's mbira.

Key No.	Note transcribed as	v.p.s.	Progressive intervals (cents)	Major tempered scale for comparison (cents)	Intervals (cents)
(12)	(G')	(592)	(1200)	(1200)	(147)
11.	F #'	544	1053	1100	159
10.	E'	496	894	900	208
9.	D'	440	686	700	328
8.	B'	364	358	400	181
7.	A'	328	177	200	177
6.	G	296	1200	1200	147
5.	F #	272	1053	1100	159
4.	E	248	894	900	208
3.	D	220	686	700	328
2.	B	182	358	400	328
1.	G,	148	0	0	358

¹ Cf. the Nsenga *kalimba* described by Blacking on p.00, where the six extra keys of the upper rank each sound *different* notes of the scale.

It will be noticed that there is no equivalent of 'fa' in the scale, that is, the pitch that would be represented by C. This omission is found in several Sena/Shona *kalimbas* of the smaller type, and I suggest that this is not because the players are hexatonically unaware of the existence of the note (as can be shown in the case of the *mbira dzawaNdau*) for the note is used regularly when singing (c.g. in "Kana ndoda", Fig. 4). What is more likely is that this note has no place in the harmonic sequences used on the instrument, and as the *kalimba* is rarely used melodically but rather as a rhythmic and harmonic background to the voice, the player has no need for it. Other types of *mbira*, such as the *njari* and *madebe dzwaMbondoro*, from the same areas in which the *kalimba* is found, show a complete heptatonic scale in all octaves. This would suggest a different harmonic system for both the *kalimba* and the *njari*, and from listening to many *njari* tunes, I would suggest this to be so. *Njari* tunes are generally longer, with a much wider choice of harmonic progression. Some, however, show unmistakably the 'kalimba' type of harmonic progression, as for instance, one that has been transcribed by Nettl: "Shona Karanga music for sansa orchestra and voices", published in Nettl's *Music in Primitive Culture* (Harvard 1956).² It is probable that there are several types of harmonic progression on the *njari* and related *mbiras*, and that the one most suited to the *kalimba* layout has been appropriated. This however, needs extensive research into *njari* technique, which must remain for the future.

The tuning of Tapera's notes sounds, on a casual hearing, much like a European major scale, but the above measurements show that this is not so. Tapera's scale has two notes (Keys 4 and 5, and their octaves) that are invariably tuned slightly sharp of the average Shona *mbira* tuning, i.e. towards European temperament, which probably accounted for the relative ease with which I could accept his scale when learning to play his instrument. These two degrees, the sixth and seventh of the scale, sound severely flattened on most Shona *mbiras*.

The table below shows an average Sena/Shona *mbira* tuning over one octave. This scale cannot immediately be taken as 'the Sena/Shona scale', because many individual musicians display certain constant tendencies to tune some notes differently, and the various types of *mbiras* sometimes employ different tunings. Hugh Tracey first calculated from measurement of a large number of Sena/Shona *mbiras* the average tuning of each type of *mbira*, and from this calculation he obtained the average tuning for all types. This overall average differs from any one of the instrumental averages by not more than ten cents in nearly all cases, with a maximum, in one case, of twenty seven cents, or one quarter of a tempered semitone. When one bears in mind that the individual variations

<i>Average Sena/Shona mbira tuning (cents)</i>	<i>Tapera's scale (cents)</i>
1200	1200
170	147
1030	1053
178	159
852	894
168	208
684	686
168	—
516	328
173	
343	358
181	181
162	177
♯162	177
0	0

² This tune, although not named, I can almost certainly identify as "Ndinosara nani", composed by the minstrel Wawa Chipitea from the Gutu district of Fort Victoria, in January, 1933.

usually concern only one or two notes in the scale, and that the remainder conform substantially with the average scale given here, this is indeed a remarkable degree of unanimity in the concept of a 'right' scale. One hopes that this average may have some validity, and that it may serve in future as the basis for a standardised Shona mbira scale.

Although Tapera's overall tuning varied from time to time within the range of about one semitone, the relative pitches of his scale remained constant, as I ascertained from exact measurement on four separate occasions.³ He is always conscientious about tuning his mbira before performing, and the accuracy of his ear is reflected in the accuracy of his octaves and unisons.

A NOTE ON THE TRANSCRIPTIONS.

