

International African Institute

---

The Kalimba of the Lala Tribe, Northern Rhodesia

Author(s): A. M. Jones

Source: *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Oct., 1950), pp. 324-334

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the International African Institute

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1156449>

Accessed: 28-09-2018 23:11 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*International African Institute, Cambridge University Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*

## THE KALIMBA OF THE LALA TRIBE, NORTHERN RHODESIA

A. M. JONES

ALEXANDER MAYUNGE's father was, before he died, headman of Mayunge Village in the Lala area of Northern Rhodesia—that is, some 100 miles east of Broken Hill. He was a professional Kalimba maker, and Alexander his son, to whom I am indebted for the facts in this essay, used to help him. Mayunge used to make all kinds of Tulumba—the *Kankowela*, the *Ndande*, and the *Tulumba-twa-masawu*: he also made Malimba which, among the Lala, means single-note xylophones.

The word 'Kalimba' (pl. Tulumba) is a general term embracing all those musical instruments commonly called Kaffir Pianos. Their general form is a soundboard with a metal bridge over which are fixed a number of carefully tuned metal prongs. The soundboard is placed over a calabash held in the hands, and the notes are played with the two thumbs. (See Fig. 1.)

In passing it is interesting to record that the Lala children make Tulumba (*Tunkowela* or *Ndande*) from Kaffir corn or maize stems. For the soundboard they cut strips, lay them side by side and make them rigid like a plank by piercing them transversely at each end by a thin piece of stalk. The bridge and notes are made of the same material, and Alexander says the instrument is correctly tuned. It needs, of course, a calabash resonator held beneath it while playing. In the British Museum are exhibits of a Belgian Congo Kalimba with notes made not of metal but of strips of a red wood; there are Nigerian Tulumba with soundboards made just as the Lala children make them but using just a few pieces of stout bamboo, pinned transversely as described above. The Nigerians also make a zither whose soundboard is constructed in precisely the same way as that of the Lala children. Now, as the Nigerians are of the Sudanic language group and the Lala are Bantu, the similarity of their technique must surely be of ethnological and anthropological significance.

Tulumba fall into two classes according to their tuning. The small Kalimba has 8 to 10 notes and is called *Kankowela*: the large Kalimba has 14 notes and has the name *Ndande*. When I came to Africa in 1929 the Lala *Kankowela* had 8 notes; of recent years two auxiliary notes have been added. A *Kankowela* is a high-pitched instrument, whose range is approximately A<sub>4</sub> below Middle C to E<sub>5</sub> an octave and a half above. It is pitched to give the singer a chance to sing in an effective register. Some Tulumba are a good deal lower and would be used by people with deep voices.

These Tulumba may again be classified in two categories according to the method used in obtaining an embellishing droning sound which is an integral part of the instrument. A Kalimba should give out, when played, a buzzing sound, which may be produced in either of two ways. In the ordinary Tulumba, a hole about half an inch in diameter is bored in the centre of the soundboard and under it is stretched a piece of that white opaque covering to a certain spider's eggs commonly seen in the rafters of our houses. The Lala call it *Lemba-lemba*. This membrane acts like tissue-paper on a comb and buzzes gently whenever a note sets the soundboard in vibration. But an alternative and more elaborate method is to use little bits of iron

called *Amasaŋu*; Tulumba made on this principle are called *Tulumba twa masawu*. In this type the soundboard consists of a piece of wood hollowed out with a narrow and deep slit: thus it is really like two thin pieces of wood on top of each other with a space between (about  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. high). In this space the little bits of iron strip are hanging loosely on a piece of wire set across the middle of the space, and when the Kalimba is played they jump about with the vibration, producing the requisite 'sizzling' sound. (See Fig. 3.)

#### MAKING A KANKOWELA

##### *The Soundboard*

The maker seeks in the forest a fairly hardwood tree: from best to less good, and in that order, his selection will be Mulombe, Muchinka, Musuku, or Mupapa. He cuts off a big branch and splits it longitudinally in two. It must be sufficiently large to produce finished boards about 5 in. wide and  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. thick. He brings the branch to his village and cuts off several pieces about 6 in. long. This must be done at once while the wood is green. Any parts of the branch left over cannot be used subsequently as the wood will be too hard.

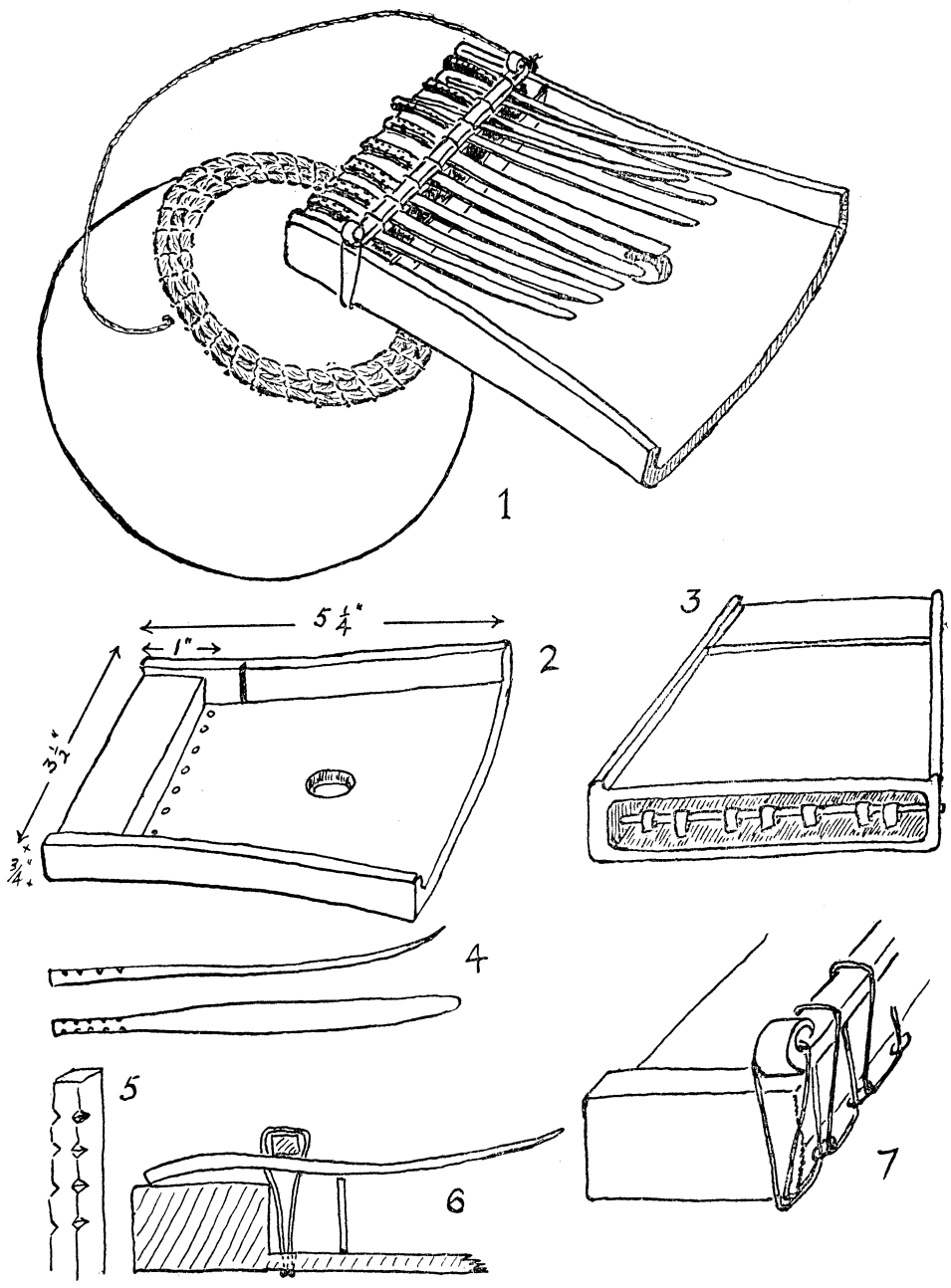
The pieces cut off are barked and then placed in an ash-pit (cold, not hot ashes), covered with a layer of ashes about 5 in. thick and left for a week. The purpose of this is to season the wood and prevent it from splitting. At the end of this period one piece is taken and carved till it becomes a flat slab about 6 in. by 5 in. by 1 in. It is then put back in the ashes for a night. The carving must not be completed in one day or the wood will split. The next day the carving is resumed and is completed bit by bit over a period of some five days, though no holes are bored in the wood yet. At this stage the wood will assume the shape of Fig. 2 (but with no holes): or, if it is a *Kankowela ka masawu*, it will look like Fig. 3 minus the wire and bits of iron.