I have chosen to transcribe *kalimba* music as if in the key of G, with one sharp, but two things must be remembered while playing or reading from the transcriptions. One is that the actual pitch of Key 6 of Tapera's mbira is very near to D (293 v.p.s. new philharmonic pitch), so the music is written approximately a fourth higher than it sounds. This was done because the key of G seemed the most suitable key in order to fit the range of the *kalimba* into a treble staff. For future studies on any *kalimba*-type of mbira, it would undoubtedly be useful to consider it as a 'transposing instrument', for the sake of uniformity of fingering and ease of sightreading from written music. Thus the G below two ledger lines would always be recognisable as the central bass note of the instrument; a middle line B would always be the outside left key of the lower rank, and so on. What this method might lose in technical accuracy would be more than adequately made up in clarity of reading, comprehension and comparison with other mbiras of the same type. Others may prefer to use the keys of D, C or B \flat for the same purpose, but I have found G to be the most suitable.

Secondly, the notes, written as they are on our staff, do not represent European tempered intervals as would be produced by a piano playing this music, but represent the exact notes given above in the table of Tapera's tuning.

Key 6 is taken as being the 'keynote' for various good reasons:

1. Tapera affirms that this is the "great note" (*inzwi huru*) and that the chord 6-3 (G-D) is the best-sounding chord on the instrument.
2. The note is played at the start of most tunes, and at the end of all.
3. It holds a central position in the harmonic progression, being always returned to from the other two main chords.
4. Lastly, to my European ear, it sounds plainly like the keynote, although, of course, it would not be wise to apply this criterion to all mbiras.

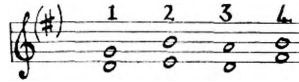
It will be seen that in most cases it is not indicated which hand plays which note. This is because there are only two notes, E in the top space and the D below it, which can be played by either hand. Where either of these occurs together with its lower octave, it can be taken as being played by the right index. Where the note occurs alone, the hand which plays it is indicated by an L or an R. Where it is necessary to make clear the contrasting rhythms of the two hands, the one is marked by up-tails, and the other by down tails, L or R being marked at the beginning of the staff.

All these tunes were taught me personally by Tapera, so I can confidently vouch for the accuracy of the mbira parts, having played them all under his critical eye many times. The voice parts are transcribed from tape recordings, and represent a condensation of what Tapera would sing with each tune. Falsetto yodelling notes are shown by a crossed note.

³ The method used was comparison of each mbira note with a set of tuning forks calibrated every four vibrations per second between 212 v.p.s. and 424 v.p.s.

The music.

The single unifying factor behind Tapera's music, and behind the majority of tunes I have heard played on this Sena/Shona type of mbira, is the harmonic progression used. This is something more than a simple root-progression around a tonal centre, as for instance that described by Blacking in discussing Venda ocarina music (African Music, Vol. II, No. 2), and it is strong enough to support a seemingly infinite variety of tunes. It consists basically of three main 'chords' (1, 2 and 3) and a passing 'chord'⁴



By a 'chord' here is not meant a triad, but a chord of two notes only. That is to say that when two keys are played in unison, the two always represent, with few exceptions, one of these chords, or their inversions in different octaves. However, when we consider the notes that regularly precede or follow each of these chords, while the harmony still remains on the chord in question, we can add extra notes to three of the chords, which will make them into 'understood' triads. It must be remembered that at no time is a full triad played on the instrument, although the two mbira notes, together with that of the voice, may sometimes make one up, particularly when yodelling on the tonic chord (Chord 1) takes place. Here are the basic chords with the extra notes that are allowed near each of them printed in black. 5 and 6, parts of tonic chord 1, are the only other simultaneous chords that are regularly played. Chords 1 to 4 are also played in all the inversions possible on the instrument.



These chords may now be described as that of the tonic, the submediant minor (relative minor), the dominant (without its third degree) and the mediant minor. The order in which they occur is fixed, namely 1-2-1-3. The passing chord 4 may occur in any, or all, or none of the spaces between the main chords, but more particularly after each chord 1, i.e. 1-4-2-1-4-3. Some of the vocal parts, such as "Kana ndoda" and "Amai achauya", start on chord 2, or on an upbeat before it. This might perhaps demand a rearranging of the barline for the vocal part. However the mbira generally has the chords in this order, and starting in this place. The first chord of the above sequence is also the one used to end a tune, i.e. after the dominant chord 3. So the sequence dominant—tonic can be said to have cadential function. The voice part usually drops a whole tone onto the tonic at the cadence, sometimes a third from the mediant.