##### *The Bridge, &c.*

The maker now sallies forth to seek the metal materials required. For this purpose it is rather necessary to have private access to the metal scrap of a neighbouring European! What is needed is some soft thin copper, brass, or even iron wire about gauge 20 (Imperial) for binding the cross-bar to the soundboard. In towns they often get some old insulated electric cable and tease out the wire inside. Such cable may nowadays be bought in an up-country store. But any thin wire will do, provided it is thick enough to take the strain when the notes are inserted and pressed home. He will also need an old 4-in. nail for the cross-bar, a flat piece of iron big enough to make a piece  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. long,  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide and about  $\frac{1}{3}\frac{1}{2}$  in. thick for the bridge; and finally eight old nails, some 3 in. and some  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. long, and an old cycle-spoke or two. All is now ready for smithing.

At the smithy the materials and tools required are:

- (a) *The anvil*. This is a big, hard, flat stone about 2 ft. square and 10 in. thick. Such stones, very smooth and hard, are found at the river. Two smiths can work at such a stone simultaneously, one on either side opposite each other.
- (b) *The bellows*. The Lala do not use the wood-bowl type, but have two skins each sewn into a cylindrical shape. The tops are open and made slit-shape by fixing



PARTS OF KANKOWELA AND COMPLETED INSTRUMENT

two thin strips of wood parallel across the opening. In blowing, on the up-stroke the blower opens the slit and on the down-stroke he closes it. This is done by fingers and thumb, each hand controlling one of the bellows.

- (c) *Water* in a pot, for cooling the ironwork.
- (d) *Hammer, chisel, and file*, and of course—
- (e) *Charcoal*.

First the upper cross-bar is hammered out from the 4-in. nail. It is made square in section and its ends are tapered and curved up into little eyelets, which are partly decorative and partly functional as the retaining wires pass through them. The cross-bar must be beaten to such a length that when complete it is exactly as long as the width of the thick end of the soundboard.

Next, with a red-hot cycle-spike little holes are bored in the soundboard for the retaining wires to pass through. A 10-note *Kankowela* will need 9 holes. (See Fig. 2.)

The cross-bar is now wired in position by passing the thin copper wire through its eye and over and under, over and under through the holes in the soundboard, finishing up at the other eye (see Fig. 7). Care must be taken when doing this not to pull the wire so tight as to make the cross-bar bend; if it is pulled too close to the soundboard the keys cannot be inserted underneath it (see Fig. 6), and also their playing ends will be too high above the soundboard. The wire is pulled to such a degree of tightness that when the keys are inserted the ends of the bar are lifted about  $\frac{1}{16}$  in. above the edges of the soundboard. I have a Kalimba where the bar was pulled down too tight, and one can see how the maker had actually to trench the soundboard in one place to make room for a rather fat key: this is bad workmanship.