Tapera's voice is, by his own recognition, not as flexible as it once was, and he is no longer capable of the extended vigorous yodelling that would otherwise form an important part of most of these tunes. This Sena/Shona technique of yodelling is, I believe, unique among Bantu-speaking peoples, having been only recorded elsewhere in Africa among the Congo pygmies and the Khoisan peoples of the south. From what I can hear of Tapera's performance, from that of the two Fort Victoria performers on the *kalimba*-type mbira, and from that of several *njari* players, the yodelling reinforces the suggestion that the background of this music is chordal. The notes used in yodelling are those of the chord being played on the mbira, together with the 'understood' notes mentioned above which go with those chords. The characteristic yodelling words are "Wo-ye i-ye i-ye" etc., where the 'i' represents the high falsetto tone. It usually starts on a high pitch and descends stepwise, one up, one down, following the chords as they change throughout the length of the yodelling phrase.

The existence of music based on a fixed sequence of chords may be of great interest when comparing traditional Shona music with that of the towns. If we were to replace the relative minor chord with the subdominant major chord, we would have a progression whose similarity with that of everyday African town jazz could not be overlooked.

In order to find out how these chords are put into effect we can follow the instruction that Tapera gave me for what he considers to be his best tune, "Chemutengure", one of those numerous Shona mbira tunes for which every player has his own variation of the standard. "Mbiriwiri", "Magonde" and "Neura" are the names of other traditional tunes that many Shona *njari* players know. This tune seems to be of more recent origin, and used mainly by players of the *kalimba*-type mbira. The first lesson was to learn the basic chords in a simple rhythm. Tapera would always play with me, to keep the time. The mbira I used was one that I had made myself, in order to be able to learn, and it had been tuned by Tapera.



The last bar here is the first concession to cross rhythm between the hands. Here, and often later on, I discovered for myself what Kubik has observed recently, that there is a great difference between the player's and hearer's image of the music being performed. Tapera was always able to play the individual part of either hand by itself, thus indicating that he was conscious of each part as a tune in its own right. But in many of his accompaniments the tunes of the two hands overlap in pitch, and so the listener, naturally associating together notes of similar pitch, or of a regular rhythm, constructs for himself a rhythmic and melodic framework of which the player need not necessarily be aware. A good example of this is "Chikunda" No. 2.

A simple matter of technique that had to be overcome from the start was learning to pluck the right upper rank downwards with the right index, while at the same time playing the lower octave with the right thumb. Another problem for a non-player of the mbira was to move the thumbs sideways along the ranks of keys fast enough. Learning this caused me several weeks of stiff hands.

The first lesson learnt, and the chords roughly mastered, most of my time was spent in learning the great variety of rhythmic play to which the notes of the chords can be put. Here are some of the rhythmic patterns for "Chemutengure" that can develop from the chord sequence in Fig. 6 Pattern 2 is the first extension of Pattern 1.



The left hand plays a similar pattern to that of Pattern 1, in a regular 6/8, while the right hand alternates from 6/8 to 3/4. The bass note, G₂, is used here, as it can be in many tunes, regardless of its pitch, as a regular rhythmic thump on the third and sixth beats of a 6/8 bar, which are the same beats that a single drum would emphasise if accompanying this music. There are many possible hand claps, but if it were to be a single clap falling every three beats, it would also fall on the third and sixth beats. A deep note, usually G₂ on the *kalimba*, very often falls on the quaver immediately

preceding the on-beat in a number of Shona mbira tunes that I have heard, and it can be a useful sign for orienting oneself to the rhythm. The "on-beat" I have assumed to be the strong beat of the first basic accompaniment for any tune taught me by Tapera, such as Pattern 1 here; the strong beat of most of the songs fits with this basic pattern.



Pattern 3 is an extension of Pattern 2. Both hands are now double-thumbing in 6/8 time, playing the same quaver-crotchet, quaver-crotchet pattern, the left hand staggered one quaver after the right. This is a common African group drumming technique, but when one player has to do it himself, it is quite invigorating.