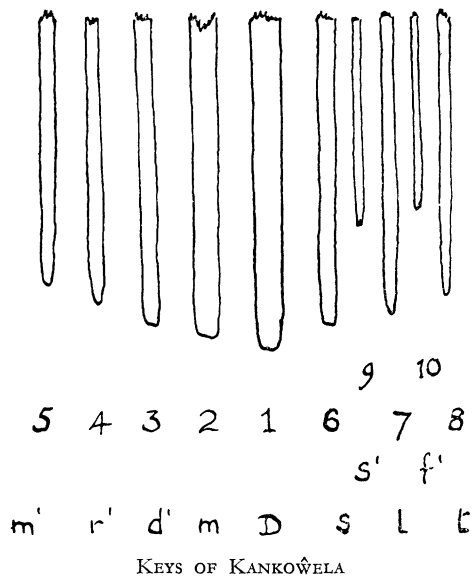
Next, the bridge is hammered out. Its length must be about  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. longer than the inside width of the soundboard between its two sides. It must be made about  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide so that when in position its edge is slightly higher than the depth of the thick end of the soundboard. This will cause the keys to lie, not parallel with, but slightly away from the base of the soundboard. The bridge is about  $\frac{1}{32}$  in. thick. To fix it in position, which is the next operation, it is necessary to heat to redness a special little chisel and with this to burn a small vertical V-shaped nick on the inside faces of the sides of the soundboard about  $\frac{5}{8}$  in. away from the solid end of the board. (See Fig. 2.) The bridge should now slide into position. The soundboard is now nearly complete and is ready to receive the metal prongs which produce the notes.

### *The Notes*

The 3 in. and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. nails are hammered out on the anvil till they are rectangular in section, and tapering from the thick end, which is fixed to the soundboard, to the thin end which is struck with the thumbs. In plan they are slightly feather-shaped. The fixed end is narrow; where it will pass over the bridge it begins to widen slightly; then the sides become parallel but it tapers gently as it nears the plucking end and is finished with a parabola-like curved end. The key is usually bent to a graceful curve so that when fixed in position the striking end curves up and away from the soundboard. In some instruments the keys are almost flat, but usually there is at least some curvature. By this curving the keys are raised above the soundboard at a height convenient for playing; if raised too high they are extraordinarily difficult

to play at all and must be readjusted. The thick fixed end of the key is decorated with nicks on both its upper edges for a distance of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (See Figs. 4 and 5.)

To produce a low note you need to beat the metal prong wide and thin: for a high note it needs to be thick and narrow. To flatten a note, beat it out thinner: to sharpen a note, lay it on its side and beat it so that it gets thicker. It is of course true that the pitch of the note could be adjusted by the length of the key projecting from the



bridge. But the instrument is played rapidly with the thumbs and it is essential for good and comfortable playing that the playing ends of the keys should be either in line or on a broad convex curve. Thus in tuning it is necessary to adjust the pitch by altering the thickness of the keys and not by pushing the keys forwards or backwards to alter their length, though this is the usual method employed by players who are not first-class men when their ear is offended by a note which they deem to be out of tune. A good player would refuse to play on an instrument whose key ends presented a jagged and irregular line.

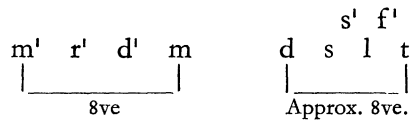
The pitch of the notes of a 10-key *Kankowela* is approximately as follows:

s' f' m' r' d' t l s m d\*

but the notes are not placed on the instrument in this order. What actually happens is that the notes from m' downwards are divided into two groups, each containing three high notes and one low one. One group is placed to the left of the instrument and one to the right, in both cases the high notes being outermost; thus the two lowest notes of the instrument lie next to each other in the centre. The two highest notes—s' and f'—are auxiliaries and in fact are a recent innovation. They are made

\* As I have no monochord or set of tuning-forks, I cannot give the vibration numbers, nor can I give the intervals in Cents. But the tuning is not by adjacent notes.

about  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. shorter than the other keys and curve up above them; they are placed between the three high notes on the right side of the *Kankowela*. The keys will thus be arranged as follows:



Consider these two groups: the left group consists of two tones plus a minor sixth enclosed in an octave; the right group, not counting the auxiliaries, is two tones plus a fifth, and thus encompasses a major seventh. Now the African has a very hazy idea about the relative size of big intervals. In his vocal music he does not use them. He will say a high note is 'little' and a low note 'big', but in this part of Africa he has no terms to signify definite intervals. Alexander maintains that the two groups given above are identical except that the right-hand group is a bit lower than the left one. It is a technical fact that the lowest note (doh) on a *Kankowela* is so thin that it tends to give a mixed sound which might be either doh or te. If you sound it with soh it appears to be doh: if you sound it with me it might be meant for te. It is also true that there is a tendency to tune the outside right key (te) a bit flat when sounded as a fourth with the left-hand outside note  $m'$ . Taken by and large, therefore, it is an interesting fact that the notes do actually fall more or less into two similar groups and that the African should have recognized this as a fundamental factor in tuning the instrument. In tuning, Alexander keeps sounding all the left-hand group in order from left to right, and then all the right-hand group from right to left. It is clear that he is appraising in his mind the degree of their similarity.

We left the craftsman beating out the keys: let us now follow his procedure as he builds up the keyboard. He hammers out and inserts No. 1 (doh) and No. 2 (me): it does not matter which of these he actually does first. He tunes them a major third apart. It does not really matter what the pitch of doh is: some people prefer a lower pitched *Kankowela* and some a higher. He sees that when the keys are in tune they are also in line at their playing ends. If not, he must hammer their sides or faces to make them so, as already described.

He inserts No. 3 (doh<sup>1</sup>), guessing the interval of a minor sixth from No. 2. He does *not* tune it to an octave of No. 1. This is strange but it gives weight to the fact that the two halves of the instrument are treated as separate though similar 'choruses'. He makes No. 4, guessing a tone from No. 3: to get it right he keeps playing 4-3-2 in sequence and adjusts till he hears the correct tune. He inserts No. 5 (me<sup>1</sup>), guessing its pitch by repeated playing of 5-4-3-2.

We now have the left-hand chorus done and roughly tuned. The same process is repeated for making the right-hand side. He makes No. 6 (soh) and guesses its pitch by playing 5, 4, 3, 2, 1-6, i.e.  $m' r' d' m d$ -SOH. Now he makes No. 7 (la), tuning it by playing 1, 6-7 (doh, soh-LA). Lastly he inserts No. 8 (te) and tunes it by playing 1, 6, 7-8 (d, s, l-TE). He now proceeds to co-ordinate the two sets of notes in order to achieve a finer tuning. He sounds 5 and 8 ( $m^1-t$ ) alternately, and tunes them so that, as Alexander says, 'No. 5 must have a *small sound*'. Actually he tunes to a perfect fourth. Fine adjustments to tuning are done with the file. He does the same with 4 and 7 ( $r^1-l$ ), tuning to a perfect fourth. Note that he does not tune by thirds. For

example, he does not adjust the instrument by sounding 6 and 8 (s-t) together, nor 4 and 8 (r-t), nor 5 and 3 (m-d). He tunes 3 and 6 (d-s) a perfect fourth.

Now with his left thumb only, he plays over and over again Nos. 5 and 2 (m-m). If it is a bad sound he alters No. 2. He thus tunes an octave.

With the right thumb he does the same with Nos. 8 and 1. Now here is a strange fact. I have ascertained that No. 1 *must* be conceived as DOH and not TE, by this means. If I play 5-4-3-8-3 (m' r' d' t d'), and sing harmony the while, Alexander unhesitatingly rejects my harmony if I sing:

Instrument	m'	r'	d'	t	d'
Voice	t	l	s	m	TE <sub>1</sub>

But he says I am right when I sing the final note as DOH. Nevertheless he seems to think that Nos. 8 and 1 (TE? DOH?—DOH) agree together. It is true, as I have already said, that No. 1 is so thin that its note is indeterminate and it needs to be sounded alternately with another and concordant key to establish its actual pitch. Thus it is true to say that it is *apparently* an octave of No. 8 if sounded with the latter, and yet it is apparently an octave of No. 3 (doh!) if sounded with the latter. Well, there it is—perhaps there is more to be discovered here.