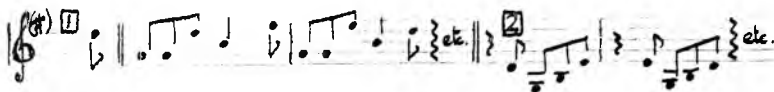
Pattern 4 is in the same rhythm as pattern 3, the left hand now repeating on the upper rank the right hand's note, instead of its own note.



Pattern 5 is very similar in rhythm to Pattern 3, the right hand now moving 'up-down' instead of 'down-up'. Tapera generally has at least two distinct accompaniment patterns for each of his tunes, and often these are described as 'Big Tune' and 'Small Tune' (using the English words). Big refers to low notes and Small to high notes; Big Tune generally means a melody which includes most of the lowest four or five notes of the instrument. Small Tune means one on the upper manual, together with the left hand keys 6, 7 and 8 of the lower manual. In this pattern (5) the sequence G,-D-B-E etc. in the bass, when emphasised, Tapera would call 'making the tune big'. The effect is more marked in the next pattern, No. 6.



Here the listener tends to appreciate these two tunes playing against each other:



while the player does not think mainly of these two tunes, but of the fascinating mechanical-rhythmical effect of playing a staggered 6/8 beat between the two hands. The listener can never be aware of how this accompaniment is created, unless he happens to be a player of the instrument himself.



Keeping the same double-thumbed pattern in the left hand, the right hand now plays in 3/4 time.

All the previous patterns are full accompaniments for the voice. The next three, Nos. 8, 9 and 10, are all examples of 'Small Tune'. They may be used behind the voice, but are more often used as mbira solos in between parts of the song.



This is the main Small Tune, usually played during a quiet or lamentative section of the music. It was in fact the first accompaniment that Tapera tried to teach me for "Chemutengure", but finding that I could not grasp it, he went back one stage further—to the basic chords.



Pattern 9 is an extension of Pattern 8. The rhythm starts to develop with the repeated bass notes E-E and D-D in bars two and four, and the added semiquaver in the treble.



Pattern 10 is a further extension of pattern 8. It shows another way of increasing the interest of the Small Tune. This filling up of all available rhythmic space is what Tapera calls the 'njari technique'. The *njari* has many more duplicated keys than Taper's mbira, and is played with four fingers, as against Tapera's three, so he double-thumbs to get the same full effect.



This is the introduction to "Chemutengure" that Tapera played on a test recording that I made. Or rather, this is what it sounded like to me. When he came in on the song one had to adjust one's rhythmic bearings rapidly, and working back to the start one could discover what the background rhythm in his mind actually was. Tapera often starts his tunes with an introduction that appears to be in a quite different rhythm from the main body of the song. Frequently this introduction is the main contrasting rhythm pattern that he would get a second mbira, in this case mine, to play behind him when he had eventually set up the main pattern.



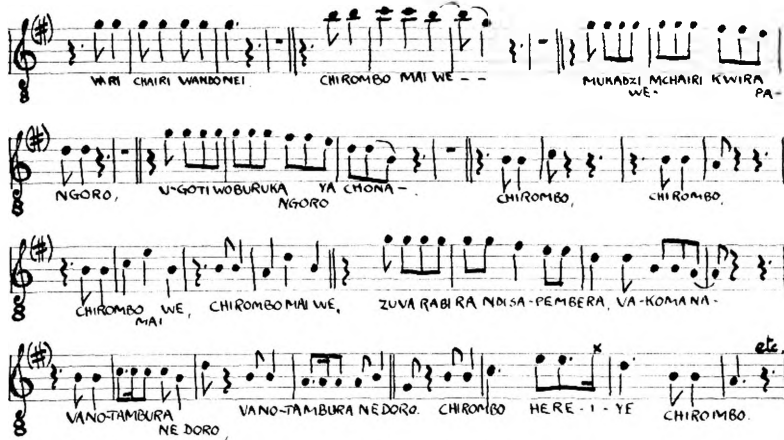
This is the introduction as it is in fact felt, and the accompaniment pattern for the first part of the tune as recorded.

For the ending of the recorded tune, Tapera played this energetic “Big Tune” pattern, followed by this typical ending pattern.



Having grasped these patterns, one has to learn to vary them constantly, fading one into the other, sometimes working up from simplicity to complexity, sometimes the reverse; sometimes loudly emphasising certain notes in a pattern, sometimes unexpectedly leaving some out. The elements of humour, surprise, improvisation, reaction to the audience are all part of the art. Most tunes start slowly, even hesitantly, without complication, and gradually build up to the full pattern. They end, conversely, with a gradual reduction of the complications. This is also a typical feature of Shona *njari* playing.