He now plays in sequence Nos. 8-7-6-1 (t l s d) and 5-4-3-2 (m' r' d' m). If these groups do not seem to be similar in sound he adjusts them further.

We have now got the main (and traditional) notes of the instrument finished. The next step is to make the buzzer. Every Kalimba must produce a sort of buzzing drone. So the craftsman heats to redness a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. iron bolt and with it bores a hole in the very centre of the soundboard. On the under side of the board he stretches and sticks over the hole a piece of 'Lemba-lemba' (see above, p. 324). This acts like tissue-paper on a comb and when any note is played it buzzes.

Keys 9 and 10 (s' and f') are now hammered out from pieces of cycle-spoke. No. 9 (soh!) is inserted and is tuned from No. 6 (te). This by the way is a minor sixth and is an unusual interval for the Bantu.

Now No. 10 (fa!) is inserted and tuned from No. 7 (la); here is another minor sixth. Alexander says you reckon the tuning of these four notes by striking them and saying to yourself, '10 is higher and 6 is short: 7 is higher and 9 is short.' He also said, 'The lower note (of each pair) should be "short" and the higher note goes on.' This is rather cryptic English but it obviously means something very definite to Alexander. In actual practice these high notes do have the property of singing on rather like a tuning-fork, while the lower ones are of shorter duration when struck. But I think his word 'short' also refers to their actual pitch. It is probable that he carries in his mind a clear 'interval-pattern' and knows exactly when the keys of the instrument conform to this pattern.

### *The Resonator*

We have now completed the *Kankowela* except for the resonator. For this, a calabash is taken and cut so as to provide a spherical resonator with an opening about 3 in. in diameter on the top. The edge of this hole must be covered with a damping material, as otherwise it would knock on the soundboard while playing and produce ugly noises. So a series of small holes is pierced all round the edge of the hole, about



$\frac{1}{4}$  in. apart and about  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. from the edge. Then some sisal fibre is twisted into a soft string and this is sewn round and round, using the small holes to pass the needle through. The stitches are so arranged that they make a series of radiating lines across the circles of sisal and it is obvious that much pride of craftsmanship is expended on this operation in a good instrument. When this is completed there will be a flat soft band about  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide, forming a sort of platform on top of the calabash, and entirely covering its hard edges. (See Fig. 1.)



Another small hole is drilled just under the soft band and a piece of sisal string some 12 in. long is passed through and knotted on the inside; the other end is passed through one eye of the cross-bar of the instrument and knotted. Thus the *Kankowela* and its resonator are loosely strung together so that they will not get separated.

The final stage is now to play the instrument, and to make any further slight adjustments in tuning with the file.

In playing, the Lala (unlike some West Africans) hold the *Kankowela* so that the free ends of the keys are towards the body of the performer. The notes are gently struck with a sort of scraping, pulling action of the two thumbs, using the thumbnail, or else the very tip of the thumb, to do so. The soundboard is grasped between the two extended first fingers, and its sides lie along the whole length of these fingers. The calabash is grasped between the remaining fingers of each hand and is so held as to be just not touching the soundboard. If the soundboard sits on it, there is no proper resonance. If the resonator is held at the optimum distance, the instrument produces an intense and most mellifluous sound, beautifully resonated.

### THE MUSIC

*Kankowela* music is usually rapid—about 420 pulses to the minute on the average. By a pulse I mean the smallest note-value (with the exception of an occasional half-note) in the piece being played. Sometimes the tune is a single melody: sometimes it is a melody reinforced with occasional harmony using fourths, a fifth, or octaves. Of all the harmonies possible on the instrument, the following are the *only ones used*:

Notes.	Harmonies used.
	