To complete the music of “Chemutengure”, here are some of the vocal phrases regularly used by Tapera in the song. Each phrase length of four bars, marked off by double bars, corresponds with the four bar length of one accompaniment pattern.



“Chemutengure”

“Chemutengure” was considered by Tapera to be his best tune; he also had the greatest number of variants in its mbira part. It is a virtuoso piece—an exercise in rhythms. Most of his other tunes have a more standardised accompaniment. One of the first that I learnt was “Kana ndoda kuramba murume”, a sad song in 5/8 time. “If I should want to refuse (divorce) my husband, I should be very worried. Have you eaten your food with the mouse’s head?” (A mouse’s head is considered a delicacy).

♩ = 240 R

KA - NA NDO DA KU - RA - MIBA MU - RU - ME NDO SHE - RE - KE - TA

SADZA HE - RE ? NDI SORO OMBEWA SADZA MADYA HE - RE ?

UNO U RAMBA UNO U RAMBA

KANA UNONI - DA MAI WE ZARA KUTEVE ZARA KUTEVE, ZARA KUTEVE

0 - 0 0 - 0 0 - 0 MUNDORAMBA MURUME MUNDORAMBA MURUME MUKADZI

MUNDORAMBA MURUME MM - - - MM - - -

MM - - - MM - - - NDI NORAMBA TUONE NDI NORAMBA TUONE NDI NORAMBA TUONE

“Kana ndoda kuramba murume”

Alternative patterns that can be used with “Kana ndoda” are: 1. Where the right hand pattern is doubled, in imitation of the song; 2. Which is the same as the Small Tune solo of “Chemutengure”, but adapted to 5/8 time; 3. The first basic accompaniment that I was taught; 4. The pattern that Tapera used when he had the extra top G’ key; 5. Clap patterns that are used with this tune are any, or all of these three. (See transcription on Page 62).

The next tune that I learnt, because Tapera considered it easy to play, was “Kuyaura kwasi nakatura”, another sad personal song, sung with a catch in the throat that makes onlookers exclaim, “Anochema kwazvo”—“He is really crying, mourning”, which, they say, is how old men ought to sing. Others sung like this are “Amai achauya”, “Gumbukumbu” and “Ndonofira msango”. The words of “Kuyaura” were explained to mean ‘the suffering of a man who has nothing, neither land, house nor cattle’. Tapera also mourns the loss of his wife in some of the exclamations that fill many of the pauses in the singing. These exclamations in most Shona mbira music, sometimes taking up more

time than the singing itself, are often an important and permanent part of a song, and invariably performed with it. They are comments in the mood of the song itself, traditional exclamations, or else topical ad libs. Many Shona mbira songs, in fact, have no sung words at all but the yodelling “woye iye iye”, interspersed with these spoken exclamations. Not being a Shona linguist, I am not able to comment on Tapera’s numerous exclamations.

The musical score is written on seven staves. The first staff is an 'INTRO' in G major, 3/4 time, with a tempo of 128. It features a melodic line with 'LR' and 'R' markings. The second staff contains the first vocal line with lyrics: 'KU-YAURA KWASI NAKA TURA A MAI. NYA RA KWASI NAYA-TURA AMBUYA.' The third staff continues the vocal line with lyrics: 'WO YE I-YE-E - YUWI YE YE I-YE WO.' The fourth staff is an 'MBIRA SOLO' section with 'LR' and 'R' markings. The fifth staff contains the second vocal line with lyrics: 'MANGARA KWASI NAKA TURA. AMAI YUWE - E - E - E HANDI DI MOKOMA HANI DI MOKOMA.' The sixth staff shows a bass line with 'O' markings. The seventh staff is another 'MBIRA' section with 'MM' markings.

“Kuyaura kwasi nakatura”

“Amai achauya” is a mourning song composed especially for his wife, Maggie, whose loss must have affected him deeply. “Mother will come; will come and see; will come and see this poor man, yuwi uye yuye iye iyuwe”.