*Kankowela* music does not exist as instrumental music pure and simple. It is invariably an accompaniment to a song which the player himself usually sings. There are stylized forms of Introduction on the *Kankowela*, after which the player embarks on the song music. When this has been played several times, he starts singing. Between the verses there may be quite a long stretch of *Kankowela* music by itself, but later on the song comes again. The singer uses a soft voice to suit the soft tones of the instrument: he often sings falsetto. It is clear that this is rather personal and private music even though frequently the song is in the form of cantor and chorus and needs a party of Africans sitting round to join in when the chorus occurs. The performance of a song with chorus and *Kankowela* accompaniment is a restful, ever-varied, and wholly delightful art form: one may use the word 'exquisite'. Everyone is listening

with rapt attention and appreciation to the accompanying continuo on the *Kankowela*: it is this which is the foundation of the song. The song is, as it were, a short thread woven at intervals into the continuous playing of the instrument. The tune played is a short one repeated many times, but a good player is continually introducing subtle variations of melody, harmony, or rhythm, and there is never a dull moment for those who understand what is happening. He plays alone: he croons the cantor's part: the chorus join in softly and feelingly: they stop and he goes on playing solo for some thirty seconds, and then sings the cantor's part for the second verse—and so on. It is a beautiful performance: there is a wistfulness in it, a far-off charm that baffles description. But if anyone wants to find the real soul of beauty in African music, one certain way is to listen, in the evening, to a group of Africans led by a competent *Kankowela* player.

*Examples of Kankowela music*

EXAMPLE I

SONG (*Sung 8ve lower*). ♩ = 140.

*D.C. ad lib.*

Wá - ká - lú - lū 'Mú - tā - í - sýa, Né kŵe - ñdo 'Mú - tā - í - sýa!

KANKOWELA.

R=Right.

L=Left.

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

EXAMPLE II

SONG (*Sung 8ve lower*). ♩ = 168.

SOLO. Wá-Nchimi-sh'a-wá - kulu wá mushi

KANKOWELA.

SOLO. Ka-ntu-tu - ke kali - pama pe 'kosh í!

*D.C. ad lib.*

## NOTES

## EXAMPLE 1

1. Translation: 'O Mr. Hare, you Slothful One! even in walking, you Slothful One!'
2. The marks over the words are speech-tones: ' = middle tone, and - = high tone. The relation of the rise and fall of speech-tone to the rise and fall of melody is a big question. As far as we know it has not yet been investigated by anybody. But it may be said that in free-rhythm songs, where the melody and words may be altered at will, the rise and fall of melody will be found to correspond generally with the rise and fall of speech-tones: there are, however, certain conventions observed by the Bantu which cause apparent exceptions to this rule.
3. The song is sung very softly in a quiet wistful murmur.
4. The two phrases of the *Kankowela* are coincident with the two phrases of the song. This is by no means always the case.
5. The Bantu in Central Africa find no difficulty whatever in singing or playing four against three or conversely: it is as plain as daylight to them.
6. Note especially that the first beat of the bar of the accompaniment does not coincide with the first beat of the bar of the song, though both are in the same  $\frac{3}{8}$  time. This crossing of the beats is not syncopation, but it is absolutely fundamental to African music. The principle is discussed in *African Music in Northern Rhodesia and Elsewhere*, by A. M. Jones, published by (and obtainable from) The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Livingstone, N. Rhodesia. 35.
7. The *Kankowela* phrases are identical except for the penultimate note of each phrase—G and F: but how very telling is this slight modification!—it 'makes' the tune.
8. The fourth note from the end of the song (G) is harmonized by the bottom note of the *Kankowela*, A $\flat$ . This bears out what we have already said about the indeterminate position occupied by the latter note.
9. If it be asked, 'What is the main beat of this piece?'—the answer is that there are two—one for the song and one for the instrument, and the listener may pay attention to either one or the other, or to both simultaneously!—that is the genius of African music. It is a revealing exercise to sing the melody and at the same time to try and tap the main beats of the *Kankowela*, attempting to realize that they *are* main beats, and not the third beat of the song bar.

## EXAMPLE 2

1. This really is a splendid piece of music.
2. Translation: 'Mr. Nchimishi, the Headman of the village—just as he tried to run away, he was struck on the neck by an Angoni!' (The syllable *-li-* in 'kalipama' stands for *ipule* which means a Mungoni.)
3. The song is essentially a solo, sung by the player. More verses may be added but the form of the song will remain unchanged. It is in A-B, A-B form, 'A' being the song part and B being the *Kankowela* solo part. A chorus may join in: in this case they repeat the words and melody of the solo, singing just after the soloist, that is, while he is playing the *Kankowela* solos.
4. The melody may be sung as we print it: it may also be sung, by way of variety, a fourth lower. The piece is repeated *in toto* over and over again as long as is desired.
5. The *Kankowela* is considered to have two 'banks'—as we have indicated in the section on tuning. The left bank, presided over by the left thumb is, during the song, considered by the player to be reduplicating the melody thereof as we print it. The right thumb is considered to be reduplicating the alternate form of the melody (a fourth lower). Thus, the essential notes of the left thumb are:



and of the right thumb:



6. In contrast with Example 1, where the accompaniment is in arpeggio form, in this second example it is mainly chordal, using fourths, a fifth and, very curiously, a tenth.
7. Although necessarily scored in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time, the song sounds anything but four-square. It is sung quite freely, though strictly in time, and its stressed notes are melodic and not word-accents. We have marked the notes which take an apparent stress in singing. But in beating time the African player taps his foot on the first and third beats of the bar as we have scored it. These, then, are the real beats.
8. Note that the whole piece consists of 4 phrases each of 8 beats. This exemplifies the rule for African music as regards length of phrase. African music in Central Africa always falls in phrases of 2 beats or 3 beats or a multiple of these.

*Résumé*

## LE KALIMBA DE LA TRIBU LALA, DE LA RHODÉSIE DU NORD

L'AUTEUR, qui a étudié la musique africaine depuis de nombreuses années, décrit dans cet article la fabrication d'un *Kankoŵela* — une sorte de ces instruments de musique connus sous le nom de *Kalimba*, dont l'usage est très répandu en Afrique Centrale. Le *Kalimba* se compose d'une planche de résonance, avec un chevalet en métal au-dessus duquel sont fixés un nombre de fourchons métalliques, soigneusement accordés. La planche de résonance est placée sur une calebasse tenue dans les mains et les notes sont jouées avec les deux pouces. En plus d'une description détaillée de la façon d'accorder l'instrument et la gamme employée, l'auteur traite de la forme et du caractère de la musique de *Kankoŵela* et donne des exemples de chansons et de leurs accompagnements.

## 'AFRICAN ABSTRACTS'

THIS quarterly review, devoted to abstracts of ethnological, social and linguistic studies appearing in current periodicals, has completed its first volume. The four issues contain 618 abstracts in English and French of articles drawn from the 1948–9 issues of 113 periodicals published in 25 countries and African territories. An index of subjects, tribes and languages, authors and periodicals will be circulated with the January 1951 issue.

The second volume, in addition to completing the 1948–9 period, will cover articles published in 1950. It is hoped to devote special supplementary issues to articles published during the war years.

In order to reduce the lapse of time between the publication of the original article and of its abstract, periodicals are as a rule abstracted in the country of publication. Teams of abstractors in Belgium, France, Italy and the United Kingdom are jointly responsible for abstracting all relevant articles. In six other countries individual abstractors are at work. The abstractors as well as the Editorial Advisers who supervise their work are specialists in the fields which they cover.

Reviewers of *African Abstracts* have stressed the useful service which this publication performs in bringing together widely scattered information. To quote one of these: 'While waiting to take up an appointment in Africa, many people must have spent hours searching libraries for information. An hour with *African Abstracts* would have given them a vast store of information.'

*African Abstracts* is published by the International African Institute with the assistance of a grant from Unesco. In order to maintain the review, the number of subscribers must be increased. Those interested are requested to communicate with the Secretary of the Institute.