The musical score is written in 6/8 time with a tempo of quarter note = 124. It begins with an 'INTRO.' section followed by a 'PATTERN.' section. The main body of the score consists of a vocal line and three alternative mbira accompaniment patterns labeled 1, 2, and 3. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

Lyrics:
 I YO - O AMAI WACHAUYA WUYA WUO - NE -
 AMAI WACHAU YA, YU WI U - YE - YU - YE - I - YE I YUWE - WO NO WA RA
 KA WAROMBE AMAI WACHAU - YA WO NA WARA KAWAROMBE WONA MNONBEWA WO -
 NO WARA KAWAROMBE.

The score includes a section labeled 'MBIRA' with a 2-measure rest, and three numbered alternative accompaniment patterns (1, 2, 3) at the bottom.

“Amai Wachauya”

1 and 2 are alternative accompaniment patterns; 3 is a short solo passage in between parts of the song.

Shona mbira music in duple time is not common, and is more typical of the Eastern Shona, that is, the Manyika of the Umtali district of Southern Rhodesia and eastwards into Moçambique. “Butsu Mtandari” is a Manyika song. The clap that the Manyika put to the song is written below.

“Butsu mtandari,
 Wona inenge vombe.”

INTRO. $\text{♩} = 120$

WO - NA I - NE - NGE ROMBE .

PATTERN

WONA I-NE -NGEROMBE HAYA HO WO - NA, HAYA HO WO - NA,

HAYA HO WO - NA. BUTSUM-TA - NDA RI, BUTSUMTA - NDARI,

WONA I-NE -NGEROMBE HAYA HO WO NA, HAYA HO WO - NA

WO I-YE I-YE - WO I-YE I-YE - I-YE HAYA HO

MBIRA SOLO
Loco.

I NE - NGEROMBE, I NE - NGEROMBE HA, I NE - NGEROMBE

HA

CLAP

“Butsu mtandari”

“Ndonofira msango” is another song in duple time, from Tapera’s home in Mangwendi. It is a song for the Mhondoro spirits, originally played on the *njari*. It is performed very quietly.

The musical score consists of six staves. The first staff is an introduction (INTRO.) with a tempo marking of quarter note = 128. The second staff continues the vocal melody. The third staff is a vocal line with lyrics: MM - - NDO - NO - FI - RA MSA' RWANGOMA MTA - . Below this staff is a section labeled 'PATTERN' with a circled 'P' and a rhythmic notation. The fourth staff continues the vocal line with lyrics: - VARA . MM - - NDO NO FI - RA MSANGO . RWA NGOMA MTA VARA . RWANGOMA MTA - . The fifth staff is a 'MBIRA SOLO loco' section with lyrics: VA' . RWANGOMA MTA VARA . The sixth staff is another 'MBIRA loco' section with lyrics: WOYE YE - NDO NO FI - RA - . RWANGOMA MTA VARA .

“Ndonofira msango”

It would be possible from the accentuation, and from observing Tapera’s movements while playing, to bar this song thus:

A single staff of music showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The notes are grouped into three pairs, with the first pair on the 3rd and 5th positions of the staff, and the second pair on the 5th and 8th positions. This represents a 3-3-2 eighth-note pattern.

but the song definitely fits the other barring, and, to judge from the beginning and ending, the mbira part should also be barred the same way. The eight quavers of the bar are divided into three, three and two, placed not on 1, 4 and 7, as in the common Latin American rhythm, but on 3, 5 and 8.

Gumbukumbu is the name of a certain kind of small bird that frequents rivers and marshy places, and the song “Gumbukumbu” is addressed to this bird as, one imagines, the composer loiters alone and palely by the river. “Gumbukumbu, you understand; you understand but you refuse to answer”.

INTRO. $\text{♩} = 128$

PATTERN.

DA-I-RA. O-E WA-U YE HA HA WARAMBA KU-DA-I-RA.

YE-WO WO-I-YE WARAMBAKU-DA-I-RA. GUMBUKUMBU U-NOZI-NZWA UNO-ZIN U-NOZI-NZWA WARAMBAKU-DAIRA MAI-

-WE EYE-I-YE WARAMBA KU-DA-I-RA MAI-WE E-YE-I-YE WARAMBA KU-DAIRA.

WO-YO HA NDE-NDE HA WO-O WARAMBAKU-DAIRA. WO-I-RA.

MBIRA.

- YE WARAMBAKU-DA-I-RA.

“Gumbukumbu”

This and “Chikunda” No. 1 are the only tunes that I heard Tapera play in any other mode than his usual one. Yet he still ends it on the tonic G-D chord. 1. appears to be the chord sequence. 2. shows two regularly played variants for bar one of the mbira pattern. 3. is the full form of the accompaniment using the right index.

“Chinotamba mudzia mwacho” was of interest as being the only song I learnt that was in triple time and of eighteen quavers length. The others are all of twenty-four quavers length. This is a children’s song from Mrewa, or it can be sung by a mother to the child on her back. According to Hinde, in NADA 1932, this is a children’s game of pick-a-back. “Little imp which is on the back, so not carry me. It dances round in its own pool, the little chigwaya” (a kind of small fish).

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 12/8. It begins with an introduction marked "INTRO." and a tempo of quarter note = 108. The score consists of several systems of staves. The first system shows the melodic line with rhythmic markings "R", "L", and "R" above notes. The second system contains the lyrics: "CHINO - TAM' 'DZA MWA - CHO." and "[CHINOTAMBA MUDZIA MWACHO]". The third system is labeled "BIG TUNE PATTERN." and includes the lyric "A CHIGWAYA." The fourth system contains the lyrics "KAROMBO KARE PA MSAANA" and "KAROMBO KARE PA -". The fifth system is labeled "SMALL TUNE PATTERN." and includes the lyric "ZANDBEREKE." The final system is labeled "MBIRA." and shows a melodic line with rhythmic markings "R", "L", and "R".

“Chinotamba mudzia mwacho”

The rhythm of the words “Karombo kare pamsana, zandibereke” is a good example of how the Shona like to give a tricky rhythm to a sentence. It is an important part of their poetry. The barring may be in doubt here; the song starts every time on the fourth beat of the 12/8 bar, as does the introduction, so the bar line, for the song at least, ought perhaps to come in front of that beat. As for the mbira accompaniment, the present barring indicates the phrasing, the 3/4 bar being ‘on its own’.

Finally, here are some extracts from the two Chikunda tunes that Taper a learnt as a young man in Tete. ‘Chikunda’ is the name of the language of the Sena/Nyungwe people of Tete. The first is in the relative minor mode; the legato passage at the end is how Taper a would have me play against him on a second mbira.

The musical score for "Chikunda No. 1" is written in 12/4 time and consists of eight staves. The first staff is labeled "MBIRA" and features a melodic line with rhythmic markings "R" and a dynamic marking "at sim.". The second staff is labeled "SMALL TUNE" and the third "BIG TUNE", both showing rhythmic patterns. The fourth staff continues the "BIG TUNE" pattern. The fifth and sixth staves show a melodic line with a "dim." marking at the end. The seventh staff is marked "legato" and includes a "7" marking and an "etc" marking. The eighth staff continues the melodic line.

"Chikunda No. 1"

(See Page 55).

This section of the musical score shows five staves of rhythmic accompaniment. The first staff is a treble clef line with a key signature of one sharp. The second staff is a treble clef line with a key signature of one sharp, featuring rhythmic markings "L R" and "R L R". The third staff is a treble clef line with a key signature of one sharp, featuring a "7" marking. The fourth staff is a treble clef line with a key signature of one sharp, featuring rhythmic markings "L R" and "L R". The fifth staff is a bass clef line with a key signature of one sharp, featuring rhythmic markings "L R" and "L R".

The second is in Tapera's usual mode. It is a display of virtuosity on the instrument. You can only play it when your fingers are 'clever' he says. Its main interest is in the changing directions of the melody; the basic tune itself varies intriguingly between up and down, and, in the variations, the direction is constantly changing, with notes appearing here and there unexpectedly, giving an effect of surprise which invariably pleases an African audience. Note the use of dynamics for variation.

This is another tune with a different player- and listener-image. The player is conscious of the contrast of the left and right hand rhythms:

The musical score for "Chikunda No. 2" is presented in a series of staves. At the top, there is a rhythmic notation for the left hand (LH) and right hand (RH). The main score is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 8/8. It begins with an "INTRO" section marked *mf*. The melody is characterized by frequent changes in direction, with notes often appearing unexpectedly. The score includes several sections: "BIG TUNE" and "SMALL TUNE". Dynamics are used for variation, including *p*, *cresc.*, *f*, and *mp*. The piece concludes with a final measure marked *p*.

"Chikunda No. 2"

The listener, however, associates together notes of similar pitch and constructs his own rhythmic framework for the tune on the normal two against three pattern.